

Brooklyn Park Charter Commission Minutes

Wednesday, February 10, 2010

7:30 p.m. Brooklyn Township Conference Room

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Dwight Cox called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Members present were: Arlene Breckenridge; Christopher Bohler; Dwight Cox; Wokie Freeman; Dennis Gunther; and Marjorie Lindberg

Absent: Mike Habiba and Olajide Williams (Excused)

Also in attendance: Council Liaison Rich Gates and Staff Liaison Devin Montero.

Chair Dwight Cox asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves to the new Council Liaison Rich Gates.

2. Additions/Approval of Agenda of January 13, 2010

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded by Marjorie Lindberg to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of the January 13, 2010 Minutes.

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded by Wokie Freeman to approve the January 13, 2010 minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Old Business

Chair Cox stated that there were no items because last year's items were closed out and the Charter Annual Report would be given to the Council in April.

5. Reports of Offices, Boards, and Standing Committees.

Commissioner Marjorie Lindberg briefed the Commissioner on the Council Commission Retreat held January 15, 2010. She stated it was an interesting experience and hoped the Council keeps it ongoing. She talked about the session with the Council, Commissioners and staff broken into groups to work on assignments given. She stated the six goals by Council were presented and each group was given two goals to discuss and came up with action items. She stated the information from the groups would be given to the Council for their Saturday retreat.

Council Liaison Gates stated the Saturday retreat began with the information from the groups and discussed the items. He stated he was excited to see the Commissioners at the retreat because it was nice to have a resident's view of what the Council was doing. He stated last year the Council spent many hours and came up with the six goals: 1-Create a Positive Image; 2-

Develop Structurally Balanced Budget; 3-Develop Shared Services Plan; 4-Ensure Stable Neighborhoods; 5-Ensure Best Use Development Investment and Reinvestment; and 6-Ensure Mission Oriented Culture and each goal was assigned a team leader and members to work on the goals. He stated an update was given to the Council in December on the status of each goal and Council discussed if there was anything that needed to be changed or added.

Staff Liaison Montero stated that he would provide the Charter Commission with the updates given to Council.

Commissioner Marjorie Lindberg stated she was glad to see the other commissions at the retreat because of the similarities with the commissions and departments and hoped there would be an ongoing relationship with the commissions.

Council Liaison Gates stated when the commissions were discussing items, the Council wanted to see how they fit with the goals when discussing those items. He stated when staff brought the items to the Council, staff would have to show that it fit with the Council goals.

He stated the goals could be adjusted next year because the Communications and Budget goals were up and running and possibly not be a Council priority next year. He stated the Shared Service goal was being looked at with services from other cities, commissions and the State. He stated services such as the purchasing programs, park and recreation programs, and Fire Department mutual aid were being reviewed.

Commissioner Wokie Freeman briefed on the Core Team Meeting. She stated the team met for three days and many hours and was intense and a life changing experience. She stated everyone left the meeting lifted and hopeful for the future of the city and redefined the core values as a community for the city and worked on a mission statement: "Brooklyn Park is a thriving community inspiring pride where opportunities exist for all." She also stated the team came up with strategic objectives. Council Liaison Gates stated the Core Team was a continuation of the Community Cafes and the Stable Neighborhoods goal.

Staff Liaison Montero stated there were opportunities with the Core Team by being on a Measurement Team and Action Team and applications were on the city website and would send out applications to the commissioners.

Commissioner Wokie Freeman stated the next process of the Core Team was for the Action Team to develop plans to support the strategic objectives and the Measurement Team would measure the progress of the objectives.

6. New Business

6.1 Impact of Reducing Council from 7 to 5. Staff Liaison Montero stated the item was given to the Charter Commission during the Joint Council Commission meeting in June 2009. He stated it was given to determine the benefits or if it was feasible to reduce the Council size. He commented on the State statute that applied to "statutory" cities and stated that the City

Attorney stated to reduce the Council from 7 to 5 would require a charter amendment and advised if it were to happen the process should be followed as outlined in the statute.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- What kind of savings will there be? \$22,000
- What is the budget for the City? \$28,000,000; Doesn't make sense to even think about it for a cash savings. The city is bigger than it has been
- Nothing can go into effect because the boundaries are frozen because of the Census, changes can be made after 2012 and is a planning ahead discussion and maybe the answer is to have four Wards: North, East, West and South plus the Mayor
- Having an East, West, and Central Council member with one At-Large
- Redistricting would be done before the 2012 election and the next opportunity to redistrict the city boundaries
- To decrease the Council size does it have to go to a general vote?
- Why was the city divided into three districts?
- A petition is needed to change what?
- Can we get other city comparisons on Wards/Districts/At Large?
- What happens if there are four districts and no one runs in a district?
- Current district representation has two East District Council members north of TH 610; one Central District Council Member north of TH 610 and the other south of TH 610; and both West District Council Members are south of TH 610
- Has the District boundaries been changed?
- Seems strange to reduce the actual representation that people have at a time when the city keeps growing and wonder how much one Council member with sharing responsibility with all the other commissions and liaisons and if one person is going to represent the district, they got twice as many people to be responsible to already with the population growing; have a small democratic concern about that for the average person having representation
- There are more costs to it than the \$22,000 because you have to hold elections to get these people for which one of the seven; and the cost for the discussions and meetings; it takes a lot of time with the seven versus only having the five.
- Agree is a big city and the cost of doing all that we just have to pay for that if we really wanted representation of all the people
- If having less Council members we pay them more because they will have more responsibilities
- How many does it take run the city? Only 4 votes
- My representation is in the Central District, I have one in the North and one in the South

Council Liaison Gates stated that he had averaged out the time commitment per month of being a Council Member to take care of residents, e-mails, phone calls, read the Council packets, attend Council meetings, Council liaison time, other meetings and events, by being a representative of the city, and was between 40 to 45 hours per month on average. He stated sometimes it was more or less depending on what was going on. He stated in the summer time more time was spent due to the festivals and other events like national night out. He also

added that most Council members had jobs too. He stated that to be a Council member in the Central District and cover the entire District would double his time commitment per month to try and represent the whole city. He stated he got calls from the other districts as well and the time commitment was a lot.

He stated the city could possibly have 100,000 in population in the future with the future proposed developments by Target, and questioned if a part time city Council was going to work. He stated if it was kept at 7 Council members it could work with six districts and give each Council member a district and keep them within the population means.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- What would be the affect on the population itself if it was broken into six districts?
- What is the resident's feedback from the north and south?
- What you are saying makes me appreciate more what we have because we don't have ward politics like other cities and having two from each district also reduces the chances of that happening

Council Liaison Gates stated when he makes a vote he is voting for the entire city not just for the Central District and making all Council members at-large would be a negative thing and didn't see a difference of making six districts represented and at-large representation.

He stated that the Parks Commission had to have three people from each district and two people at large on the commission. He stated when applications were received they were not from a specific parts of the city. He stated the problem for making an at-large Council Member would be getting enough representation across the city. He stated that was being noticed in the Commissions and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission made everyone at-large and didn't have the district requirement now and would be a concern if the city was broken up in four or six districts and no one ran in that district. He stated the way the three districts were divided works out because it is more likely to get someone to run for Council.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- There is value in how the districts are divided today
- As representative of a district and the city, the Council member receiving communication from the residents on issues should take the city and residents into consideration when voting and if not doing their job they could be voted out of office.
- What if the city was divided into four districts and had two at-large positions? All the districts could vote for the at-large positions
- If you read the new mission statement, "...opportunities exist for all", you would not short shift the people who are in less established neighborhoods like the newer ones and at the same time the older ones that are economically troubled with the foreclosures. Everyone would have a vote more equally
- An at-large seat would cost more for campaigning than a regular seat and someone would not run for the at-large seat because of the costs involved
- Only the rich could afford to run if having at-large seats

- The current districts help with the costs of campaigning

Council Liaison Gates stated he hoped with the Community Cafes held there would be more residents stepping forward to represent the city on the Council. He stated the attendance to the cafes were a lot more representative of what the city was made of.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- The city used new strategies to reach other residents by holding the Cafes at other places than city hall
- What's the breakdown of the population in each district?
- How are the census numbers collected? Is it the number of bodies in a household or the number used for redistricting? Large sections of the city, in the Central District, may have large numbers but not be eligible to vote because of the immigration status.
- How many registered voters in each district?

Staff Liaison Montero stated that the Charter Commission was given the City Manager's Population Report based on population in each district and not by registered voters.

Chair Cox stated there were a lot of issues whether to change or divide the districts and recommended the discussion be carried over to the next Charter Commission meeting to give the Commissioners a chance think about the discussion held tonight. Staff Liaison Montero stated that if the Commissioners had other items to research to let him know.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- Can we get information comparing other cities on how many districts they have? Wards and at large seats
- Can you provide us with a map showing the city divided by four districts?
- We will have to literally see the new legislative map to determine our precincts
- What is the process to get a charter question submitted to the voters?
- Is there a petition process for the voters?

Staff Liaison Montero stated he would provide information on the petitions called Initiative and Referendum at the next Charter meeting.

Chair Cox stated he would like to carry the discussion to the next meeting for more discussion and asked Staff Liaison Montero what he would be bringing to the next meeting.

Staff Liaison Montero stated he would provide the commissioners with comparisons of other cities with wards, districts, at-large seats and district maps dived by four and six.

7. Correspondence/Communications

Staff Liaison Montero stated there was a legislative bill to change the Primary Election date to August 10 and would also change the candidate filing dates to May 18 to June 1. He also stated

he didn't see anything in the Charter that needed to be amended as the result of the changes if passed. He also stated the campaign signs could be put up on June 25 as the result of the change.

8. Adjournment

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded by Marjorie Lindberg to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Devin Montero, Staff Liaison