

## **CITY OF APOPKA**

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**Minutes of the Charter Review Committee Meeting held February 27, 2014, at 6:30 p.m., in the City of Apopka Council Chambers.**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Linda Laurendeau, Chair	Vince Gray, Member
Pastor Doug Bankson, Member	Bill Spiegel, Member
Brian Furgala, Member	Tommy Harrison, Member
Arlen E. Mizell, Member	Diane Velazquez, Member
Jim Greene, Member	

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Doug Gondera, Member  
Alexander Smith, Member

**ALSO PRESENT:** Bill McLeod, Committee Attorney; Bea Franqui, Administrative Services Manager & Committee Liaison; and Janice G. Goebel, City Clerk & Committee Recorder

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Cline Walters, Tenita Reid, Bobby Reid, Edward Bass, Suzanne Kidd, and Theresa Mott

**PRESS PRESENT:** John Peery - The Apopka Chief

**CALL TO ORDER** - Chairperson Linda Laurendeau called the meeting to Order.

**DEVOTIONAL** – Pastor Doug Bankson gave the Invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA** - The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was led by Chairperson Laurendeau.

**WELCOME** - Chairperson Laurendeau welcomed everyone to the meeting, and advised there were speaker cards available for anyone wishing to speak. She affirmed a new member has been appointed to the committee, Doug Gondera, who was not able to be present this evening.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** – Chairperson Laurendeau asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Mr. Furgala pointed out his name was misspelled. With no other corrections, Chairperson Laurendeau said the minutes were approved as corrected.

## **DISCUSSION ON NUMBER OF CITY COMMISSIONERS**

- **City of Apopka charter: 2.01 - Composition of city council.**
  - **A mayor and four city commissioners shall constitute the city council of the city (the “city council”).**

Chairperson Laurendeau said next the issue is a discussion of the number of city commissioners and if they complete their discussion, coming to a consensus about the recommendation to council, they will then move on to talk about term limits. She recapped the discussion from the last meeting of whether to raise the number on the city council by 2 seats, and whether they should use 60,000 – 70,000 population as a trigger point. She opened the meeting for discussion.

There was discussion concerning the charter change process, and the number of years it would take to hold a vote to approve the charter change, and then how long it would take to vote the new council seats into existence.

Pastor Bankson said it had been suggested to him rather than tying an addition of seats to a population number, why not have a clause in the Charter to review the Charter periodically and once they get to the place of needing additional commissioners, then let it be determined at that time.

Chairperson Laurendeau reiterated two suggestions by the public or members of the committee from the last meeting being (1) qualifying by petition, and (2) to establish a regular charter review by a designated number of years.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of years to recommend for regular charter review, and varied from every 2-3 years to every 10 years, to a trigger mechanism for adding the number of commissioners, and what was best for Apopka..

Mr. Greene said this ties into another issue they will be considering later, and commented that it is good to have each elected commissioner responsible to all voters city-wide. He declared if all commissioners were to be elected at large, and then having a slightly greater number would provide additional diversification and be less expensive than dividing the City into districts.

Mr. Harrison said what he is hearing from residents is that the City has not reached a point of need for the additional commissioners, so perhaps the committee recommendation should be to call for another charter review in 2 years to address this issue.

Discussion continued regarding the number of commissioners and a regular charter review.

**PUBLIC INPUT** - Chairperson Laurendeau opened the meeting to public input.

Cline Walters, 222 N Central, said he personally felt adding 2 more seats would be good for Apopka allowing a broader, diverse representation. He suggested they prepare for growth and add the 2 commissioners as quickly as possible to get through this growth.

No one else wishing to speak at this time, Chairperson Laurendeau closed the public portion of the meeting.

**DISCUSSION (time permitting)**

Mr. Greene said he was also looking at diversification, but felt more input was needed from the public. He spoke in favor of each commissioner being responsible to all of the voters of the city, and advised he didn't feel there was a dire need for 2 additional commissioners at this time.

There was further discussion concerning when to add the new commissioners, in light of the anticipated growth to Apopka.

Ms. Gray inquired what area the new commissioners would cover.

Chairperson Laurendeau advised the commissioners are elected at large by every elector in the city and they serve the entire city. No matter where one lives in the city, they can call any of the Council members with their concerns.

Pastor Bankson said he was hearing a consensus for adding diversity, this being a good purpose for the addition now by being ahead of the growth rather than waiting for it to happen.

Mr. Greene said there is no guarantee you would get more diversity in an election, as it would be dependent on who ran, and who was elected.

Mr. Spiegel said diversity would also be obtained by the sheer number of opinions obtained.

**MOTION was made by Mr. Harrison, and seconded by Mr. Greene, that the committee recommend the addition of 2 commissioners. Motion carried by a show of hands, 7 ayes, 2 nays.**

Chairperson Laurendeau opened discussion on term limits.

Ms. Velasquez spoke in favor of term limits, noting that it allows for each council member elected to set goals and strive to achieve those goals within their term limit. She also said term limits allows for an open pathway for others to be elected with fresh ideas, and allows for a constant regeneration and opening for young people raised in the City to return as leaders.

Mr. Mizell and Mr. Greene spoke in opposition to term limits, saying the voters have a chance to elect new people with 4-year terms, and elections being held every 2 years.

Mr. Furgala said term limits tend to reduce the field of candidates.

Pastor Bankson opposed like term limits saying it tells him who he cannot vote for. He said anyone can run for office, and the voters make the decision of when a council member has met their term limit.

Mr. Spiegel said the accountability of term limits needs to be shifted to the voter and term limits are every election cycle, if somebody were not performing or being respectful to the needs of the constituents, they would be voted out.

Mr. Harrison expressed his concerns that term limits could squelch an individual serving who has vision for a long term project into making it happen. He believes in the voting process and if a commissioner steps out of line, the citizens will eliminate the individual.

Chairperson Laurendeau declared she was opposed to term limits.

### **PUBLIC INPUT (Additional)**

Cline Walters, 222 N Central, recounted when his father was an Apopka Commissioner, serving for 13 years, and he decided not to run, even without term limits. He said there were a lot of people who have served this city well for many years, and asked if the committee decides on term limits, to make it 4 terms (16 years), making it a length of time that someone can get something accomplished and keep senior leadership on the council.

Suzanne Kidd, 1260 Lexington Parkway, spoke in support of term limits, saying 2 terms would be too short and suggested recommending 3 terms, allowing somebody new to know they have an opening they could step into and contribute.

No one else wishing to speak at this time, Chairperson Laurendeau closed the public portion of the meeting.

Mr. Harrison said the public needs to be informed the committee will be discussing term limits at the next meeting.

Chairperson Laurendeau noted the agenda for today's meeting included: Discussion on term limits (time permitting). She inquired if they wanted to hold off a vote until the next meeting to provide the opportunity for people to speak on the matter.

Discussion ensued and it was the consensus of the committee, although committee members appeared to feel strongly about not recommending term limits, to wait and give the public an opportunity to provide more input.

Chairperson Laurendeau stated the next meeting agenda will include continuance of discussion on term limits and if time allows, discussion on districting. She encouraged committee members seeking input from the public, to inquire of them regarding both topics.

Attorney McLeod advised if they were going to have a process wherein there will be a presentation by staff or additional information provided before discussion, this would also need to be published as well to allow people to know there will be an education process preceding discussion on the issue.

An unidentified woman from the audience inquired about residency requirements for a candidate.

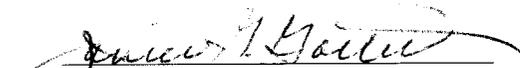
Chairperson Laurendeau explained you must be a resident within the city limits for 1 year prior to the election in order to run for office. In order to vote in the election you must be registered within 30 days prior to the election.

**ADJOURN** - The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

ATTEST:



Linda Laurendeau, Committee Chair



Janice G. Goebel, City Clerk