



City of Santa Rosa

City Charter Review Committee Regular Meeting Minutes - Draft

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

5:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Cisco called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Present 15 - Chair Patti Cisco, Committee Member Adriana Arrizon, Committee Member Annie Barbour, Committee Member Christine Byrne, Committee Member Dan Condon, Committee Member Jazmin Gudino, Committee Member Jen Klose, Committee Member Brian Ling, Committee Member Chris Mazzia, Committee Member Evette Minor, Committee Member Ernesto Olivares, Committee Member Logan Pitts, Committee Member Jocelyn Villalobos, Committee Member Mark Walsh, and Committee Member Karen Weeks

Absent 6 - Committee Member Lisa Badenfort, Committee Member Scott Bartley, Committee Member Abigail Cunningham, Committee Member Ana Diaz, Committee Member Danny Martinez, and Committee Member Ron Miller

Committee Member Diaz joined the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Committee Member Martinez joined the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

Committee Member Bartley joined the meeting at 5:11 p.m.

Committee Member Miller joined the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA MATTERS

Kevin Conway spoke on the climate crisis and urged the Committee to address this issue.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - NONE.

4. SCHEDULED ITEMS

4.1 EQUITY PRINCIPLES

The principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging remain in the forefront of the Charter review process. This standing agenda item provides the Committee with the opportunity, at the outset of each of its meetings, to refine, reaffirm and recommit to its Statement of Principles. The Statement of Principles regarding diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging provides a procedural and substantive lens through which the

Committee undertakes all of its work.

No presentation or discussion was made on this item.

No public comments were made.

4.2 CHARTER UPDATE AND MODERNIZATION

The Committee is currently considering several proposed Charter amendments to address significant substantive issues, including, but not limited to Council compensation, directly elected Mayor and ranked choice voting. In addition, the City Attorney recommends that the Committee consider a ballot measure to include more minor amendments, designed to update, clarify and modernize the City Charter.

The proposed measure would be intended to remove ambiguities, streamline City procedures, and revise outdated provisions. Similar update measures were placed on the ballots in 2002 and 2012 and were passed with strong voter approval. For 2022, the proposed amendments may include clarification of the timing of Charter review and amendments, clarification of emergency management responsibilities, allowance for a two-year budgeting process, streamlined provisions for procurement, clarification of scope of authority of the Board of Public Utilities, alignment with District-based elections and others.

City Attorney Sue Gallagher presented language that could be included in the general charter update related to district elections, council vacancy procedures, frequency of charter amendments, revisions to provide flexibility related to the Board of Public Utilities, budget, contract procurement, emergency response, Community Advisory Board appointments, and making language gender neutral.

Chief Financial Officer Alan Alton answered questions from Committee members regarding factors on the flexibility and benefits of a two-year budget and outlined the process that would be used.

No public comments were made on this portion of the presentation.

Committee discussion ensued on the benefits and flexibility of a two-year budget, and the decision needing to be made by the City Council. The Committee took a straw vote with a majority voting to recommend a two-year budget cycle to Council.

City Attorney Gallagher presented information on District Elections and language revisions for the charter to align with the City's district elections, state law and the Voting Rights Act with the boundaries established by ordinance. Information was provided on the current process for filling a Council vacancy and discussion ensued whether procedures to fill a vacancy should be changed, a review of the pros and cons of a council appointment versus a special election, the process for more frequent charter revisions, and the pros and cons for the allowance of more frequent reviews and possible charter amendments through an initiative by the voters.

City Attorney Gallagher provided proposed language amendments to Charter Section 25 - Board of Public Utilities to clarify the scope of responsibilities to include "dry" utilities, the pros and cons of expanding their role, for contract procurement to allow for flexibility and innovation on contracting for public works, clarifying emergency response language by revising the charter to avoid ambiguity in leadership during emergency response, clarifying appointment to the Community Advisory Board to one at large and one from the Council Member's district, revising language to be gender neutral, and making the seating of new council members to a date certain.

City Attorney Gallagher answered questions from Committee members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kevin Conway spoke in support of updating the charter more frequently than every 10 years, and the need to respond to the climate emergency.

Discussion on this item was continued to the next meeting.

4.3 PROPOSED SCHEDULE

In its work thus far, the Committee has considered and given staff direction on three issues that were recommended by the Council for consideration, including Council compensation, direct elect Mayor, and ranked choice voting. At its last meeting, the Committee identified three additional issues as priorities for consideration, including voting rights for non-citizens, frequency of Charter amendments, and procedures for filling a Council vacancy. In addition, the City Attorney has recommended consideration of a measure to include more minor amendments, designed to update, clarify and modernize the City Charter.

This item will allow the Committee the opportunity to establish a schedule and final work plan for its remaining meetings.

City Attorney Gallagher reviewed the proposed schedule to include the continued discussion of Charter updates and modernization of language, voting rights for non-citizens, proposed ballot language to be reviewed by the Committee, an introduction of the report to Council for Committee review and comment, and the final report to Council.

No public comments were made.

5. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S/CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORTS

No reports were made.

6. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS - NONE.

7. WRITTEN AND/OR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS - NONE.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Council Compensation
- Extending the last Charter Review meeting beyond the May 11

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cisco adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for March 30, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.

Approved on:

Stephanie A. Williams
City Clerk