



BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL CHARTER CHANGE COMMITTEE

11/18/2014

Charter Change Committee Meeting

November 18, 2014

MINUTES

Committee Members: Councilor Rachel Siegel (RS), Chair; Councilor Kurt Wright (KW); Councilor Norm Blais (NB)

Staff: Eileen Blackwood (EB)

Other Attendees: none

RS called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

1. **Agenda.** RS asked to amend the agenda to add to #6 size of board and term length. KW moved, NB seconded approval of the amended agenda. Unanimous.
1. **Minutes of 10/27/14.** KW moved, NB seconded approval of the minutes. Unanimous.
1. **Public Forum.** No speakers.
1. **Non-citizens serving on boards and as department heads resolution**—The Committee reviewed the draft resolution. KW noted that “legal voters” on line 8 should be “residents.” The Committee unanimously agreed. RS noted she will not be at the meeting and will be flying, so needs someone else to present this. NB and KW will work it out.
1. **Potential changes to board application.** EB explained some suggestions from Diversity & Equity Core Team about how to make application more accessible to more people and thus attract more diversity. She noted that CEDO interns are currently working on obtaining information from other communities on how they collect demographic information. NB notes that this is like an employment application, and suggested that perhaps HR Director Leonard could give input: Can she work with Kesha and come up with a good application? RS suggested two different applications—one for those with political affiliation required and one without. EB noted the C/T’s Office believes it would be administratively difficult to have 2 separate applications. RS then suggested the application identify which boards require political affiliation and which don’t. KW said that someone from the board of voter registration suggested that city shouldn’t let people write Independent or nothing. NB feels it’s important to have political



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affiliation on the application so that the public knows the affiliation of members of boards. He's concerned the inner circle will always know who's in which party, and if it isn't included on the application, then government isn't being transparent. RS raised the school board, and EB noted the charter says the school board does not have political affiliation listed. KW said that was done in the 90's. RS suggested that CEDO's interns complete their work and then EB (with Public Engagement Specialist Ram and HR Director Leonard) could draft a new application to bring back to the Committee. RS noted that people don't all fill out the section on political affiliation and thus RS feels strongly we should not say it's mandatory if it's not. RS suggested that we include an asterisk and list the boards that require political affiliation. NB said he sees no harm from seeing everyone's political affiliation. Party designation is an important factor in deciding whom to appoint, according to a recent council vote, NB continued. KW said it's a factor—just not THE factor. RS said she's voted against Progressives, so political affiliation's not the determining factor. NB noted that we'd want to know if every applicant for the library board is a Democrat, for example. RS asked that the committee keep the discussion to changes on the application. She then moved that political affiliation be moved farther down the application as suggested by the D&E Core Team and that the application be rewritten to say that political affiliation is mandatory for some and then asterisk which boards.

1. **Discussion concerning requirements of political affiliation, board size, and length of term.** EB provided a chart of these requirements for each CC-appointed board. RS wants to delay discussion of whether or not the boards should require a balance of political affiliation, but discuss size and term length. RS has heard most about the Housing Board that 5 year terms are terrible. KW wants to move it to 3 years, and NB and RS agreed. The idea was raised why not have all of them be 3 years? Some of the boards (BHA, CCRPC, CCTA, CSWD, WVPD) are outside the council's jurisdiction, but otherwise the Committee would like to change all the others to a uniform 3 year term.

RS wants to reach out to the chairs before she does this. KW and NB noted that even opposition from the chairs might not change their minds that this is a good idea, but they felt the committee should reach out and get input from the boards. EB will send out an email asking all board chairs if their commission has feedback. RS would request the chair to bring it before each board. KW and NB it's up to the chair to decide how to get the feedback from his/her board. RS thinks that's hierarchical. NB & KW would like to do a charter change for the March ballot. RS asked that the email ask for input from members of the board, please let us know by a date certain.

RS has heard concerns that Parks and Police boards should be more than 5 members. KW asked who has said this, and RS said public. NB said what about cemetery commission? RS suggested the email could ask about size too. KW would want to hear from past chairs about how boards have been working. RS also mentioned that the D&E Strategic Plan calls for the next 2 appointments to the Police Commission be people of color, and she is concerned how this can happen and be maintained if there are only 5 members. NB agrees that he would like input from those involved in governing, as it is sometimes harder to get work accomplished with a larger body. He was interested in having this committee invite former board chairs to come to talk to it about the size of the boards. RS suggested the next meeting be scheduled for an evening and that the committee invite all board chairs to come to discuss size. She thinks the committee ought to ask about all 3 issues—size, length of term, and political affiliation. Why not ask? NB and KW don't think this needs to be linked to term length and want to be sure that issue gets to the council in time for a charter change. RS is concerned that if the decision is already made on one issue and input is not taken, that's not good. RS doesn't think that inviting the chairs to come speak to this committee is prohibitive of getting on March ballot. RS thinks there's time for an evening meeting the second week of Dec. and then a draft could be done in time for the 12/15 council meeting. EB suggested that might be a bit tight, but the uniform term limit could be drafted now, and a meeting set for the first week of Dec. to get on the ballot.



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1. **Other Business.** The Committee discussed holding an evening meeting the 1st week of Dec. The decision was to schedule a meeting for Wed. 12/3 at 5:30 pm until 8 pm and to invite all the boards and commissions to discuss size, term length, and political affiliation and to say that the committee is interested in changing all terms to 3 years. EB will draft this email and send to RS to review.
1. The meeting was adjourned at 11:04 am.