



City of Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission

Submissions to the Commission

Committee of the Whole
20 June 2018

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The following messages and other materials have been submitted to the Facilitator since the last sharing of Submissions. The materials are ordered by date received.

1. Diane Hallum – Message 7 June 2018

Dear Prof. Keller:

As a 25-year resident of the Noble Road community I am troubled that you are giving voice to Brenda May.

1. The Noble Neighbors group is not a democratic group in that Ms. May was not elected by residents who live in the northern part of this city nor by the members of that group, a group of which I have been since before it was called "Noble Neighbors". Residents living in our neighborhood are not informed of the structure, operations, decisions, or actions taken by Ms. May or this group. We are unaware of just who sits on the board of this non-profit and are unaware of the content of its articles of incorporation or bylaws. Repeatedly, we, even those who are members of this group, have been stunned to find out just what issues and decisions made by the city that "Noble Neighbors supports"; stunned because we were never asked about our views on those issues and by the fact that "support" was often contrary to the desires, needs, and hopes of many who live here.

2. In the Spring of 2014, the city planned to hold a meeting with residents from the north side of the city following a spate of crime and violence and the increasing anger of hundreds of northside residents related to crime, vacant businesses and homes,

vandalism and lack of investment by the city in our area. Discussed in the Council of the Whole meeting of April 4, 2014, the city under Council's request were arranging a meeting at the Cleveland Heights Community Center in order to hear directly from them [1st Noble Neighborhood Meeting.jpg]. At that meeting, Council planned on holding that meeting in June 2014.

However, after I shared this meeting information with over 200 people on my citizens' group email list who lived on the north side of Cleveland Heights, Councilman Jeffrey Coryell told me one week later that Brenda May and Cynthia Griggins, two residents on the north side who were holding meetings with about 60 residents in the area about all our concerns, had agreed with Tanisha Briley to, instead, hold the meeting at the Police Academy on April 29, 2014. I asked Brenda about this and she told me that the city would invite only those who lived near the Monticello Blvd-Noble Road intersection. This decision eliminated $\frac{3}{4}$ of the frustrated, angry, and fearful residents that live on the north side of Cleveland Heights who had originally planned to attend that original Community Center meeting that would have been held 2 weeks later.

That was the moment that the city decided that Brenda May was to be the "voice" of residents who live on the north side of the city.

If you are interested, I am also providing the city's summary of that meeting [Actual Noble Road Meeting.pdf]. You can see that after 4 years, we, the citizens North of Mayfield still have the same complaints, frustrations, anger, and crime.

3. Since that time, the City Manager and Council have extended a great deal of effort to promote Brenda May as the "leader" of the "Noble Neighbors". This effort began behind closed doors on March 14, 2014 with the first private meeting between Tanisha Briley and Brenda May, a meeting mentioned in subsequent March 18 2014 emails. The fact of this meeting was never shared with us, the group. Their emails also referred to our little group of 60 residents as "Noble Neighbors". They forgot to inform Brenda's co-leader, however, because on the same day, Cynthia Griggins still referred to our group as "North of Mayfield" in a March 18, 2014 email to Council members. The group did not vote on an actual name until April 22, 2014.

4. The cozy relationship Ms. May has built up with Council members include the following:

When Michael Ungar was running for his Council seat, Ms. May posted on the Noble Neighbors web site that Ungar was responsible for shutting down an illegally operated dump site in East Cleveland. The facts are that the Ohio EPA and the Cuyahoga County Health department had initiated and conducted the investigation and work to shut down that dump site a year before Mr. Ungar raised this issue locally. I had even forwarded that background information to him to let him know who he might contact if he wanted to know more. The problem legally is that this promotion of a candidate is counter to state laws for a tax-exempt non-profit.

Beginning around November 2016, Brenda May, as a representative of Noble Neighbors, was asked by Cheryl Stephens to participate in a group to alter the form of government in the city of Cleveland Heights. The work of that group is what led to the creation of this Charter Review Commission. Email records demonstrate that Ms. May had been providing summaries of the conversations, deliberations, and plans of that group of citizens in emails to Carol Roe, Melissa Yasinow and Michael Ungar without the knowledge of that group. In one email, Ms. May even mocked the people in that group with whom she was representing herself as being a sincere member [Brenda-Clandestine committee.jpg]. She even went out of her way to assure Roe and Yasinow of her fealty to them to counter the comments made by one of those civic-minded citizens [Brenda-Fealty to Roe-Yasinow.jpg].

My comments are not to take away the extensive hard work that Ms. May has done to create the "We are Noble" event every May. However, that work does not translate into representing those who live and work on this side of the city. The sad fact is that Noble Neighbors has become a tool for the city and Ms. May to promote her rather than being an organization that has dealt with the issues around which that "citizens' group" had initially formed around. In the four years since the city chose only to speak with Ms. May back in April 2014, thus anointing her as its "leader", our area still faces the same level of crime, housing issues, and lack of allocation of resources by the city.

For these reasons, Ms. May should not be viewed or presented as a representative of residents who live on the north side of Cleveland Heights.

Regards,
Diane L. Hallum
1059 Oxford Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44121

Appendix 1

First Hallum Document

TO : TANISHA R. BRILEY , CITY MANAGER

**FROM : CYNTHIA JOHNSTON , NOBLE CR , JANET HOFFMAN,OXFORD CR,
SUSANNA NIERMANN O'NEIL , COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR**

RE : COMMUNITY MEETING STAFF SUMMARY

DATE : MAY 1 , 2014

BASIC SUMMARY:

- Meeting was held at the Police Academy on April 29,2014; Time 7:00pm-9:00pm
- 82 residents signed in , however 126 chairs were filled.
- 28 streets were represented: Allston, Atherstone, Beverly, Bluestone,Cambridge, Elbon, Fenley, Inglewood, Keystone, Langton, Lecona, Monticello, Montford, Navahoe, Noble,Nobleshire, Northampton, Oakridge, Oxford, Pembrook, Pennfield, Quilliams, Roanoke , Rushleigh, Sylvania ,Woodridge, Woodview, Yellowstone. Businesses: Noble Food Deal , HRRC, Eloff Law. Church: Bethel Baptist
- Officials present: Council: Wilcox, Boyd, Coryell, Dunbar, Stein, Yasinow. City Manager Briley
- 35 residents spoke

SUMMARY OF ISSUES EXPRESSED BY RESIDENTS:

- Concern about increased crime; the police are responsive but there is fear and uneasiness about safety.
- Vacant houses in the area are a problem that are effecting property values; enforce violations; Residents maintain their homes
- Many residents have lived here for 20+years; they want the community feel back let us work together
- Promote the area (houses and business district) more in publications and with the real estate industry
- More programs for youth; better promotion of the Scholarship program
- Noble Road and roads in the neighborhood are crumbling; need more attention ;
- The Noble Monticello business district needs attention; bring in better businesses; the bars and gas station are attracting problems
- Need for a strategy for litter issues and beautification

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS OF THE 35 RESIDENTS (in order):

#1: Commercial vehicles in residential areas should be ticketed, ie, Taylor Road, Northampton

#2: Lived here for 30 years – “Feel that this area is forgotten by the City”; people are afraid; what about a beat cop?; are we at a tipping point?; City must send resources to this area of the City not just to the west area; Home devaluation is a real problem;

#3: These are the best police , so responsive but they need help;

#4: Concerned about crime and safety issues; does not feel safe walking in the area; the police response has been great but that is after something happens

#5: Vacant empty houses are a real problem; Do something about absentee landlords; trash is everywhere; put pressure on CMHA; solve the Section 8 nonsense.

#6: The Clark gas station is an eyesore; do something; police response has been great

#7: Concern about breakins; when will Noble Road be fixed?

#8: Housing issues – vacant houses! Inconsistent inspections , he was inspected and had violations but he sees apt buildings and two families in terrible shape.

#9: Do not let the neighborhood go down; crime and trash!; “I am not leaving let’s work together”.

#10: Staff and police are working hard; Courts are not aggressive with warrants; they are not doing the job. The message must be “You better be responsible if you live in Cleveland Heights”.

#11: Afraid – will not even go to the Cedar Lee during the day; lot behind Mario’s and the old Golden Coins needs repair; afraid to go there too.

#12: Litter and infrastructure problems; Atherstone water line is still a problem! Do something about behavior: we need more families; the behavior in school is a problem.

#13: What can we do about litter? Vacant houses have raccoons in them; need to secure them; saw a policeman with a gun looking for a suspect it was scary.

#14: PR for the City says \$90,000 to \$1million. What a joke! Even before the national financial collapse our houses were losing value. Why is the City subsidizing other areas like Turkey Ridge? ;Why doesn’t the Relocation guide feature Noble-Nela and Noble-

Monticello like it does the other commercial areas? Our neighborhood is 5 census tracts , we deserve more recognition.

#15 : Youth have too much time on their hands; Give us something to do; We need jobs; make Noble school into a Community Center.

#16: Drug dealers at the Gas station; I testified at the hearing at least there is a fence now between my business and the gas station; youth are wearing “colors” to identify groups; this business area is just a step child; beautification efforts must happen for the area; where did the ornamental grass go on the median?

#17: Start ticketing the youth walking in the street for jaywalking; they have no respect for drivers.

#18: Would like to see more patrols; vacant houses and unkempt lawns are an issue; hire youth to cleanup the yards

#19: Noble Road and side streets are a mess; too many kids everywhere disrespecting people

#20: Council predecided the Turkey Ridge CRA and now wants to give it to Cedar Fairmount – what about us?; sick of kids with their pants hanging down; do not ignore us; make something happen;

#21: Get someone in to market our neighborhood; we have affordable housing for young families; neighbors must look out for each other.

#22: Research our district and talk to the businesses that are here- what do they need; cut crime in the neighborhoods with more citizen involvement; do something proactive about litter; the housing docket is not efficient. We need a short term plan for the summer followed by a mid term and long term plan; “ I am a good member of the Village but the Village is tired.”

#23: Trash day aftermath is a mess; research what South Euclid is doing with mechanized trash containers

#24: Came to this City for diversity but laws must be enforced; need more police patrols; police can sit in my driveway if they need a place to observe

#25: The yard waste issue: why do the crews push the yard waste bags into the street for pickup and not come back for hours; it is a mess

#26: Resident works with youth and often tells them to “watch their language” they do comply; but the whole atmosphere has become depressing; took child out of Oxford school over behavior concerns

#27: Taxes are so high; get out there and report violations; do something about the bars

#28: Food Deal is not a nuisance; why will it be shut down? It is a neighborhood store.(employee)

#29: City should evaluate the funding of the police department – more money into the detective bureau and less in ticketing; improve the dispatchers

#30: If the police come down hard on youth behavior there will be a backlash of accused harassment; we need solutions for youth; cannot afford Rec Center; never heard of the Scholarship program; are the business owners involved in keeping the area solid?

#31: Everyone needs to look out for each other; many of the problems and the youth issues are caused by people who do not live here

#32: Can video surveillance signs be put up (even if there are no cameras really there?); can there be graduated taxes for our areas; why are other areas getting tax breaks?

#33: There will be a cleanup on June 7th ; CVS has donated bags; Community Relations is printing the flyers for distribution

#34: Need more police; glad the City has police dogs; have the police talked to the post office mailmen they know what is going on in these houses; tired of the kids in the street “they think they own it”.

#35: Bethel Baptist wants to be part of the solution; can vacant homes be opened up to the Butanese people now in rentals on Noble; Diversity is something we all cherish.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMENTS OF OFFICIALS:

BOYD: Juvenile diversion and mentoring programs have begun

BRILEY: Yard waste issues are being addressed; City is attempting to move up the Noble Road rehab

WILCOX: Every Council member is at large ; we all live here; we are here to listen to you and to work together ; we know you want to make things better for yourselves and your neighbors; Know your neighbors; call the police if you see anything of concern; further dialogue will come.

WAGNER: The Clark gas station at Noble and Roanoke is scheduled for demolition; it has been a difficult process due to ownership issues.

CR STAFF SUGGESTIONS:

- **Ongoing coordination between City and neighbors for the June 7th cleanup**
- **Street contacts encouraged to have street meetings with emphasis on know your neighbor and when to call police**
- **Rebeautify the median strip at Noble-Monticello**
- **Increased information about the area in the relocation guide; realtor meeting regarding the affordable housing in the area**
- **Increased promotion of the Scholarship fund (although many funds have gone to the youth in the area).**
- ***Meet the Police* once a month at the Police Academy**

Appendix 2

Second Hallum Document

- Interviews were held on Thursday with two responsive firms and references are being checked before a selection is made.

5. NOBLE NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING – TUESDAY, MAY 20TH

- Per Council's request, staff is planning a community meeting for the Noble neighborhood. Due to space and accessibility requirements, we are planning to host the meeting at the Community Center. Invitations will be extended to neighbors along Noble Road (one block north and one block south) from Selwyn to Mayfield. We will make contact with all the churches and organized neighborhood groups in the area to assist us in the promotion effort. The meeting will be facilitated by staff and the goal is to hear directly from residents about the challenges and opportunities in their neighborhood to use as a baseline in what we hope will become a community plan.

6. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

- A meeting of city officials from Lyndhurst, Shaker Heights, Pepper Pike, Beachwood, University Heights and Cleveland Heights (South Euclid was invited

Appendix 3

Third Hallum Document

 Charter Review meeting notes 3-20-17.pdf
494K

 Letter to City Regarding Charter Review Commission.pdf
351K

Brenda H. May <b2may@juno.com>
To: caroejd@aol.com, melissa.a.yasinow@gmail.com

Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 9:53 AM

FYI

Carol, your point in another conversation about ALL city commission members being appointed by council may need to be reaffirmed in future city-wide communications. The strange assumption in this email and drafted letter is that council will act as a unified body only appointing people who will favor the city manager form of government. So, once again, here's more fodder with which to craft your public communications. The other stunningly bizarre assumption is that only this clandestine committee has the wisdom to influence the appointment of fair-minded people, all of which, of course, favor an elected mayor form of government. Sigh.

Brenda H. May

Please note: forwarded message attached

From: "Robert Brown" <citybobbrown@gmail.com>
To: <rdavislovejoy@gmail.com>, <susanefroymson@gmail.com>, <tlfarmerjr@gmail.com>, <b2may@juno.com>, <judith.miles@att.net>, <earlpike@yahoo.com>, <carla@simmertildone.net>, <julian_rogers@hotmail.com>, <Seku13@yahoo.com>
Subject: RE: Charter Review Decisions

Appendix 4

Fourth Hallum Document

Brenda H. May <b2may@juno.com>
To: caroejd@aol.com, melissa.a.yasinow@gmail.com

Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 11:06 PM

Bob misunderstood something I said in the meeting to mean I wanted to continue with the petition effort. I have not corrected him yet. FYI to both of you, I will not offer a petition to anyone. Not that there is a petition to offer, which gives me liberty at the moment to wait to correct Bob's misunderstanding.

Brenda H. May

Please note: forwarded message attached

From: "Robert Brown" <citybobbrown@gmail.com>
To: "Brenda H. May" <b2may@juno.com>
Cc: <Carla@Simmertildone.net>, <susanefroymson@gmail.com>, <earlpike@yahoo.com>, <rdavislovejoy@gmail.com>, <Seku13@yahoo.com>, <lfarmerjr@gmail.com>, <julian_rogers@hotmail.com>, <judith.miles@att.net>
Subject: RE: FINAL Charter Review Letter
Date: Tue, 28 Mar 2017 23:00:30 -0400

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Robert Brown <citybobbrown@gmail.com>
To: "Brenda H. May" <b2may@juno.com>
Cc: <Carla@simmertildone.net>, <susanefroymson@gmail.com>, <earlpike@yahoo.com>, <rdavislovejoy@gmail.com>, <Seku13@yahoo.com>, <lfarmerjr@gmail.com>, <julian_rogers@hotmail.com>, <judith.miles@att.net>
Bcc:
Date: Tue, 28 Mar 2017 23:00:30 -0400
Subject: RE: FINAL Charter Review Letter

Thanks Brenda. Since we had no letter to review at the meeting, I wanted to give everyone a chance to review the letter before making a final decision. As you said, from your comments at the meeting, I did expect that you would choose not to sign the letter, choosing instead to stay with the petition initiative rather than offering to become part of the City Charter Review Commission. Regardless, I know that your participation will be valuable.

Robert N. Brown, FAICP

citybobbrown@gmail.com

www.citybobbrown.com

2. Message from Diane Hallum – 11 June 2018

I have been unable to keep up on the meetings of this very important Commission, so I apologize for submitting another comment so soon after the most recent.

I just read about the letter sent to the Commission by Roe, Ungar, Yasinow, and Dunbar about Seren's comments to the Commission.

I have been requesting public records from the city related to this commission for some time. Those public records revealed the hypocrisy of the above Council members as it relates to the law, the regard and respect they have for this City's Charter, and just how they hoped to control every aspect of the Charter rewrite from beginning to end.

In summary those records reveal the following important facts:

4/25/2017: Council voted to create the CRC legislation.

6/24/2017: The day according to the City Charter that the city could legally act on that legislation and create a Commission.

However, the law means nothing to certain Council members that include Roe, Yasinow, Ungar and Dunbar:

May 2-4, 2017: Ungar with Roe's and Yasinow's encouragement invites 3 people to apply for Commission; two currently sit on Commission: Commission Chair Jack Newman and Craig Cobb. Jack Newman applied only after receiving assurance from city he could not be sued for his work on the Commission.

4/25/2017: Yasinow sends out numerous invites to people to apply for the Commission, five of whom now sit on the Commission. Roe also sends out personal invites that include Gaynier. It appears the people Dunbar invited did not want to participate in this "effort".

Of 57 "applicants" to be on the Commission 20% did not apply under their own volition.

Of those that now sit on the Commission, 60% were specifically invited by Yasinow, Roe, Ungar and Dunbar through her work with the other three. These include Newman, Doell, Solender, Keller, Cohen, Perelman, Cobb, Gaynier, and Rucker. Most of these, along with Vail, donated to the 2016 election campaigns of Ungar and/or Yasinow, with Gaynier also being Yasinow's campaign treasurer and now acting treasurer for Roe's future election campaign.

A few others appointed have been close allies with Dunbar and have served on several previous city Committees, Commissions, and Boards. Only Snodgrass, West and Rautenberg had no strong ties, loyalty or demonstrable fealty to City Hall or Council based on public records.

I took note of Yasinow's comments about the work of this Commission back on November 1, 2017:

"The city's constitution deserves to be treated with respect and all ensuing discussions should be open, transparent, and thorough."

Yet, they stomped all over the City's Constitution by acting on legislation that hadn't even been voted on by Council by inviting people the first week of May.

They then spat on the Charter again on May 25, 2017 when Council voted to pass the CRC legislation by sending out a flurry of invitations the same day, an act contrary to Section 8 of the City Charter which mandates a 30-day waiting period before enacting any legislation.

Still further, the selection of Commission members was to be done by the whole Council at one of its meetings; yet the Council Administrative Committee (Roe, Dunbar, Ungar, Stephens) with Yasinow present met and voted on their "personal" and group choices in a private meeting outside of the whole Council.

Public records obtained from these Council members use of private emails to conduct the public's business revealed these abuses of power yet the same people dare to complain when another Councilman practices his rights to speak his mind based on his knowledge and own personal experiences working with these people.

My strength is too low currently to copy the related records that substantiate my comments. I can do that later should anyone request them. I believe Seren has the same records if not more.

3. Message from Bob Brown – 12 June 2018

Larry, Jack and Susanna:

Attached is a statement I'm submitting to the Charter Review Commission. Its main topic addresses questions that have been raised about the objectivity of articles that I have been writing for the Heights Observer on the Commission's meetings. Thanks for all of the work you are doing on this project.

Appendix 5

Brown Statement

OBJECTIVITY?

I have been writing articles for the Heights Observer, covering the meetings of the Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission (CRC). Like other local residents who write articles for the Observer, I am a volunteer. I also volunteer for the FutureHeights organization.

Unlike some reporters, I have also expressed an opinion on a key issue that is being debated in the meetings I am covering. That issue is whether Cleveland Heights should have a popularly elected full-time mayor, rather than the current seven part-time city council members who appoint a full-time city manager.

I have expressed support for this change to an elected mayor. I have remained undecided, however, on the other major governance issue facing the CRC. That issue is whether the current at-large members of city council should include some members elected by ward or district.

A few people have questioned how I can do both – writing objective articles on the meetings of the CRC and expressing an opinion on one of the key issues facing the group. Because I have stated my position publicly, I am doubly careful to avoid letting my opinion color the articles in any way. After each meeting of the CRC, I review my notes, consult the online video, and then work hard to write what I consider to be a fair and objective summary of the meeting. For example, when a particular issue has been debated at the meeting, I am careful to give both sides of an argument equal coverage in the article. Considering this issue of journalistic objectivity more broadly, I realize that journalists are human beings who are engaged in the world around them and often have personal views on the subjects that they cover in news articles that they write. That is inevitable. Journalists who write news articles typically do not share their personal views publicly. In this instance, I have shared my personal views publicly, which, in one sense, alerts readers to look for any bias in my articles. I think that this is a good thing with respect to transparency.

Prior to the creation of the CRC, I was part of a small group of Cleveland Heights residents who were considering a petition drive to place key changes in our local government on the ballot.

When the city decided to form the CRC, I and three other members of our group wrote a letter to the city council saying that, out of consideration for the city's decision to form a CRC, we had decided to drop our participation in a petition process. Three of us then applied to for membership on the CRC.

None of the three of us was selected to be a member of the CRC. City council, particularly its leadership group, made it clear that members of the CRC should be citizens who did not have a pre-conceived position on any of the major charter amendment issues.

Although that policy seems understandable, I believe that citizens who have been civically engaged in Cleveland Heights are likely to have formed opinions on many local issues. Because a charter review group should include many citizens who have been civically engaged, I believe that a more appropriate criterion for membership would be whether potential members could show that they would be open-minded on the issues and could

remain open to changing any pre-conceived positions during the course of the CRC process.

Just because a citizen hadn't spoken publicly on these issues doesn't mean that he or she had no pre-conceived notions. In fact, in attending the CRC meetings, I have sensed that most of members came into the process believing that the current council-manager system should remain in place unless convincing evidence was presented to the contrary.

That is fine, but it seems – and I may be wrong – that only two of the 15 CRC members came into the process with pre-conceived support for change.

Personally, I supported the current council-manager form of government until a few years ago, when I retired from full-time work as a city planner in Cleveland, and started to get engaged in my home community of Cleveland Heights.

What got me thinking about the need for a bolder, more decisive, more agile form of government – which I believe is more likely to come from a government led by a popularly elected full-time mayor – was the way the city handled or failed to handle the bankruptcy and partial collapse of Severance Center.

I was one of several people who urged the city to step in while the property was in receivership and put a plan on the table with a package of possible incentives for a developer interested in the kind of transformation that I believe Severance needs if it is to become an asset for the community.

When the city failed to take this kind of action and sat back to let the private market take its course, what I and others predicted did, in fact, come to pass, as the property was purchased by an owner known to buy distressed properties cheaply and then invest very little money in redeveloping and transforming those properties.

That experience led me to see how the Cleveland Heights city government seemed to be too slow-moving and somewhat risk averse on a number of issues. It became apparent to me that the problem was not necessarily the people in our city government, but it was our city manager form of government.

I began to see the city manager form of government as appropriate for very stable communities, in which efficient management is the greatest need. In contrast, I began to see that the city manager form of government is not optimal in communities like Cleveland Heights, which – despite tremendous assets – are facing issues like declining population, housing foreclosures, declining property values, rising poverty, etc.

Like many other citizens who have shared opinions with the CRC, I have come to favor a local government led by a popularly elected mayor who works with city council to set a vision and policies for the community, while a professional chief administrator manages day-to-day operations and services.

It is because I consider the work of the CRC to be of such critical importance for Cleveland Heights that I chose to attend all of the meetings and write articles about the work of the group. Although I cannot delete all opinions on this subject from my brain, I will continue being scrupulous in making my news article objective.

4. Message from Michael Bennett – 12 June 2018

Dr. Keller, please include the attached (the text is also pasted below) as a submission to the Charter Review Commission. You may also note that I have submitted it as an Opinion Piece to the Heights Observer.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks so much.

Michael

Michael E. Bennett
(216) 408-3874
mebennett@outlook.com

June 12, 2018

TO: Heights Observer letters to the editor

FROM: Michael Bennett

Charter Commission: discuss before deciding

Months of opinion-gathering and fact-finding by the Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission went to waste at its June 7 meeting.

Instead of engaging in thoughtful discussion about our city's form of government and an evaluation of hundreds of comments from residents, commission members stated their preferences, with a majority in support of preserving the current city manager-council form. This derailed the conversation, discomfited several commission members, and did little to move the process forward. A bit of conversation surfaced toward the end of the meeting, but the damage was done; the tenor was such that anyone even considering an elected mayor form of government had little ground on which to take a stand.

I urge the commission to get the deliberation train back on a better track at its June 21 meeting and beyond, for this and all other charter issues. Potential charter changes are too important to let several people's strongly and frequently expressed opinions preclude open and honest deliberation among all.

My understanding was that commission members were chosen because they had no preconceived ideas of what charter changes would best serve residents. They spent months interviewing elected officials, stakeholders and others, and convened a community town hall meeting and online survey.

Yet there was no discussion of all that information before opinions started flying around June 7. At least one member (and perhaps more) did not even know about a

32-page report detailing the solicited community opinion, which overwhelmingly favored an elected mayor form of government; there was no reference to any of the thoughtful comments it contained on both sides of the debate.

Commission members have selflessly given a lot of time and attention to this vital public service. I am grateful for their role and appreciate any toll it has taken on their lives at home, work or other volunteer engagements. But now is not the time to shy away from more hard work (there was a reference at the meeting that it would be easier to avoid major changes).

At some point, yes, they will need to take a stand and a vote. Well before then, or even well before a show of hands indicating which way they are leaning on any issue, they should discuss and deliberate all the evidence they have gathered, starting from a point of neutrality.

They could, for instance, review and discuss key takeaways or questions they had from the lineup of speakers the past months. They could delve into the 32-page report and spend an entire meeting reviewing it to gauge the temperature of the community they represent. They could openly discuss comments from residents and council members that have been posted as “Submissions to the Commission” -- hopefully members have been reading and absorbing the information, but it is too valuable to not see the light of day in open discussion.

Charter reviews don't happen often – the charter says City Council only has to determine once every 10 years whether or not to appoint a review commission. I hope the commission will take sufficient time to deliberate carefully. I hope even more residents will engage in the process, either by attending commission meetings, submitting written filings to the commission, and sharing their thoughts with City Council members – who ultimately will take action on any recommendations the commission offers. Details are at Clevelandheights.com – click on the “Charter Review Commission” link.

Michael Bennett

*Contact info, not for publication: 2914 Hampshire Road, Cleveland Heights;
mebennett@outlook.com, (216) 592-2426*

5. Message from Mark Chupp – 18 June 2018

I attended the last Commission meeting and was struck with how unclear it was how the group would process their views and arrive at a set of recommendations. I took up Jessica Cohen's suggestion in the meeting to focus on what were the original issues that led to the formation of the Commission.

Please see the attached proposed process that includes a simple worksheet (table) for each Commission member to fill out. The first step would be to reach some agreement on what the 4-5 key issues are that the commission is trying to address.

I'm happy to discuss this process and even help facilitate, if called upon. Please use it and distribute it as you see fit.

Thanking you for all the work you are doing in this important effort,

Mark Chupp
2924 Edgehill Rd
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

Appendix 6

Chupp Matrix

Cleveland Heights

Charter Review Commission

Proposed Process for Individual Members Arriving at Recommendations

Mark Chupp

1. What are the criteria by which the decision will be made? Ideally, the Commission will reach consensus on the primary issues (or problems to solve) that must be addressed (e.g. that led to the formation of the Commission).
2. How would each form of government address each issue within each form of government? Each member will have their own sense of how the forms of government can best address each concern. (Each Commission member should fill in all boxes).

Issue or Problem to Address	Strong Mayor	Weak Mayor
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
Issue or Problem to Address	3 Wards, 4 at-large Council	7 at-large Council Members
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

3. For each criteria (issue), each member reviews their responses and selects the form of government that he/she feels provides the best solution. Then total scores across all issues.
4. The commission discusses each issue and the members’ individual results. Discussion questions:
 - What does each form of government address best?
 - What is most important to address?
 - Are there some issues that can only be addressed by one form and not another?