



City of Cleveland Heights

Charter Review Commission

Decisions and Rationales

29 March 2018
Council Chambers
Cleveland Heights City Hall

Charter Review Commission: Present; Patrycia Ajdukiewicz, Craig Cobb, Michael Gaynier, Howard Maier, John Newman, Jr., Chair, Carla Rautenberg, Vince Reddy, Maia Rucker, Katherine Solender, James Vail, Sarah West. Absent: Jessica Cohen, Randy Keller, David Perelman, Allosious Snodgrass

1. Acceptance of Decisions and Rationales from 15 March 2018

Moved and seconded to accept the Decisions and Rationales 15 March 2018.
Accepted unanimously.

2. Discussion among Commission Members regarding interim status of Thinking on Manager/Mayor and Council Items

Maia Rucker, who had not been present at the last meeting where current thinking on forms of government was shared by the members, commented briefly on the present direction of her thinking, which had yet come to a firm landing. Carla Rautenberg, as a supplement to her comments at the previous meeting, then shared her thinking on election by wards versus at large elections of council, which in turn prompted certain questions and discussion by other members bearing on that topic.

3. Interview, question and answer session, Bud Hilf, Member, Euclid Charter Review Commission

Mr. Hilf described the background and process of Euclid's charter review, which took place over a roughly two-year period, at the end of which the commission voted 6-3 to change from the existing strong mayor system to a council-manager system, a recommendation that did not bind the city council, which has not chosen to put the issue on the ballot. He explained how and why the issue of form of government arose in the first place, certain arguments advanced on either side, and his views as to why the decision was reached. He noted that there are nine council seats, eight elected by ward and the

president elected at large, the structure having replaced an earlier more evenly split mixed ward/at large system that had drawn a federal voting rights lawsuit. He observed that there is an authorized management position for an administrative director but it is not always filled. He commented on mayor/council salaries and his views on the ward system as well as Euclid's recent population trend. Following the session, he shared certain documents that had been e distributed to the Euclid commission on forms of government, which have now been circulated to members of this Commission.

4. Interview, question and answer session, John Zagara, Zagara Marketplace and Cedar-Lee Special Improvement District (SID)

Mr. Zagara described how and why the Cedar-Lee SID started (formed after seeing the actions of the Coventry SID), its geographic reach, its leadership by a consultant/executive director, and various of its interactions with the city. It is funded in its operations by supplemental charges tacked on to the property taxes of businesses in the SID, based on street frontages, these amounts then being funneled back to the SID; with additional targeted efforts, these funds are then augmented by grants from various levels of government. The first five years involved “getting [the SID's] act together;” the next five involved planning; and since then it has been executing on the plan, with beautification and parking being early items of focus. The SID has worked with city staff for most issues, with a staff member typically attending meetings of the SID's board. He offered his views on the skill set, leadership and time commitment that could and should be reasonably expected from an elected mayor in contrast to his expectations from an appointed leader dealing with day-to-day details of running the city, all in the context of a part-time council. He noted that he had not read the Master Plan.

5. Interview, question and answer session, Steve Presser, Big Fun and Coventry Special Improvement District (SID)

Mr. Presser described the genesis, geographic reach, and purpose of the Coventry SID, which was the first in the Cleveland area and the second in Ohio. It is funded in a manner similar to that of the Cedar-Lee SID, and has a consultant/executive director. He noted the relationship of the SID with city staff, who attend SID meetings, and the ongoing tightness of city funding resources. He acknowledged the need for process in development activities, which can be time consuming, but also noted the need for energy and vision in government. He expressed his views on the potential for a system that included an elected mayor and also on the potential for having a portion of the council elected from wards, and the impact that might have on the Coventry SID. He had not read the Master Plan, but commented generally on the desirability of such a mechanism and the importance of follow-through.

6. Consideration of Additional Information Gathering

It was noted that George Maier, who has served on charter review commissions in Mentor (a council-manager city), will meet with the Commission on the 17th of May. Contacts have been, or are in the process of being made, with Brenda May (Noble Neighbors) and Tom Malone, former Finance Director. Mr. Malone has served in both strong mayor and council-manager systems. Karen Knittel will be contacted for presentation on the Master Plan. Certain other names were suggested as possibilities for invitations to make individual appearances and will potentially be considered, depending on timing and further assessment of needs. Paul Volpe and Peter Ruben will be contacted for a developers' panel targeted for May 3. A third developer will be contacted, with potential follow-up on the suggestion of a developer by a member.

It was noted that the Commission would have an opportunity to meet in a previously unplanned session with the Executive Director of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Marc Ott, at 6:00 PM on Thursday, April 19. The Commission agreed with arranging a session, but also directed that there be an effort to move the session to a 5:30 PM start.

7. Update on Planning for Community Meeting

In further planning for the April 19 community meeting, the suggestion was made that in order to provide more opportunity for discussion at the meeting, the program include attention to only the first two previously listed questions, not three. The Commission agreed to the revised format.

A question was raised about the description of the strengths and weaknesses of the plans as set out in the PowerPoint drafted by the facilitator for use at the community meeting. After discussion, the Commission agreed to add “not elected by the voters” as a weakness to the council-manager system and “elected by the voters” as a strength to the strong mayor system.

It was also suggested that there be a handout at the meeting to provide information about the Commission's process and related matters, as a supplement to the PowerPoint.

Additional work will be done by the group spearheading the planning to put the PowerPoint and other materials in final shape and to deal with the logistical and other final details required for a successful meeting.

8. Supplementary Questions to Councilmembers

Following discussion, including certain questions about wisdom or necessity of circulating one of the three supplemental questions for members of council that had been set out on the agenda, it was determined to proceed with all questions, to be circulated by the facilitator.

9. Public Comment

Four persons presented public comments. Harriet Applegate discussed proportional representation (also known as rank choice voting) for electing an at-large council, explaining its genesis, its purpose, and how it works, and noting its use for many years in the past in Cincinnati and currently in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bob Jeffres spoke on his view of the present form of government – council-manager and at large council -- and the reasoning behind those views. Tony Cuda made observations about the unveiling of a project to renovate Mayfield road attended by representatives of certain other nearby cities but not Cleveland Heights. He also commented on a strong mayor system, part-time council, function v. theory, relative democracy, relative speed in dealing with municipal issues in Cleveland Heights versus certain other cities, including recovering property values. Deborah Van Kleef commented on potential attendance by Commission members at meetings of the city council committee of the whole.

10. Adjournment

Committee agreed by consent to adjourn after the last public comment.