

**Snohomish County  
Charter Review Commission**  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Robert J. Drewel Building  
Jackson Board Room  
Wednesday, June 8, 2016  
7:00 p.m.  
**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

Chair Gregerson  
Vice-Chair Terwilliger  
Vice-Chair Miller  
Commissioner Chase  
Commissioner Donner  
Commissioner Fior  
Commissioner Liias  
Commissioner Matthews (via phone)  
Commissioner O'Donnell  
Commissioner Roulstone  
Commissioner Stanford  
Auditor Wiekel  
Rick Robertson, Commission Attorney  
Chris Roberts, Commission Analyst

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Gregerson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Barton, Kelly, Koster, Valentine absent. Commissioner Chase arrived at 7:05 pm

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lacey Harper from the office of Executive Somers distributed a letter to the Commission.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Commissioners discussed a typo found in the minutes.

Commissioner Chase arrived at 7:05 pm

**Commissioner Roulstone moved to approve the May 25 minutes with additional corrections. Vice Chair seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

**1. ENLARGE COUNCIL FROM 5 TO 7 MEMBERS**

Chair Gregerson summarized the language and mentioned decisions the Commission needs to make. Chair Gregerson discussed reports that the costs of the proposal would be around

\$800,000 per year.

Commissioner Roulstone expressed caution about adding money to the budget. He mentioned that the cost estimates are current costs, not what the costs would be in five years.

Commissioner Fior arrived at 7:09, Commissioner Donner arrived at 7:10.

Commissioner Liias stated that the only costs involved in the proposal are the additional salaries of two new councilmembers. Other costs are discretionary decisions made by the county council. He supported changing four votes to five votes of the council for special circumstances.

Vice Chair Terwilliger asked about the projected population of the county in 2022 and expressed that the population would need to be significantly higher than 150,000 before the number of councilmembers need to increase.

Vice Chair Miller stated that the Commission should look at the population numbers in 2022 and 2026. He mentioned that his preference for more representation than worry about the budget impacts.

Chair Gregerson stated the median 2035 population is 950,000 in the comprehensive plan.

Commissioner O'Donnell stated that members of the public have not contacted the Commission about the proposal. He stated the executive has come twice to the Commission to express his concerns about costs. Commissioner O'Donnell suggested the council would cut from law and justice, human services and other programs before cutting its own budget. He suggested the ombudsman will increase responsiveness in the county.

Commissioner Liias reminded the Commission that the proposal gives the council five years to plan for additional costs. He stated the county continues to grow. Commissioner Liias stated that the City of Stanwood has one councilmember for each 900 residents. He expressed support for asking the public about the proposal.

Vice Chair Miller stated that Commission only makes recommendations to the people about changes to the charter.

Chair Gregerson clarified the action today is to clarify language. She stated that the Commission will hold a public hearing on June 22.

Commissioner Donner stated that district courts do not have the same workload as they did ten years ago because of annexations, but there has been not been an effort to reduce the number of judges. He stated the council does not need any more people.

Commissioner Fior mentioned that she has not heard a good argument why the council should expand.

Vice Chair Terwilliger expressed his support for changing the vote totals, changing the number of Charter Review Commissioners to two per district, and allowing the Charter Review Commission to decide on a chair.

Commissioner Roulstone asked why there needed to be an odd-number of Charter Review Commissioners.

Commissioner Liias stated the Charter Review Commission could be an even-number or allow

the Commission to select a chair who can break a tie. He reminded Commissioners about Councilmember Wright's statement to the Commission that more Commissioners would allow the County to have a greater regional presence. He stated democracy costs money and we want our voices to be heard.

Commissioner O'Donnell stated that as the county gets bigger, the county gets smaller as cities have annexed unincorporated areas in the county, providing more representation. He stated there is not a good reason for expanding the council. He expressed a preference for adding an ombudsman this year and revisiting the proposal during the next Charter Review Commission.

Commissioner Roulstone mentioned that if there was a big need to expand, the council or the executive would push for the proposal. He reminded Commissioners that the county council can propose a charter amendment.

Chair Gregerson stated that we have heard voices about concerns for representation on the county council, and heard interest for the proposal before taking office. She stated that Councilmembers also represent cities.

Commissioner Liias expressed his support for a supermajority of five votes, two members of the Charter Review Commission from each district, and support for the implementation piece.

Commissioners discussed the need for a separate proposition about the change to the Charter Review Commission and the interrelated nature of each amendment. Commission Attorney Robertson stated that the ballot title mentions procedural and related changes. He mentioned that the word count for ballot titles is 75 words.

Commissioner Roulstone asked about the difference between increasing councilmembers and adding council districts. Attorney Robertson stated that council districts are a term of art.

Commissioner Liias wondered if staff had enough feedback on the proposal?

Commissioner Fior supported staff moving forward on drafting the proposal.

Chair Gregerson discussed the June 15, 2016, hearing.

Commissioner Roulstone expressed support for the ballot language.

Commissioner O'Donnell asked where the 2023 date of implementation came from. Chair Gregerson stated that the date allowed for the districting committee to draw new district lines.

Attorney Robertson suggested the Commission carefully review the transition provisions.

Commissioner Chase expressed comfort with the ballot language and comfort with the people making the decision to expand the council.

Commissioner Matthews asked about the effect on the airport commission. Chair Gregerson stated that draft language of the proposal would be one member from each council district.

## 2. CHANGE DATE OF COUNTY ELECTIONS

Chair Gregerson summarized the proposal with transitions beginning with the elections in 2017. She stated the county could expect savings with changing the date of the election, but

could increase costs for other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Liias stated the transition makes sense and the question for the Commission is whether they want to voters to weigh in on the proposal.

Commissioner Roulstone expressed concern about unintended consequences on other cities and other jurisdictions. He wanted more information on the ballot costs for other jurisdiction.

Commissioner Liias stated that cities are assigned a pro rata cost for the election. He stated that increased costs will be spread across cities.

Vice Chair Terwilliger stated that the pro rata cost would be spread out across cities and special purpose districts, and no jurisdiction would see a large increase in costs. He also mentioned that in odd-numbered year elections, the state pays for a share of the election costs if there are statewide measures on the ballot.

Vice Chair Terwilliger stated he was torn on the issue. He stated that the argument about people being more aware of elections in even-numbered years is true. He stated that even if there was a large drop-off in even-numbered years, you could still expect 55-60% of voters voting for county executive. Getting to that turnout in odd-numbered years is difficult. He mentioned that there would be less press coverage in even-numbered years, but more voters.

Auditor Weikel expressed concern about moving elections to even-numbered years because the press will not cover the races.

Commissioner Liias mentioned that most counties in Washington conduct their elections in even-numbered years. He stated that press coverage depends on the intensity of the race and most people rely on voter pamphlet statement.

Commissioner O'Donnell asked about the effect of the proposal on school levies. Vice Chair Terwilliger stated that most school levies are in the spring.

Commissioner Roulstone stated this proposal would be budget neutral and the people should decide the issue.

Vice Chair Terwilliger stated this proposal requires a charter amendment, while other issues the Commission is discussing are additions to the charter.

### 3. EVALUATE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR PAINE FIELD

Chair Gregerson summarized the draft language. She stated that Commissioner Kelly sent an email asking whether the airport commission could be combine with the proposal to create a human rights commission.

Commissioner Roulstone wondered if the Commission should add language in the Charter to create commissions as they see fit, rather than focusing on each individual commission.

Vice Chair Terwilliger asked if the proposals to combine the proposals regarding the human rights commission and the airport commission. Attorney Robertson answered that the proposals probably could not be combined. He stated that the county council has ample authority to create commissions and advisory bodies. He stated it would be difficult to create a single set of parameters for all of the county commissions.

Commissioner Liias stated that the language in the Charter should be the minimum amount to

accomplish its purpose. He suggested that language relating to reimbursement is not necessary.

Vice Chair Terwilliger mentioned that the proposal and the human rights commission were put forward because they are critical to the county and need to be called out in the Charter. The council has the authority to create any number of commissions. He stated that placing the proposal on the ballot means that it is so important to the operation of county government that it cannot be left to the county council and executive.

Chair Gregerson stated the language appears to be ok by the Commission, with the exception of the reimbursement language.

Attorney Robertson stated the idea for next meeting would contain clean versions of ballot language as reviewed by the Commission. Attorney Robertson and Commissioners discussed amending the Charter relating to reimbursement language in other parts of the Charter.

#### OLD BUSINESS

Chair Gregerson stated that staff will send out press releases about the public hearing on June 22.

Vice Chair Terwilliger highlighted the executive's letter about the impact of the proposed changes to the timeline of the budget.

Commissioners discussed the original idea behind the budget proposal.

Commissioners discussed the agenda for June 15 and whether there would be a work product coming from the meeting.

**Commissioner Liias moved to cancel the June 15 meeting. Commissioner O'Donnell seconded the motion.**

Attorney Robertson stated that more than half of the proposals contain suggested changes to the text of the amendment or the ballot title.

Commissioner Liias stated there was consensus on the changes that needed to be made.

Commissioner Fior expressed her preference to meet on June 15 and a preference to present clean versions at the public hearing.

Commissioners discussed whether votes would be taken on June 15.

Commissioner suspended their rules to allow public comment. Ms. Bush wondered if the proposals would be published before the public hearing.

**The motion failed 4-6. Vice Chair Miller and Commissioners Chase, Liias and Stanford in support. Chair Gregerson, Vice Chair Terwilliger and Commissioners Donner, Fior, Matthews, and Roulstone in opposition.**

Attorney Robertson stated the Auditor's office reviewed the election proposals.

Commissioner Chase asked if the amendments could be categorized on whether they amend existing provisions or add new provisions to the charter.

Attorney Robertson encouraged Commissioners to review the ballot headings.

Commissioners discussed holding the public hearing in the public hearing room on the first floor of the building.

Commissioners discussed the format of the public hearing, specifically the idea of the staff presenting objective material at the hearing.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Commissioner Fior moved to adjourn. Commissioner Donner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Gregerson adjourned the meeting at 8:39 pm.