

Minutes of Charter Review Committee
June 4, 2020
Electronic Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Mayor Shane Watts, Town Manager Eric Pollitt, Tom Camden, Boyd Walker, Councilor Sonny Williams, Councilor Aaron Britton

Absent: Councilor Barrett McFaddin

Mayor Shane Watts opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

Mayor Watts stated this is the first meeting of the Charter Review Committee. Mayor Watts stated the Town Charter is outdated and needs to be overhauled by October of this year so that the changes can be presented to the General Assembly for approval next year. Mayor Watts stated the changes will be presented to Town Council for approval, then sent on to Richmond.

Town Manager Eric Pollitt stated he is requesting the Committee do a new Charter instead of updating what we already have. Town Manager Pollitt stated Delegate Ronnie Campbell will help with this when it goes to the General Assembly to be approved. Town Manager Pollitt stated an email from Virginia Municipal League (VML) recommended having this ready for Delegate Campbell to meet with experts at the State level before it is presented to the General Assembly, and then so the General Assembly will have a preliminary look before it goes to a vote.

Mr. Tom Camden asked if other towns in the County have a Charter. Town Manager Pollitt stated that both Glasgow and Goshen have one, as well as the two (2) cities of Lexington and Buena Vista. Mr. Boyd Walker asked if the Town of Buchanan's Charter had been looked at. Town Manager Pollitt stated theirs is slightly different as their mayor is the equivalent to a town manager, and that they are in the process of changing theirs as well. Town Manager Pollitt stated the Committee could still look at Buchanan's as a reference.

Town Manager Pollitt stated he has a list of Charters that he reviewed for the Committee to look at before the next scheduled meeting in July. Town Manager Pollitt stated a few have been updated recently and are more organized than Glasgow's. Town Manager Pollitt stated the first three (3) sections to work on first are: 1) Corporations 2) Boundaries 3) Powers Granted on Behalf of the State. Town Manager Pollitt stated these do not need a lot of time spent on them and are something he and Town Attorney Grace Crickenberger can work on, along with Delegate Campbell if he thinks the language is not sufficient.

Town Manager Pollitt stated next to be discussed would be Elected Officials, which consists of the mayor and council, and any town-equivalent constitutional officers which would be for counties and cities e.g. treasurer, commonwealth attorney. Town Manager Pollitt stated Glasgow's would be the mayor and council.

Town Manager Pollitt stated the next section for discussion would be Appointed Officers, which are appointed by the mayor and council. Town Manager Pollitt stated some places do it differently where they appoint the town manager, the attorney, the clerk, and some appoint those three (3) plus treasurer, zoning enforcer, and some also appoint the chief of police. Town Manager Pollitt stated some charters have Administrative Departments that are broken down to say the town manager fills certain positions e.g. clerk, treasurer, financial officer, chief of police. Town Manager Pollitt stated some charters include Financial Provisions. Town Manager Pollitt stated the FY 2021 Budget Calendar outlines what Glasgow's financial provisions would be. Town Manager Pollitt stated these are in there to make sure state guidelines are followed e.g. submitting the budget on time, etc.

Town Manager Pollitt asked the Committee what they would like to start working on first. Town Manager stated the options are Elected Officials and their duties, Appointed Officials and their duties, Powers of the Town Manager, Administrative Department and who is responsible for what, and Financial Provisions. Mr. Camden stated in looking through Glasgow's Charter, he is looking for what can be eliminated so the Charter can be more streamlined. Mayor Watts stated this is what the Committee is looking for, to update, streamline, eliminate things that are no longer applicable, to make it more user-friendly, and make sure the ordinances we have updated recently are included. Mr. Boyd Walker stated if it cannot be enforced it should not be in the Charter. Councilor Aaron Britton asked Mr. Walker if he had a specific example of what is not being enforced. Mr. Walker stated where it says the Town Manager has to live in Glasgow. Mr. Walker stated you cannot make someone buy a house in Glasgow. Mr. Camden stated he would like to see examples from other small communities in the State.

Mayor Watts stated tonight the Committee needs to decide which topic is going to be the hardest to get through and start working on that first so will have more time to work on it. Mr. Camden stated he believes the Elected Officials and Appointed Officers will probably be the hardest. Mayor Watts concurred. Town Manager Pollitt stated he will send out examples of other Charters he has reviewed for the Committee to look at. Councilor Britton stated to send only the sections that the Committee will be working on, not the whole Charter. Mayor Watts stated under Elected Officials a vice-mayor needs to be added. Mayor Watts stated there needs to be a clear-cut definition of what each person is supposed to do e.g. the town manager, the town attorney, what the mayor's duties are – is the mayor a figurehead only.

Mayor Watts stated for July the Committee will work on Elected Officials, August will be Appointment of Officers, September/October will finish up with Administrative Department(s) and Financial Provisions, and Miscellaneous. This was agreeable with everyone present.

Town Manager Pollitt stated he look at about twenty (20) different Charters, and asked how many the Committee would like to see. Councilor Britton asked Town Manager Pollitt if he would narrow it down to the top 2-3 and send those to the Council.

Councilor Britton asked Town Manager Pollitt if he would also highlight the area they are supposed to be looking at so they can go right to it.

Town Manager Pollitt stated the meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of each month @ 6:00 PM. Mayor Watts asked if the meeting for July can be pushed back a week as he will be on vacation the first Thursday of July. The July meeting was changed to Thursday, July 9, 2020 @ 6:00PM, possibly meeting at Locher Field at the pavilion. Town Manager Pollitt stated he had emailed Delegate Campbell's office several times and is still waiting to hear back from him.

Mayor Shane Watts asked all members if they prefer updating the existing Charter or start with a new Charter. All Committee members present concurred on starting with a new Charter.

Mayor Watts adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.