

**CHARTER COMMISSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Charter Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, September 19, 2013, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Joseph Field
 Commissioner Susan E. Anderson
 Commissioner Jim Bendtsen
 Commissioner Ben Deemer
 Commissioner Harry Niska
 Commissioner Chad Sivertson
 Commissioner Eric Zaetsch

Members Absent: Commissioner John Niederhaus

Also Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen
 Councilmember Mark Kuzma
 City Administrator Kurtis G. Ulrich
 City Attorney Joseph Langel
 City Clerk Jo Thieling

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Field called the regular meeting of the Charter Commission to order at 6:34 p.m.

CITIZEN INPUT

None.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Deemer to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried. All present voted in favor.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Deemer, seconded by Commissioner Bendtsen to approve the meeting minutes dated April 19, 2012.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Deemer, Bendtsen, Anderson, and Niska. Voting No: None. Abstain: Commissioners Sivertson as he was not present at the

April 19, 2012 meeting and Commissioner Zaetsch as he was not yet an appointed member.
Absent: Commissioner Niederhaus.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.1 Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2013

City Clerk Thieling explained that since this is the first meeting of the year for the Charter, they shall elect a chair and vice chair.

Consensus of the Commission was that the election should be for two years – 2013 and 2014.

Chair Field opened the floor for nominations.

Nomination for Commissioner Joe Field for Charter Chair for years 2013 and 2014 by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Sivertson.

Nomination for Commissioner Harry Niska for Charter Chair for years 2013 and 2014 by Commissioner Bendtsen.

Commissioner Niska stated he would support the nomination for Commissioner Field.

Commissioner Bendtsen withdrew his nomination.

Upon inquiry, and hearing nothing further, Chair Field closed the nominations. All voted in favor of Joe Field as Chair for years 2013 and 2014. Commissioner Niederhaus absent.

Nomination for Commissioner Harry Niska for Charter Vice Chair for years 2013 and 2014 by Commissioner Bendtsen, seconded by Commissioner Deemer.

Upon inquiry, and hearing nothing further, Chair Field closed the nominations. All voted in favor of Harry Niska as Vice Chair for years 2013 and 2014. Commissioner Niederhaus absent.

5.2 Introduce new Charter Commission Member and Update Commission on Status of Vacancies.

City Clerk Thieling introduced newest Commissioner Eric Zaetsch, who had been sworn in prior to the meeting. It was noted that Joe Field and Jim Bendtsen were also sworn in for another four-year term prior to the meeting. Mrs. Thieling reported that the following Commissioners' terms expire in December of this year: Susan Anderson, Ben Deemer, John Niederhaus and Chad Sivertson and stated that those interested in reappointment should submit their letters of interest to the City Clerk or directly to the judge.

Joseph Langel, the City's new attorney was introduced to the Commission as well. It was noted that he has a lot of experience with Charter cities. A brief question and answer period followed

the introduction – consisting of questions about the open meeting law, getting topics on the agenda, etc.

5.3 Receive Presentation of City’s Strategic Plan

City Clerk Thieling noted that Mayor Strommen, Councilmember Kuzma, and City Administrator Ulrich were present and that Mayor Strommen and Mr. Ulrich would present on the City’s Strategic Plan.

Mayor Strommen and City Administrator Ulrich presented a power point on the Strategic Plan followed by a discussion with the Charter.

The presentation, as well as having Mayor Strommen, Councilmember Kuzma and City Administrator Ulrich present, brought about discussion relating to franchise fees, funding sources, the City’s budget, taxes, waiving of fees for developments, HRA’s - including the Anoka County HRA, road reconstruction, prioritizing the roads for construction, the petition process for and against projects, terms from the Strategic Plan such as enhancing the elections process (asked for an example), success terms, and smart budgeting (asked for an example), prioritizing expenditures, implementing new revenue sources, property taxes, the levy limits and whether or not the Council adopted the maximum, economic development, tax base, SAC and WAC and building permit fees, Local Government Aid, policies and administration, staff roles and responsibilities, road conditions and the PASER system.

The Commission thanked Mayor Strommen, Councilmember Kuzma and City Administrator Ulrich for attending the meeting and for the presentation and answers to questions. Chair Field added he really liked the measurables and was impressed with the balanced scorecard.

Commissioner Deemer added that he was pleased that the Council made the decision to continue with six issues of the *Ramsey Resident*.

5.4 Approve Summary Letter to the Judge

City Clerk Thieling noted the Charter’s summary letter to the Judge for year 2012 activities was included with the agenda.

It was suggested that the letter be broken down into separate paragraphs for activities versus just for the meetings, which may make it a little easier to read; however, the content of the letter was fine.

Motion by Commissioner Deemer, seconded by Commissioner Zaetsch, voted to approve the year-end summary letter, amended as suggested, and directed staff to submit it on behalf of the Charter Commission.

Motion carried. All present voted in favor. Absent: Commissioner Niederhaus.

5.5 Update on Topics for Discussion

City Clerk Thieling reported that at the Charter Commission meeting in April 2012, there were a few items slated for review at a subsequent meeting. One was to review Sections 2.3 through 2.5 of the City's Charter. The City Attorney was asked to draft an ordinance amending 2.5 to clarify the clause referring to non-residency in the City to include language relating to non-residency in the ward as well. The Commission had approved a motion that the Attorney draft an ordinance to delete 2.3.3 and rewrite the last sentence of 2.3.1 to make it easier to understand what years different Councilmembers are elected without having to do the math. Mrs. Thieling suggested that since the attorney and some Charter members are new, the Commission should review the past direction and clarify the intent of the proposed amendments for Attorney Langel.

At the April 2012 meeting, former City Attorney Goodrich noted that Section 4.5.5 had been discussed years ago. It talks about such a remote event that he wasn't sure that the Charter would even want to review it again. He suggested the Commission could study 4.5 dealing with vacancies and a "learning session" could be held on it to maybe brainstorm to make the language more clear. The question was raised about the dates of special elections and did the Commission want to consider extending the dates so there is time for a primary election. Mrs. Thieling reiterated that these instances are rare and added that a primary election is quite costly as well.

Discussion ensued relating to scheduling a work session to talk about Charter Section 2.3 and maybe 4.5 as well.

Commissioner Zaetsch noted Chapter 11 and stated that maybe the City would want to offer broadband and wondered if there is anything in Chapter 11 that might restrict the City Council from offering broadband. He suggested that could be a future discussion.

Motion by Commissioner Zaetsch, seconded by Commissioner Anderson that the Charter Chair and the City Clerk work on scheduling a work session and report back to the Commission with a date and time and an agenda which should include 2.3 through 2.5 and 4.5 of the City's Charter.

Further discussion: Commissioner Niska stated he would prefer a regular meeting be scheduled, where the Commission can take action. He stated that 2.3.3 could be rewritten – it's pretty straight forward. Section 2.5 can easily be amended to add language that you must live within your ward. Commissioner Bendtsen expressed an interest in doing the same, stating that he felt that the Commission was pretty much in agreement on most of language. Commissioner Niska stated that 2.3.3 would not be a substantive change – as you could refer to the presidential election year and the governor election year for electing Mayor and Council – both At Large and Ward representation. Section 2.5 would just be to clarify that if the vacancy occurs in a ward, the candidate must live in the ward. Commissioner Anderson asked that a broadband discussion be brought back as well.

Motion by Commissioner Zaetsch, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to amend the motion to schedule a regular meeting, not a work session, and discuss 2.3 through 2.5, 4.5, plus Chapter 11 with regard to broadband.

Motion carried. All present voted in favor. Absent: Commissioner Niederhaus.

COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

City Clerk Thieling inquired if there is any interest in amending the City's Charter to state that local write-in votes do not have to be tallied unless the person has filed as a write-in a certain number of days prior to the election. She referred to the City of Blaine's Charter language about this subject, and added that it does save time for the election judges on election night. At this point, State, Federal and County level write-in candidates are not counted unless they have filed as a write-in prior to the election. The write-in votes would still be counted, however, they would not be tallied. That is where the time savings occur for the judges.

Motion by Commissioner Zaetsch, seconded by Commissioner Sivertson, to add the topic of write-ins to the next agenda and supply the Commission with the language used by the City of Blaine.

Motion carried. All present voted in favor. Absent: Commissioner Niederhaus.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Deemer, seconded by Commissioner Zaetsch, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. All present voted in favor. Absent: Commissioner Niederhaus.

The regular meeting of the Charter Commission adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Joseph J. Langel
City Attorney

Minutes taken and transcribed by Jo Thieling, City Clerk