

MINUTES
CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021
7:00 P.M. – Tallmadge Municipal Building
46 North Avenue, Tallmadge, OH

1. **Call to Order:**
Chairperson Raber: It is now 7:00 p.m. and I would like to call to order the January 25th meeting of the Charter Review Commission.
2. **Roll Call:** Steve Clark, Helen Fire, Bob Higham, Katie Lindhe, Serif Krkic, Megan Raber, Ted Roy, Kimberly Sabetta, Randy Sarvis, Meghan Thompson, Mary Tricaso – all present.
3. **Approval of Minutes – January 11, 2021:** Mary Tricaso moved to approve the minutes. Seconded Meghan Thompson. Voice vote 12-0. **The January 11, 2021 minutes were approved by a vote of 12-0.**
Chairperson Raber: Before we begin, we do have an agenda addition. We do need to have Mayor Kline swear us in as members to the Charter Commission.
Mayor: I would like to thank all of the Charter members for joining and I do have to swear you in, so if you will please raise your right hand and repeat after me. The Mayor then swore in the members of the Charter Review Commission.
4. **Public Input:**
Chairperson Raber: First up on the agenda tonight we have Public Input, and we did have someone from the public to register for that; Councilman Dennis Loughry has asked to speak tonight and for the members of the public, we do have, or will have the ability to speak at every meeting. During Public Input there will be a section on the agenda for public input and so all you need to do, because we are doing these virtually, is to register with the Clerk of Council prior to the meeting by 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. We are in the process of trying to create a form to make it easy for the public to submit that registration so they get the link for the meeting to actually participate and then for everyone else, if you don't want speak at the meeting, you can always submit something in writing or you can always watch it livestreamed through the City's website or on the City YouTube channel. So, at this time I would ask Councilman Loughry if he would like to join us and go ahead with his input.
Mr. Loughry: First off, I had talked with Mrs. Raber today and we just went over some things, but secondly, I want to thank all of you on the commission for volunteering your time. I know you all and I respect you all and I am friends with most of you; I'm almost related to one and so with that being said, I really think that, and I told Megan this today, if you are a structure and a policy geek like I am that this is by far the most important thing that we do in our City and we only do it every ten years and so I am just really thankful for all of you volunteering to do this. So, with the Megan, I'm not real sure how much of what I had that you want me to present at this time?

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Chairperson Raber: I think you are welcome to hit on any high points that you want the commission to take into consideration, but you are also welcome to submit that in writing. I think we talked about if you had detailed suggestions as to language that you might submit that via a memorandum to the commission to take under consideration as we go through each independent section. Tonight's meeting is intended to be kind of general overview topics. So, I think you did have a few of those things on your list.

Mr. Loughry: I will just give you my big picture items and they haven't changed in the last ten years or actually the last twenty years. So, I think the most important thing that we discuss every ten years when we do this is whether we will remain a partisan City or if we are ready to become a non-partisan City. If we choose to go non-partisan, how many candidates will there be on the November ballot and all of those things. That's always a major issue.

Second is if we stay the way we are, how do Independents get treated as it relates to either a "D" or an "R?" I'll just give an example both when I was elected as an Independent, this past . . . when I got re-elected as Council At-Large three years ago now and also with both Mr. Stalnaker and now Mrs. Allman, and so that is when you are a "D" or an "R" and you are being replaced, you get replaced by a vote of the Precinct Committee people and basically each party I believe has 18 of those if all positions are filled; if all precincts are filled.

If you are an "I" you can form your own committee when you go to the Board and pull your petitions and set everything up and typically you can have anywhere from 1 to 5 members on your committee and so I just think that if I wanted to, when I ran, I could have had a committee of one and it could have been my wife and if I would have needed to step down or wanted to step down for any reason, Pam could have just picked my replacement. One person in a City representing you of 18,000 people, but if you are a "D" or an "R" there are many more people. Now, when I set my committee up, I had 15 on it so that if something were to happen my committee would be similar to what the two partisan positions would have to do.

So, if that process holds true for all elected positions; so, I just think that needs to be discussed and if you keep it the way it is that is your decision, but I think that it needs to be looked at.

Next, and this comes up often, again every ten years typically there is some sort of discussion on term limits. I think that needs to be had again. What typically comes up as well, and Akron had highlighted this in their Charter Review that they just voted on this past November and that is the whole issue involving dealing with Civil Service. Whether or not we still want Civil Service; whether we want to eliminate it and many school districts have and some municipalities have and those that are keeping it some are tweaking it to give the Mayor and hiring authorities more latitude regarding testing and scoring and all those things to make it easier for them or give them more latitude when they hire sometimes and often times with the goal of making their employee pool more diverse. So, I think that discussion should be had.

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Dennis Loughry (Cont'd.): Regarding the Finance Director and the Director of Administration; their job descriptions as presently written, or qualifications are similar but not exactly the same. I think they should probably mirror each other with the exception that the Dir. of Administration would continue not to need to live in the City. That is up to you guys and I would think that the stagger with the Law Director and Finance Director running with the Mayor; I think that there should be a discussion amongst you all as to whether or not you think it might be beneficial to change that and have the Finance Director and the Law Director run with the At-Large Council candidates with the goal of possibly increasing the pool of Mayoral candidates. So, when we set this Charter up years ago, one of the reasons At-Large runs when we run and the Mayor runs when the Ward candidates do and it is to some degree the At-Large candidates run safe so that you could throw your hat in and run for Mayor and if you lose, you are still on Council. I think there would be some benefit possibly to letting the Law Director position and the Dir. of Finance afford them the same thing. Again, just a discussion point. I'm not really sure how to go about that. I think it is good and healthy to discuss things and I'm sure you will do that, but those were my big points, and I will stop with that or take any questions.

Chairperson Raber: Thank you very much Mr. Loughry.

5. Correspondence & Communications:

Chairperson Raber: We have not received any correspondence or communications this evening. If we do, and again the public is welcome to submit correspondence to the Clerk of Council who is serving as the Clerk for the commission by 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting, but to my knowledge, we have not received anything. But, if the public wishes to, we would read that into the record at this point.

6. Agenda Items:

Chairperson Raber: Tonight, we have asked some of the officials of the City to just kind of touch on what they see as potential Charter changes and also kind of just give an overview of what they do and so first up this evening is Mayor Kline.

Overview of Charter:

Mayor Kline
Dir. of Finance Gilbride
Chairperson Raber
President of Council Kilway
Dir. of Administration Cooper
Dir. of Public Service Rorar
Discussion of Commission Members

Mayor: Thank you. I did jot some notes down here and thank all of you. I will try to be brief. First, thank you for your service.

In 2011 all of these sections of this Charter were fully looked at and vetted and 21 recommendations were made and 17 of those recommendations made it to the electorate for their consideration. All 17 were adopted by the electorate. Those

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Mayor (Cont'd.) really reflected a very nice cleanup of the Charter so there is really not a lot going on. I know Mr. Loughry stated some things there and I think they should be looked at, but I will just go down and I am going to go by the order of the Charter in **Section 1 – Form of Government**. That is always talked about. Should it be a weak form of government or a strong form of government. Our current form of government is a Mayoral/Council which is considered a weak form meaning the Law Director and Finance Director are separately elected and I do believe that is good for the City. I think that gives a great checks and balance to the City and in a strong form of government, the Mayor is elected by the electorate and then he would appoint his own Law Director and Finance Director. I just don't think that is good for a city our size and so I think that section is well enough where it is at.

Article 3 – Mayor. So, my job is the CEO of the City. I run the City on a day-to-day operation required through City Council to consider to operate and adopt that and it works pretty well. The one thing I would maybe consider changing in the Mayor's section is the vacancies. We went through this; you know it was modified the last time, but to add something somewhere to what is in Section 4.05 which if someone were to run as the Mayor as an Independent or non-affiliated, then there is no section in the current way in the Charter to replace that person so I think there has to be a way if a Mayor would actually run as an Independent in a non-partisan and that should be added and I also believe that should be added into the Finance Director and also the Law Director's sections. We did add it to the Council last go around.

Article 8 – The Dir. of Administration. Dr. Cooper is online. He is going to speak on a couple of changes that I think you would like to see in the qualifications of the Dir. of Administration.

The Mayor is responsible for appointing the Dir. of Administration, Service Director, and all of the folks on the Administrative side of the Mayor's office.

Article 10 – Boards & Commissions. This is probably one of the ones that we will have a lot more discussion on. All the Boards and Commissions . . . there is Planning & Zoning, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Heritage Commission. Each one of those has a five-member board and a lot of times people just can't make it to the meetings and so I would like us to figure out a way or consider adding an alternate to each one of those boards so if someone was unable to come then the alternate could fill in for that person, but still have only five people that are eligible to vote at any one given time. So, we will brainstorm on that section and how to come up with that.

It was also brought up to me about compensation for the boards. Well, that doesn't need to be changed because that is already in the Charter that as long as Council can authorize the payment, I think the Boards and Commissions should receive a stipend. Civil Service is the only one that does at this point, but Planning & Zoning, Heritage and BZA do not receive any stipend at all. I think that they volunteer and do a lot of hard work and I think that would be good for us to add that and so that does not have to be done by this committee, but I am going to.

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Mayor (Cont'd.) So, I will take that to City Council to get them to move something on that.

In the Heritage Commission in Section 13.01, one member must be from the Design Control District: the Heritage District around the Tallmadge Circle. I really don't have a problem with that, but it also says that all members of the Heritage Commission and all members of every commission must be a resident of the City of Tallmadge. So, if I have a person that is in the district that must be in the district; could that person be not living in town. Something that we will debate on that issue if we should do that or not, or otherwise, do we just make it all five members of the City of Tallmadge and it does not have to be one member in the district. It gets hard, and I really try hard to get people to fill these spots. I put it in the newspaper, make applications looking for different positions. It is just that we are out pulling teeth to get people to join these volunteer groups. So, maybe with the stipend that might be a little bit different.

Section 14 is the Civil Service Commission. The City of Tallmadge; quite a few of our folks are classified employees. It is vetted through the Civil Service. I think it is a good system that we have. It is a 3-member board, and they do a good job at vetting and they do the testing process, and it takes appointments away that I can just arbitrarily, or Department Heads can just go out and pick their friends to do it. I think it is a good vetting system. If it is not Civil Service, I think that there has to be another means of protection for the employees but since you have all of our Police Department, Fire Department full-time folks are classified civil servants and the people in the Street Department are all classified and there is a hiring practice in the revised code. We do have the ability, as a City, to amend the Civil Service rules and we do that periodically through the . . . anytime something comes up that we want to change, but Council has to vote on that to do that. So, it works out pretty well.

Section 15.01 is the Primary Election. That talks about the partisan. I have been involved in Tallmadge politics, or call it City government for 43 years right now and it seems the way is working; I think our residents like it that way and I will guarantee and I know personally from other communities that have gone to the non-partisan; they are partisan and they definitely figure out a way to work with their different party affiliations and they . . . and that will still continue even if we are non-partisan, but as I heard Mr. Loughry also state that when a non-partisan person such as Gene Stalnaker, when he ran, on the back of it there is a spot that lists your five people that you would want. Could that be different, as Dennis did, he said he did 15 people and maybe we make it a restriction that if you want to replace a partisan person, right now it is the precinct committee folks of that party and it could be I think it is 17 or 16 with one in Portage County, maybe you make the non-partisan the same. But at least a different group would take a look at that and vet that person out and by the Independent picking their own persons who are their committee, it is almost like you are making sure that you know that your values would be carried out as you would like and that is why you ran to begin with.

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Mayor (Cont'd.) So, that is just a little overview of a couple of the items that I have, and I will surely answer questions throughout this process and again thank you for everything that you guys are willing to do for us. Megan, that's it.

Chairperson Raber: Next we have the Director of Finance, Mollie Gilbride.

Dir. of Finance Gilbride: Thank you and thank you all for serving as the Mayor stated. I am the Director of Finance and to just give a brief overview, the Director of Finance at the City is responsible for maintaining all the financial transactions and records of the City both incoming funds, especially importantly the collection of our income tax which is our largest revenue source here. I need to ensure that we are collecting all of the revenues due to us and then also track and spend those funds in accordance with the rules of the State of Ohio in terms of restrictions on insuring we are not spending more money than we have coming in and also in addition to making sure that we are complying with the budget that is passed by Council.

I am also responsible for ensuring that we are meeting all our financial reporting requirements and issuing any debt that the City might need to use in order to finance large projects and also investing the funds of the City.

So, I guess if it's money; I take care of it.

In terms of suggestions for the Charter in the Finance Director's section particularly I don't have a lot of changes. I think it pretty well encompasses the role that my office plays within the City. I do, in review it today, think that there is an opportunity maybe in the qualification section to qualify that the bachelor's degree that the Finance Director has to have, maybe add that it has to be a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Public Administration or something of that sort so that we are making sure that we have a candidate that has some background and qualifications and training in that prior to taking the office.

The other section that I think I may have some suggestions for is . . . there is a section regarding Financial Matters and I think we have an opportunity to make some clarifications as to the roles of our Board of Control, which is a board that includes the Mayor, myself, the Law Director, the Service Director, and the President of Council to review finances and contracting and so I am going to look at that and possibly suggest some language clarification in that section when you come to that part of the review. If anybody has any questions for me at any time, feel free to let me know and I will be glad to answer those.

Mayor: That Board of Control section is Section 16. for your information.

Chairperson Raber: I will just point out that that financial matters section is the only one that we kind of deviate from going consecutively through the Charter so that we are talking about the Dir. of Finance kind of simultaneously to that Financial Matters section so if you look at the upcoming agendas; they are kind of paired together for that reason.

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Dir of Law (Cont'd.) I think I am next. I will give you a quick overview of what my office does. We handle all the legal matters for the City. We do have the ability to have outside counsel for certain matters and we do utilize them for various expertise like a doctor; you wouldn't necessarily go to the same doctor for all your ailments. You would sometimes seek out people who specialize in the area and so the City is no different with regard to that.

In my office, we will review contracts, we look at potential liabilities of the City, we look at policies and how they relate to those liabilities and concerns and try to make sure that we are in compliance with State law and Federal law. We get into kind of helping advise all the different areas of the City; the Service Department, Director of Administration, the Boards and Commissions, and Council. I prepare most of the legislation that goes before City Council. We also help assist residents with certain complaints if it is related to violations of City Ordinances and I help advise the Zoning Department with their issues that come up and arise.

We also serve as the prosecutor for the City for all misdemeanors and so we are primarily in Stow Municipal Court and we handle the misdemeanors there and we occasionally are in Portage County because of that small section that is in Portage County and so occasionally we are in the Kent Municipal Court and we refer all felonies as does everyone; all the jurisdictions within Summit County to the Summit County Prosecutor. So, the felonies are handled through the Summit County Prosecutor's office, but we work closely with the Police Department with regard to prosecution.

So that is just a general overview of what my office does.

With regard to the Charter, I just kind of wanted to just touch on maybe a few historical points. The Charter was approved by the voters in 1995. Prior to that we were a statutory state, but in the State of Ohio, municipalities are permitted to adopt a Charter through their residents, and they can then deviate from the statutory Ohio Revised Code so that they can kind of make independent home rule choices. My understanding is that they actually had proposed two other versions of the Charter prior to its adoption in 1995 and those failed. Those proposed versions were more of a strong Mayor form of government that Mayor Kline had referenced earlier. The residents of Tallmadge in 1995 did adopt the weak Mayor form where we did have the independently elected Law Director and Finance Director. Then Council controls the purse strings. So, that is kind of the scheme that was adopted by the voters in 1995.

Some of the things that I would like us to take a look at are again, kind of going back to that qualifications section, the Law Director right now is the only one that has a 3-year requirement for experience as opposed to 5. So, the Finance Director, the Director of Administration, Public Safety Director, Service Director all have 5 years and I think it could be appropriate for the Law Director to have 5 years. The plus side is that you would have a little more experience for a potential candidate. The downside is it could you know, I guess, limit who might be eligible to become Law Director. So, that is just something for us to consider.

I also think that we do need to take a look at the sections that relate to the Boards and Commissions and try to provide for some alternates. We do run into situations

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Chairperson Raber (Cont'd.) where these volunteers are not all able to be there and for the applicants who come in front of those boards, it can become challenging when they have to get a unanimous opinion of 3 people when it is a 5-member board for example. So, I think having that ability to have an alternate is something we should really take a look at.

And to just echo what everyone has said, I think we need to kind of look at all the issues that have been raised tonight and we are obviously not done with our discussions and then kind of decide in what direction we want to move. I think the role of the commission is to at least have a discussion about all of these topics. I want to echo everyone for thanking all of you for being a part of the commission.

Next, we are going to hear from Pres. of Council Kilway.

Pres. of Council: Thank you all again very much for putting all of this together. I want to thank all of the members of the commission as well. This is a lot of work that you guys are volunteering for and it is very important to thank you very much for doing this.

As President of Council, basically I just kind of overview Council and make sure the agendas are done correctly, make sure the meeting is run correctly and making sure everyone is dotting their i's and crossing their t's and so forth, but basically mainly what we want talk about is Council's role and Council's items in the Charter. So, as it has been stated, we have 4-year terms, and they are staggered. The Ward Council people do run when the Mayor and Law Director and the Finance Director all run. Then as Denny Loughry has indicated, the At-Large; they run two years offset from everyone. Not only does this help with anyone who wants to run At-Large to then possibly run for Mayor, to me, it is more of a guarantee of a continuation of the Council so you are not having the potential like they had in another community close by where they had a brand new Mayor; they had a brand new Law Director; they had a brand new Finance Director and they had all new Council and you know they got to their meetings and luckily some of them had been on Council before and so it wasn't a complete cluster, but you know the whole point of having the offset elections for the At-Large is mainly to have a continuation of government that is secure. So, I do like that.

I do think I do like the idea of possibly having the Finance Director and Law Director maybe at the offset; that is something that you guys would really have to discuss, but just keep an open mind on everything with that as well.

Just going through the Charter, a little bit, qualifications; you know, a continuous resident and a qualified elector for at least one year immediately prior. To me, that's fine, but you could get somebody that is going to move into the City just because they want to run and be on Council. Maybe if you want to expand that to more than just one year so they really get to know our City before jumping on Council; I think that might be something to look at.

I do think what Mr. Loughry did state in reference to how the Independents do pull their committees together, I think that is something that we do need to look at. We have had Council people in the 9 years that I have been on Council, we have had Council people that have left, and replacements have been made and we have

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Pres. of Council (Cont'd.) had to do the vacancies and when it is either a “D” or “R” it is basically up to the precinct committee to take care of it and it is out of anybody’s immediate hands. But when it is an Independent, it is right up to most of the time; family members that will determine who is going to make the replacement, which is not all bad, but I think more than 5 people would be good. In just looking through the Charter really quick, I was not aware that I was going to be doing this tonight, so you know, I think our Organizational meetings and all of that is done fine. I think back in 2011 when Mrs. Raber went and did an overhaul of the Charter; I think she did a fantastic job and I really don’t see too much of a change within Council would be very pertinent, but if you have any questions you can ask them at this time or anytime. So, thank you very much.

Chairperson Raber: Thank you. I will just say that it wasn’t just me; it was all the commission making the recommendations and then obviously it went to the voters to be able to act on that and so at the end of the day, we have that check and balance. On the commission, is that we go through the process of Council putting it on the ballot and then the public gets to have the ultimate say as to our recommendations. Next up is the Director of Administration, Mr. Cooper.

Dir. of Administration: Good evening everyone. I’m Don Cooper, the Dir. of Administration. Article 8 addresses the responsibilities and appointment of the Dir. of Administration and it is unlike some of the other appointments in that it is one that serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and it is not subject to the confirmation of Council. So basically, the most important issue is that whoever is the Dir. of Administration must be able to work well with the Mayor because another description currently in the Charter is that this person is the personal managerial aid to the Mayor and performs such duties as may be assigned to him or her by the Mayor. So, basically whatever the Mayor wants the Dir. of Administration to do; he or she does.

In my case, my predecessor was part-time and so I am the first full-time Dir. of Administration. So that alone I think has evolved the position from helping out where the strengths lie have evolved to where things need to be done in the City and so there has been an evolution of responsibilities or tasks that the Dir. of Administration has done over the last 5 years and so that is the basis of some of my minor suggestions for revisions to this section.

There are some things that you need to know about the job in general. Basically, technically I oversee a small staff. So, Human Resources is probably the thing that takes most of my time, but Human Resources Administration is a big part of the job as the Dir. of Administration. There is a Human Resource Administrator that I work very closely with and that is Jill Stritch in the City currently and of course she does a wonderful job and doesn’t need much from me and so we are kind of blessed kind of in that way. But Human Resources is a huge

responsibility just by itself and it probably takes up 60 to 70% of my time. Also, the Dir. of Administration is the general liaison with other government entities in what we do. So, if there are things that we try to tackle; tasks that we try to complete that involve other communities or other government entities I will often play a key role there.

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Dir. of Administration: I oversee Economic Development and Community Development. We also have very capable people in those roles so again, it is an oversight position, and my job is really to get them what they need to do what they very well know how to do.

I also get involved with things like strategic planning. Generally, for the City, but a responsibility of the Administration is developing the Administration Budget every year. So, it falls on me to coordinate that effort and make sure I am working closely with the Finance Department and again, like I said, we have Jill Strich in our Administration and she is of course, quite helpful in that respect too. My job is just to oversee it and make sure that it gets to where it needs to be, and everything is communicated well when we have to present to Council and the numbers basically add up.

There are a couple of things that have kind of evolved over the last few years that have been obvious kind of opportunities and one is in what I will call Occupational Safety. So, although we have a Human Resource Administrator, and my job is to oversee Human Resources, the job of Occupational Safety is something that is very important in a City of our size making sure that things like our employees are safe. This is in contrast to public safety that mostly Police and Fire address, but occupational safety so that our employees are safe. It is something that we have seen a lot of need for and so that has fallen upon to me and I have been addressing that and I currently oversee the IT Department. They need a voice in the Administration, and I help provide that because I have some background in the area, and I am able to help sort out some priorities and some communicated to Administration and other folks as need be. You can imagine, IT, basically pervades everything we do. Everything we do; including when we are communicating with other organizations and other entities. So, one of the last things I do and this kind of crosses over into Human Resources, but it is what I will call Labor Management and so I take the lead on negotiating contracts and going through the processes that are necessary to work with or for our unions. Again, lucky for us, that has not been an extreme challenge, but there is a lot to that process as I suspect many of you know. So, there are a lot of things to do; a lot of tasks related to that.

One of the things that I think . . . there are two things that are not in our Charter that really, I have found to be . . . if I had to narrow it down to just a couple of things, first would be diplomacy. This role requires a high level of diplomacy and being able to communicate effectively without offending when we are dealing with outside entities or labor management or sensitive human resource issues and sometimes even investigations that are sensitive in nature and the other part is experience. I cannot imagine one doing the job that I currently do without having kind of diverse and wide background in dealing with these many different

things that I just described. So, I think my suggestions that I will undoubtedly submit within the next few weeks as necessary are rather minor to this section, but they involve expanding it slightly to recommend that there be additional qualifications for this person particularly in the area of safety management and in project

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Dir. of Administration (Cont'd.) management. You can imagine that just about everything I described is a managing project some small, but many are huge, large management, project management issues. So, having some background and perhaps training and maybe even certification in Project Management is a science unto itself and I would think that that would be very important to have in the role that I currently play. So, if you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them either now or later; you are welcome to visit or call my office and I would be happy to speak to you. No one responded. Alright. Thank you.

Chairperson Raber: Thank you. Next, we have our Service Director, Michael Rorar.

Dir. of Pub. Service: Good evening. First off, I would like to thank all of the commission members for doing the job that they are doing and taking the time. I appreciate that. As far as the Charter goes, at this time, I really have no suggestions. I might have one as we move through it and I just wanted to give a little bit of an overview as the Dir. of Public Service I am responsible for the Service Departments and just so everyone knows, there are about 5 departments there. It is Zoning, Street, which is really like a Public Works Department because they are also responsible for the storm water and the cemetery, then we have Parks & Rec which is the pool, and the other parks as well as the Rec Center and then we also have the Utility Department, which is both Water and the Sanitary Sewers, so I am responsible for that. I'm not sure about the number of employees. I think it is well over 100 when you look at the seasonals and everybody and it is a great job and I enjoy doing it. So, if you guys have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. No one responded.

Chairperson Raber: Alright. Thank you very much. So, at this time I just wanted to open the discussion to the commission members as is on the agenda if any one of you has an area that you think we should be looking at or discussing. I think it is kind of a good opportunity for you to kind of share if you have any particular areas of concern in the Charter? So, we will open up the floor to the commission members.

Not seeing anybody, I just wanted to doublecheck. So, I think we want to stay on track and I think we will need to make sure that we are kind of moving through the agenda to make sure we stay on track with when we need to turn in our recommendations to Council so I do want to take the opportunity today to see if we can at least have a discussion about some of the bigger topics as it relates to the Charter that you have heard tonight and I think maybe the first one that we should start with would be I guess the format of our Charter and of our government structure. So, we talked a little bit about the weak Mayor form of government that we have, and I guess I will open it up to the commission

members. Do we want to look at changing that and restructuring or is the preference to kind of continue on with what we have had and to not really try to restructure the overall format of our government? So, I will open that up for discussion.

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Katie Lindhe: I think from my view as a resident, I don't really see the City behaving in a partisan way. I don't really think that we have a problem with the current status. I don't look at our City and think that there is any partisan politics at play; it just seems like everybody is working together for the business of the City. So, I'm not sure revamping the whole thing is necessary.

Chairperson Raber: So, is that speaking to the issue of the partisan versus the non-partisan or also like changing the structure from weak Mayor to a strong Mayor form of government. Do you want to I guess kind of . . .

Katie Lindhe: I am talking about the partisan and non-partisan. I also agree with keeping it the same with the elected Law Director and Finance Director; I think that is a good format for us.

Chairperson Raber: Thank you. Anyone else?

Serif Krkic: Megan, from what I have heard so far, I think the form of government is just fine for now, but I do have a couple of questions for the group. Some of the terms out there have been tossed out; D and R; can somebody clarify on what that is, so I have a better idea of what you guys are talking about? Dennis Loughry had brought that up with the D and R.

Chairperson Raber: He was kind of abbreviating Democrat and Republican.

Serif Krkic: OK. Perfect.

Mary Tricaso: I also agree that the form of government with the weak Mayor with the Chairperson Raber and Dir. of Finance are voted in by the residents; I think that is good.

Serif Krkic: Another thing that Dennis Loughry brought up was term limits as well and he did not suggest anything as far as Mayor term limits. Does anybody have any suggestions for that so we can get things rolling with that?

Chairperson Raber: So, for points of discussion, I think you know there are neighboring communities that have put term limits onto their elected officials, and I believe there is a neighboring community that has like an 8-year term limit which would basically be two terms. As Councilperson Kilway alluded to; they also ran into a situation where by virtue of some resignations and the term limits they ended up with a virtual new . . . like everyone; like every single position in their form of government so that is just something that you can consider that may be a potential unintended consequence of term limits that we just need to discuss and weigh. So, I mean, we can kind of talk about that some more. I kind of want to focus on seeing if we can reach consensus on the format before maybe we move into that. So, is there any further discussion as it relates to changing the format or the form of governance from weak Mayor to strong Mayor?

Helen Fire: I don't have any issues with that. I think that it has been solid, and I think the voters voted that in back at the beginning and I don't see where it needs to be readdressed or any changes made and that is how I feel about the system right now.

Kim Sabetta: I would agree with the current form of government.

Robert Higham: I would also agree. I like the checks and balances they have referenced by having three different elected officials.

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Meghan Thompson: I am in agreement as well Megan with keeping the structure the same.

Chairperson Raber: OK. Does anybody else want to discuss that particular point? If not, it kind of sounds like we reached a consensus and as we move through it, we can kind of, if we needed to, we could re-review it, but in general, it sounds like we have reached a consensus that that is not something that we are really looking to tackle at this point. I think it has been addressed every single time there has been a Charter Review Commission and then for the initial Charter, obviously it was discussed at length and so I agree that I don't think we necessarily need to be restructuring everything. So, moving onto the topic of the partisanship moving from partisan to non-partisan; I know Katie had already made a statement with regard to keeping the partisanship as it is. Does anyone else want to have any thoughts or ideas with regard to that particular issue?

Meghan Thompson: I wonder if you shouldn't give a brief synopsis of exactly what that means so everybody understands?

Chairperson Raber: Sure. So, the way that our current Charter is set up it allows for or it has people file and they can file as a Republican or Democrat. They can also run as an Independent, so it doesn't preclude someone who is an Independent from running. If you were to be designated a non-partisan city, you would actually not have that party affiliation next to you during the election. So, if you think of your general election ballot; the judges for example, do not have that R meaning Republican or D meaning Democrat or I next to their name; they are non-partisan meaning they don't have any designation. So, that is kind of what we are talking about. Does that make it clearer? Does anybody else have any other questions as to what that subject matter really is? OK, so if we want to we can reopen the discussion in regard to that. Does anybody else have any thoughts or comments on that?

Randy Sarvis: Is it just strictly having a D or an R on a ballot?

Chairperson Raber: Well, it also goes to; it would go to I guess underlying things like how you fill the vacancies and so that would have to be re-explored if it was a non-partisan. So typically the . . . in general that is what it would apply to and so I think as Mayor Kline mentioned earlier, I think what can happen sometimes is municipalities that go to a non-partisan format on its face, they are not partisan, but it seems from me looking from the outside in that often times it is still partisan and so I think it is a matter of transparency to a certain extent as to whether or not it is clear or not. So, I will again, I will even go to Judgeships and so Judgeships while they are supposed to be non-partisan, often end up being

very partisan races. So, that is just an example and I will again open it up for anyone else if they want to discuss that.

Steve Clark: So, if we go to a non-partisan form, if I understand it correctly, there could be two Democrats on the ballot for Mayor or two Republicans, but they wouldn't be identified that way so that in the present format, Mayor Kline reruns as a Democrat and he would be facing a Republican challenger obviously not facing a Democratic challenger in the present form of government?

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Chairperson Raber: Correct. What happens is you lose that primary. So, what happens is instead of having that primary election where the pool of potential candidates at least from one party is narrowed down to one and one. You can have five people running for the same office, so I will use . . . I don't know for sure if I am accurate on this, but I believe like the Clerk of Stow Municipal race a few years ago that is an example that I can think of where there were a bunch of people that filed because it was a non-affiliated or non-partisan race and so you end up with like five people on the ballot for the one position. So, it does impact that primary and whether you have a primary or not have a primary and shrinking that pool of potential candidates.

Steve Clark: Could we potentially have three people on the ballot for Mayor; one as an Independent, Democrat and Republican?

Chairperson Raber: Yes. You can have more than; we could still have more than three because Independents can file and so they would still not have a primary and so you could still have that.

Steve Clark: Several Independents?

Chairperson Raber: Yes.

Steve Clark: I would say we are fine where we are at. That is my opinion.

Kimberly Sabetta: I would agree to remain.

Robert Higham: I would agree to the current system as well.

Meghan Thompson: I agree with the partisan as well.

Mary Tricaso: I agree with the current system as well.

Helen Fire: I do too.

Dir of Law: Anyone else with any further discussion on that. OK, so it seems like we have a consensus at least on that issue that we remain partisan. Going back to Serif's point; we can discuss term limits and that particular issue. So, term limits again would be a good, I mean I guess, that is an example; are two four-year terms which is 8 years . . . we will open that up for discussion to see if whether people feel that is appropriate.

Steve Clark: We have no positions that have any term limits on them; correct?

Chairperson Raber: That's correct.

Katie Lindhe: The higher up you go in politics, at maybe the Federal level or things of that nature, term limits make a little more sense, but in a smaller city like we have, I think the voters . . . we know the people we are dealing with. Like they are our neighbors. I think the voters probably can make good determinations as to whether they want to keep that Council person or the Mayor in place and not have to have them tossed out basically after their term is up.

Robert Higham: That's a good point.

Meghan Thompson: I think that a lot of us who have lived here . . . I have come and gone, but I am back, and I feel like if we had someone sitting in that position for 50 years then maybe term limits would be a discussion to have, but at this point I don't think there is a need.

Serif Krkic: On that point Megan, should we have some kind of verbiage in there for some kind of maximum term limits?

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Chairperson Raber: I think that is what we are discussing, so you know at the State level we see that; we see term limits having been applied at the State to various representatives and senate positions and governor and what I tend to see is that they jump around from various positions to various positions and it is the same. You know, they just jump around to a different position.

Steve Clark: I would say that we don't have term limits, but they still have to be voted in every four years or whatever the structure is, so even if somebody was in for 50 years, I don't think that is reason to kick them out if the voters continue to vote them in; I think that makes sense.

Katie Lindhe: I think you run into that at higher levels like State and Federal level; you run into the name recognition where people just vote for somebody because they know the name, but these are our neighbors. We know the people. It is not a situation like that where you are just having somebody sit there because that is a familiar name.

Chairperson Raber: Anyone else? So, am I hearing the consensus on that issue too that we, at least for now, and again all these issues if we really want to, we can revisit them. We are going to have many meetings ahead. So, if we get . . . if we really need to come back and address that again, I am just trying to make sure that we are kind of gaining some consensus as to the approach as we move forward. I am hearing a consensus that we are going to not really do term limits at this point.

Again, does anybody after this discussion have anything else that you want to raise or bring up? I think some of the things that we heard tonight have or are more specific to the language which is already in the Charter with regard to qualifications and the language there and we can kind of tackle that as we move forward.

Katie Lindhe: What about the Independent replacement? Is that something that we would get into later?

Chairperson Raber: Yeah, so there is a section in the Council Vacancies that specifically addresses Council vacancies for Independents, and I think we can take a look at that but I do think that there is not necessarily that same type of language found in some of the other elected official's places and so I think as we move through this, we will definitely want to take a look at that.

Meghan Thompson: So, it seems like the Independent is kind of like a hot topic with this Charter Commission? Is that kind of what I am gathering a little bit?

Chairperson Raber: I think so. I think that is probably fair that since we have had a few Independents who had vacancies with that I think making sure of how

we want to address that whether it is an Independent for whatever office that it might happen.

Mayor: I am here to answer questions you might have. I am not trying to speak up during some of those conversations like term limits and that, it is really us to you folks, but feel free to give me a call at any time just as Dr. Cooper, Mike Rorar, Mollie and Carol Kilway and I'm sure you can call Dennis too.

Non-affiliated is what they call it. If you look at the electorate of Tallmadge, there are quite a few that are non-affiliated at this time because there really hasn't been primaries and if you don't have a primary for a period of time then your name gets struck down to a non-affiliate. I think the Governor's primary is coming up next

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Mayor: (Cont'd.) year and people will then pick a party that they want to be a part of. I think that is when your name really gets changed.

Chairperson Raber: Well, to kind of clarify that, it is actually two different things. So here is a non-affiliated, meaning that you have dropped off and you have to . . . so in the State of Ohio you have to pull an actual . . . you have to vote in a primary and you have to pull a partisan ballot in order to have that party affiliation next to your name. If you want to be an Independent, then you need to pull an Issue Only ballot and you can . . . for candidates that want to be an Independent they actually file something that says that I am Independent and then they also wouldn't have necessarily pulled a partisan ballot. So, an Independent is like you are actually saying I am an Independent and a non-affiliated can happen if you look at your Board of Elections voting history and you didn't pull that partisan primary then after, it is either one or two times of not pulling that then you lose your party affiliation next to your name. So, it is a little confusing but like a non-affiliated person could sign a petition of a candidate for a party and say, yes, I am actually identifying as that particular party, but I didn't vote in the primary.

Does anyone else want to bring up any points of discussion tonight and otherwise I would just say that again, we are open to public input and happy to receive that and so we can take a look at any of these things again as we move through, I think we kind of have an idea that we are going to be looking at the substance of what already exists; at least that is our focus as we go through based on the consensus tonight.

Anything else that anybody wants to bring up this evening?

Mayor: The next meeting date is February 8, 2021.

7. **Adjournment:** Meghan Thompson moved to adjourn. Seconded Katie Lindhe. Voice vote 12-0. **The Charter Review Commission meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.**

sb

Minutes transcribed by Susan Burton