

Charter Change Committee
Wednesday, August 14, 2024
Public Works Front Conference Room at 645 Pine and Remote
DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: Councilor Bergman (Chair), Councilor Carpenter, Councilor Doherty

Staff Present: Kimberlee Sturtevant (Assistant City Attorney)

Public Present: Evan Litwin, Mark Barlow

Meeting called to order at 5:34 PM.

1. Agenda

1.01 Motion to amend/adopt agenda

Motion to Adopt Agenda as is.

Motion by Councilor Doherty, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

2. Adopt Draft Minutes from 7/1

2.01 Adopt Draft Minutes from 7/1

Motion to Adopt Draft Minutes from July 1.

Motion by Councilor Doherty, Seconded by Councilor Carpenter

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

3. Public Forum

No members of the public wanted to speak for this item.

4. Councilor Compensation

Councilor Carpenter recalled that this issue was raised back in 2021. She said she is unsure if there is motivation for the Council to move forward on this given the current budget issues.

Councilor Doherty agreed and said the Committee should gauge the interest in this change with the whole Council and if there is not a strong interest then the Committee should use its time on other items.

Councilor Bergman said that over the last few decades the City has had many years of budget gaps. He said this issue should be brought up with other councilors and thought about more generally.

Evan Litwin (City Councilor): I think the Dante Seguino research is a good start. I think some other metrics need to be identified and compared for the different comparable cities and towns. Brookline, MA is one of the wealthiest towns in the Northeast and they currently pay their councilors less than Burlington.

Councilor Bergman said adding a median income to the comparison chart for comparable cities would be helpful.

Councilor Doherty said it might be good to have a sense of the number of hours or meetings that comparable cities' councilors regularly work.

Councilor Bergman said he would coordinate with Councilor Brown McKnight to survey what the largest impediments are to councilor service and ways to mitigate them.

5. Property Tax Revenue Neutrality and Income Sensitivity

Councilor Bergman recalled the circumstances of the passage of Section 98a of the City Charter. There was to be a large reappraisal in the 1980s and the property taxes for the Old North End would have gone up considerably, leading to potential displacement. Section 98a was passed to maintain budget neutrality in an attempt to limit this new burden.

Councilor Bergman said that the Mayor's administration is working on this as well and he wants the Committee to work in concert as needed.

Councilor Carpenter said that a lot of the data necessary to work on this question will come from the State Tax Department and the City as an entity will have to request that data as opposed to individual councilors.

Mark Barlow (City Councilor): The Education Fund has a lot of mechanisms for revenue. The main concern is how income sensitivity would actually work and how it would affect those that would be paying more and those that would pay less.

6. Report on Department Head Charter Change Priorities

Attorney Sturtevant said there was a meeting of department heads and that the Mayor's Office has collected the notes from that meeting and is drafting a legislative agenda that will be delivered to the City Council in the fall.

Motion to ask the Mayor's Office to let the Committee know the charter change priorities as soon as possible to have any changes ready by early December.

Motion by Councilor Bergman, without objection.

7. Any Other Committee Business

Councilor Carpenter explained the history of attempted charter changes that would move the power of redistricting away from the legislature. She said that the City of Montpelier changed

the process to redistrict to only require a vote by the voters and not require a bill in the legislature.

The next meeting is set for October 1st at 5:30, location pending.

8. Adjournment

8.01 Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

Motion by Councilor Bergman, without objection.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 PM.

DRAFT