

Brooklyn Park Charter Commission Minutes

Wednesday, March 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; Dwight Cox; Wokie Freeman; Dennis Gunther; Marjorie Lindberg and Olajide Williams

Absent: Christopher Bohler and Mike Habiba

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

2. Additions/Approval of Agenda of March 10, 2010

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded by Wokie Freeman to approve the agenda as submitted with the addition of Item 2A, Presentation of the Create A Positive Image goal by Communications Coordinator Mary Tan. Motion carried unanimously.

2A Presentation of Create A Positive Image Goal. Communications Coordinator Mary Tan briefed the Commissioners on the strategic goal developed by the City Council and stated there were five other goals and was assigned as the team leader with other members and her job was to develop an action plan to deal with the city's image.

She stated the Positive Image goal team had been meeting every Tuesday since the goal teams were created and the Communications Plan was approved by the City Council in February and the plan included media relations, guidelines for writing letters, guidelines for PowerPoint presentations, voice mail standards, style guide for the most frequently asked grammar questions by city staff. She stated they also worked on the organizational assessment with a communication plan for that by having over 150 city employees attend a meeting so they could learn about the reorganization of the city and posted information on the intranet so employees could have questions ahead of time.

She stated at the December monthly mid-level managers meeting she invited media representatives from media organizations in the twin cities and they gave advice on what kind of stories they were looking for to publish or broadcast and what the city could do to get more positive image stories out.

She stated the city also adopted the associated press style guide used by every city, state and federal government and is the style guide used by the media. She also commented on the following:

- Website improvements
- Marketing Plan for city branding and logo

- Communications Team members
- More media training sessions for employees
- City website hits were over three million and most popular: community, Eidem Farm and Community Activity Center calendars; making it more interactive with polls and videos, podcasts by the city manager
- Social media used by the city was FaceBook, Twitter, Nixel,
- Using Social media in local government and how it relates to data practices

She showed a video on Social Media and how it was changing and growing worldwide.

Comments from the Commissioners:

- Using college interns to assist with the marketing plan
- Target realtors for the City image
- Surveying Community Café participants on the city website redesign for feedback
- Changing the city image begins and works through the outside perception
- Schools and businesses part of the measurement group to help with the city image
- Benchmarking other cities and organizations on what they are doing with branding and city image
- Human interest stories of people within the city to highlight could help with the image
- Using untapped resources (retirees and students) in the city to help with the

3. Old Business

3.1 Impact of Reducing Council from 7 to 5. Staff Liaison Montero stated at the last meeting Commissioners requested comparisons of other cities on Council and wards. He stated the League of Minnesota Cities provided a chart of cities showing council size, elected at large and elected by ward/district.

He also presented a map of the City of Plymouth to show how the voting districts were divided by four districts and information of the City of St. Cloud when they went through the reduction of Council size and the process beginning in 2003 and ultimately passed by the voters in 2007.

Staff Liaison Montero stated at the last meeting a Commissioner asked about the petition process. He stated Chapter 6 of the Charter covered initiative and referendum petitions relating to making changes to the city code and didn't apply to making amendments to the Charter. He stated according to the City Attorney, to decrease the size of the city council would require an amendment to the City Charter which is governed by MS 410.12.

Comments by the Commissioners:

- Precincts couldn't cross legislative boundaries per state law
- The City of Rogers and Hassan Townships were merging
- The Council increased in size from 1969 to 1970 and terms increased from two years to four years
- Making sure residents had a voice and representation especially south of 85th

- The annual savings by reducing a council member would be (\$11,000 salary) and not include other items such as internet allowance, conference attendances and wouldn't be much of a savings
- Concerns with Council Candidates campaigning in a larger area if being at-large positions and having more expenses to do that
- Representation by Council in the city; have three council members in the north and three in the south of the city. Two East District Council Members in the north
- May not get anyone to run in a district if divided into four or six districts

Staff Liaison Montero showed the Commissioners a 1968 map of the five voting precincts prior to the city being divided into East, Central and West districts as the result of becoming a charter city in 1969.

He stated Mr. Todd Larson, Planning Department, prepared maps showing the city divided into four and six districts showing the population in each district and presented them to the Commissioners.

Comments by the Commissioners:

- Boundaries will be redrawn next year as the result of the 2010 census
- Districts are balanced by population versus registered voters
- When the 2010 census population numbers become available to keep in mind the one person one vote and try to get unity there so there is community involvement
- Maybe divide the Central and East again with precincts
- Maybe it's is not reducing the Council size but adding or keeping the numbers the same and breaking out the quadrants; we have Council members that have smaller quadrants but still have the same numbers but not two in the east; maybe east, northeast, southeast
- How do you get people in the community to get involved that want to do something?
- Doing something now before the 2010 Census would be the snowball that breaks everything apart and don't see spinning the wheels doing anything until then

Staff Liaison Montero stated things are improving with community involvement and residents being engaged with the Community Cafés, Core Planning Team, Action Teams, and Measurement Teams.

Chair Cox asked the Commissioners if there was a general consensus if it was a good idea to even consider reducing the council size.

Comments by the Commissioners:

- Shelve it until the 2010 census numbers come out before doing anything
- Can't do anything until all the numbers come out anyway in 2012
- Won't know the legislative lines until then and what we can possible do or not
- What was the thought process in how many Council Members per residents? Did they have something? Some small cites have seven Council Members

- When did the City Council increase in size?
- The City was divided into districts when the city became a charter
- I didn't see real savings in reducing the council size
- We shouldn't do anything until we get the 2010 Census numbers and understand where our borders are and where people are and regroup and say with this in mind and keep it and have the representation in all quadrants what can we do
- Having at-large would not work with the costs of campaigning and the time it would take I don't know how they would do it
- Have a concern from reducing from seven to five in having a quorum and having it become being so important for every single council member to be there every single time too to do business
- I wasn't leaning to reducing council I was leaning towards what do we need to do to make it equitable

Charter Chair Cox that he wanted to tonight was to formalize when the Commission will discuss the issue again and what date to select to discuss the issue.

Staff Liaison Montero stated the City Manager's Population would be given to the Charter Commission's March 2011 to determine the equal representation of each district. He stated the Commission couldn't take action on the wards because the boundary lines were frozen due to the 2010 Census.

Comments by the Commissioners:

- When will the information be provided on the new lines drawn?
- The earliest it would affect the elections would be in 2012

Charter Chair Cox stated the Commission couldn't let this issue fall through the cracks. He stated the consensus of the discussion tonight was not so much the reduction in the council size as to what the districts would look like when the new lines would be redrawn and whether it would go more to the ward idea and was currently a ward with two council members in each ward. He stated the Commissioners were not thrilled with the at-large idea either.

Comments by the Commissioners:

- I'm a bigger fan of breaking up the districts so they are small and equal.
- When will we receive Census information?

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded Marjorie Lindberg to table the issue until further Census information. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Chair Cox stated he would be giving the Annual Report to the City Council on Monday, April 5. Staff Liaison Montero stated that the Volunteer Recognition Event would be held on Thursday, April 1 and to RSVP by March 26

5. New Business

6. Correspondence/Communications

7. Adjournment

Motion Arlene Breckenridge and seconded by Marjorie Lindberg to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Devin Montero, Staff Liaison