



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes

Charter Commission.

Wednesday, July 14, 2021

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

This meeting of the Duluth Charter Commission was held by other electronic means pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021 in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Members of the Charter Commission participated through video conference.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Anderson, Britton, Greene, Kimber, Lyttle, Mangan, Matheson, Palmer, Yaeger, Stolee, President Ness - 12
Absent - 0

ACCEPTANCE OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused Absences: Commissioner Gardner, Vice President Seim

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[CH019](#) Meeting Minutes for January 13, 2021

Motion was made by Commissioner Britton, seconded by Commissioner Kimber to approve. Motion carried unanimously.

Absent: Commissioners Anderson, Gardner, Seim

NEW BUSINESS

[CH020](#) Charter Commission Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group Findings

This Study Committee Report was received. President Ness inquired about what additional action the Study Group was seeking from the Commission. Commissioner Matheson indicated they would propose accepting the recommended changes to the Charter and then request the City Council review and vote on the proposed changes.

President Ness inquired about the nature of some of the recommended changes, as some were specific language changes and some were potentially City operational, and asked how the Group was thinking about the nature of the recommendations and what the Group thought would be a path for implementation of the changes.

Commissioner Matheson noted that all the Group members were in attendance, but that it was her understanding that the Group would like to include all the

recommendations in the Charter with the exception of Recommendation 6 in order to make them permanent and remove them from politicization.

Commissioner Ness asked Attorney St. George to advise about what the process would be for the Commission to move the recommendations forward. Attorney St. George indicated that the Commission could approve the recommendations and submit them to the Council. City Clerk Helmer stated that the Commission would generally formulate proposed language in Ordinance format and then submit the approved Ordinance to the City Council, or another option is for the Commission to submit a letter recommendation to Council where there is no proposed Charter language.

Commissioner Ness noted potential options for the Commission: first, to accept the Report and forward it to the City Council and City Administration and engage in dialogue and/or the Council could take initiative, put the recommendations into Ordinance form and return them to the Commission; or the Commission could accept the Report and then request staff put the recommendations into Ordinance form for consideration by the Commission which would start the formal process for amending the Charter.

Commissioner Stolee noted that there are a few recommendations, such as the redistricting committee, and other areas that affect personnel, purchasing and wondered how much research the Committee had done regarding position/jurisdiction overlap and what was more appropriate in the Charter versus the Code?

Commissioner Matheson indicated the Group did review staffing and determined that the Chief Equity Officer is more of a “big picture” position and was different from what the current Human Rights Officer is doing, and that the positions should be permanent and identify the importance of that position for the Community.

Attorney St. George indicated that some of the recommendations were conceptual in nature, but that it was, in part, to identify to the community that more work needs to be done in these areas.

Commissioner Stauber inquired about Recommendation 2, and indicated he had concerns about what would happen to the Human Rights Officer position with this change and by making it a permanent part of the Charter, how would the position be filled in the future. He indicated he would also be interested in presenting the research of the Group.

Commissioner Matheson indicated that there are some other positions in the Charter, and the Group wanted to elevate this position to that level as well.

Commissioner Greene noted there had been consideration of removing the term “Chief” and inquired whether the Commission wants to introduce another position with that title and requested clarification about the Ordinance form of amendment. President Ness noted that the process for amending the Charter is in Ordinance form.

The Commission further discussed the Charter Commission role and options for moving the recommendations forward. President Ness noted some of the policy implications and in consideration of the Charter Commissions role recommended

accepting the Report and forwarding the Report to Administration and the City Council for consideration.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britton, seconded by Commissioner Greene, to accept the Study Committee Report and to forward the Report to City Administration and the City Council for consideration, and to request that City Administration report back to the Charter Commission.

The Motion carried unanimously.

Absent: Commissioners Gardner and Seim.

ADJOURNMENT

5:36 p.m.