

## **CITY OF APOPKA**

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**Minutes of the Charter Review Committee Meeting held January 23, 2014, at 6:30 p.m., in the City of Apopka Council Chambers.**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Linda Laurendeau, Chair

Pastor Doug Bankson, Member

Brian Frugala, Member

Arlen E. Mizell, Member

Vince Gray, Member

Bill Spiegel, Member

Tommy Harrison, Member

Diane Velazquez, Member

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Alexander Smith, and Jim Greene

Ms. Franqui announced she received an email from Diane Faircloth, indicating she was not a member of the committee. Chairperson Laurendeau said she would make administration aware of the vacancy.

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

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Barbara McLeod, Theresa Mott, Barb Zakszewski, Suzanne Kidd, Jack Douglas, and Sam Ruth

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

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

**DEVOTIONAL** – Chairperson Laurendeau called for a moment of personal prayer.

**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, especially recognizing those of the public attending.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - MOTION** by Mr. Mizell, seconded by Mr. Harrison, to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2014 meeting, as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson Laurendeau announced to the public in attendance that speaker cards are available and the issue taken up at this meeting is the issue of the number of city commissioner seats. Speaker time is limited to 4 minutes, and time may not be passed to someone else.

## **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 referenced a chart distributed to the committee members outlining the population and council/commission composition of various Florida cities. (The chart is incorporated into and made a part of these meeting minutes.)

The meeting was opened for discussion.

Mr. Frugala said Apopka is currently at a population of 42,000; however, based on different sources, it is to be believed that Apopka’s population will grow to 80,000 by year 2020. He said the Councils of each city on the chart with that size population consisted of 7 commissioners.

Mr. Mizell said Apopka will still operate as a Strong Mayor that votes, so there will need to be an addition of 2 commissioners.

Mr. Spiegel stressed the need to be looking forward. He said it would appear by the chart that a pattern exists for 1 council member per 10,000 population.

Mr. Harrison noted the 60,000 population point appeared to be the level where it began deviating from the 5-member commission to a 7-member commission. Unless it is a budget issue, or some other restrictions, we could comfortably have a larger number. He also said that the chart may be listing demographics, but there could be a different land mass making up that community. He suggested there is room for growth and no reason not to start it early if it is supported.

Mr. Spiegel said that the issue in Apopka is not representation. Currently the Mayor and Commissioners have been very approachable. He referenced some history of the City Council members function in the community where each one was responsible for overseeing a different city department. That has since changed with responsibility removed from the commissioners to more administrative. He concluded that it is about approachability and not accessibility of the commissioners.

Mr. Harrison inquired what the official duties of the current members of the city commission included, and the information not readily available, Chairperson Laurendeau asked staff to provide that information to the committee members prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Mizell asked if it was possible to keep the current number of commissioners and as population increases to 60,000 then 2 new commissioners could be added to the City Council at the next general election? He said, in talking with other agencies, it was suggested the benchmark be at the 70,000 population.

Chairperson Laurendeau said that is within the purview of the committee to make that recommendation to the City Council. It will then be the decision of the City Council if the recommendation is accepted and placed on the ballot.

Pastor Bankson inquired about the benchmark and suggested a look at the economics of Apopka, to consider the cost involved by increasing the number of commissioners, and the impact to property taxes.

Ms. Velazquez noted the City of Apopka has been a Strong Mayor and 4 seat Council since the population was at 13,000. She asked if there was a point that the City would ask about a benchmark? She suggested that as the population grows, so the economy grows, thereby not requiring an increase in taxes to support the additional commissioners.

There was further discussion regarding where to set the benchmark, 60,000 or 70,000.

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

Barbara Zakszewski, 3674 Rochelle Lane, suggested that districts need to be of discussion prior to deciding on the number of commissioners. She advocated for single-member districts. She also suggested the addition of a scheduled Charter review.

Jack Douglas, 2149 Eagles Rest Drive, said using the position not to add to the number of commissioners based on an increase in taxes is not a valid reason. He said a decision needs to be based on real facts.

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

**DISCUSSION (time permitting)**

Mr. Harrison expressed concern that there be enough diversity in numbers to ensure the business of the community is properly addressed.

Chairperson Laurendeau said there will be many issues to be discussed regarding districts, which is the reason for addressing the number of commissioners issue at this time. She said that once the matter of districts is decided, that if needed, then the number of commissioners can again be addressed.

Ms. Velazquez questioned how district representation will affect the un-incorporated areas of the city.

Chairperson Laurendeau stated that those residing in the un-incorporated areas of the County fall under the representation of Orange or Lake County; not the City of Apopka. She gave an overview of what areas of the City, while appearing to be a part of the City, are actually represented by the County.

Mr. Harrison inquired if the committee is limited to the 3 issues, to which Attorney McLeod said the 3 issues are what has been authorized by the City Council; however, other issues may be recommended to the City Council.

Pastor Bankson inquired if it would be beneficial, at this time, to increase the number of commissioners.

Mr. Mizell spoke of the many accomplishments under the City Council.

Following Chairperson Laurendeau inquiring about a consensus of the Committee, Mr. Harrison recommended a delay in the formulation of the motion to the next meeting, allowing the Committee members time to collectively seek input from the community.

There was further discussion concerning setting a benchmark at 60,000 - 70,000 population, and adding two (2) commissioners.

Mr. Frugala expressed concern with the length of time since the last Charter review, and said that while benchmarking is a consideration, that a more aggressive approach be taken to ensure a time for review.

Mr. Harrison inquired if the recommendation would be voted on by the City Council, and could the City Council accept, reject, or adjust the benchmark?

Chairperson Laurendeau said the committee will be recommending to the City Council, and the City Council will make the final decision on what changes to the Charter, if any, will be taken to the voters.

She continued that the committee could also ask the City Council to include such things as a routine schedule for Charter review.

Mr. Spiegel inquired whether we should look at benchmarking geographically rather than by population, which prompted discussion concerning the impacts of annexations, and the planned economic development to take place in Apopka and the surrounding area.

In response to discussion, Chairperson Laurendeau explained that the 2 additional Council seats would be elected to separate election cycles, so the election of one would be for a 2 year term and the other one would be for a 4 year term.

There was consensus of the committee to take more time to study the benchmarking issue, and seek input from the residents.

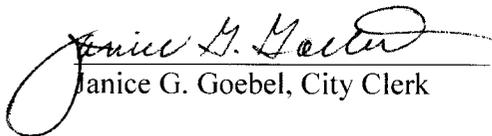
### **PUBLIC INPUT (Additional)**

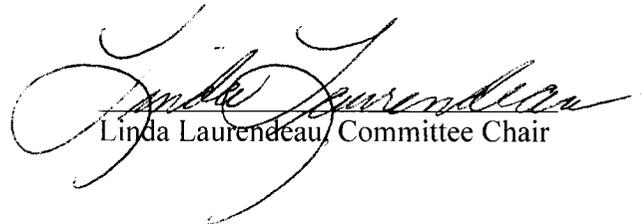
Suzanne Kidd, 1260 Lexington Parkway, asked that the information distributed to the committee members also be made available to the public. Ms. Franqui said it would be posted.

Jack Douglas, 2149 Eagles Rest Drive, asked the committee to consider, and make recommendation to the City Council, that the petition method of qualifying be added to the Charter, as a second option for qualifying.

**ADJOURN** - The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Janice G. Goebel, City Clerk

  
Linda Laurendeau, Committee Chair