



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes

Charter Commission.

Wednesday, October 13, 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 Britton, Greene, Kimber, Lyttle, Mangan, Matheson, Stauber, Seim, Stolee, Ness - 10

Absent: Commissioners Anderson, Gardner, Palmer, Yaeger - 4

ACCEPTANCE OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused Absences: Commissioner Astrin-Haire

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[CH021](#)

Meeting Minutes for July 14, 2021

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

Absent: Commissioners Anderson, Gardner, Lyttle, Astrin-Haire, Yaeger

CORRESPONDENCE

[CH025](#)

Chief Administrative Officer Correspondence Regarding Charter Commission Explicit/Implicit Barriers Study Group Report.

This Item CH025 was received.

Commissioner Ness noted that the correspondence was appreciative of the work of the Study Group and seemed in line with ongoing work of the administration in terms of redistricting efforts as well as the City's Equity Action Team, and extending notice timelines, which is often dictated by State and local law.

Commissioner Matheson stated she was pleased to see the response and is hoping to review the correspondence more closely. She noted that there were items that they were hoping to be added to the Charter and would like to review that but was pleased to see the attention being given to the identified items.

Commissioner Ness noted that this may be a good segway to a discussion for the

Commission about whether the Commission wanted to explore its role and generally what decisions are best made through the Charter or through local elected officials as policy makers. Commissioner Ness noted that the Charter, by design, is a less responsive document and akin to a local Constitution, so when there is a change it is structural in nature and core to the functioning of City government as opposed to operational that may be better addressed through Ordinance and City Code.

Commissioner Ness noted that the recommendations made in the correspondence partly reflected thoughts that some of the items were administrative and could be done through the current administration structure.

Commissioner Britton noted that the Minneapolis Charter Commission was working through potentially overly detailed Charter language, specifically dictating how many police officers the City should have, and that seems overly restrictive and goes beyond what a Charter should do.

Commissioner Ness stated that perhaps at a future meeting the Commission could explore the issue of organizations using the Charter Amendment process to push policy oriented or political agendas and the Commission could have a thoughtful discussion about what is the role of the Commission and where does the Commission want to put its energy if the Commission is approached with that type of policy discussion.

Commissioner Matheson stated she agreed and noted that Commissioners are appointed and then there is very little guidance.

Commissioner Ness noted that Commissioners want to be impactful, to use the platform, and to make a positive difference, so having that discussion about how to fulfill the role in the best possible way and defining the role between elected officials and the Commissions role as appointed officials and students of the Charter may be beneficial.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

[CH022](#)

Charter Commission Statement of Purpose Discussion and Charter Commission Handbook.

Clerk Helmer shared the Duluth Charter Commission Handbook. Clerk Helmer noted that the Handbook includes a synopsis of information that Commissioners need in their role, including a preamble Statement of Purpose which may be helpful as a reference point for the Commission's ongoing discussions. The Clerk noted the Handbook included a copy of the Charter and applicable Statutes.

Commissioner Ness noted that might be a helpful document for the Commission to review and to guide the Commission's ongoing discussion about its role and that type of activity may highlight and bring particular points to the table for discussion.

Commissioner Ness inquired about next steps related to the Charter

Commission's review and whether the group as a whole should discuss or a subcommittee should be formed.

Commissioner Matheson indicated that it may be beneficial for the whole Commission to have a discussion first before a working group is formed so there is more direction before the working group is formed.

Commissioner Ness mentioned it may helpful to have a facilitator for the discussion as well.

[CH024](#)

Election of President and Vice President

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously carried to elect Commissioner Stauber as President.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously carried to elect Commissioner Matheson as Vice President.

ADJOURNMENT

5:25 p.m.