

MINUTES Wednesday, September 12, 2018

4 PM

Charter Revision

Carnegie Town Hall

Commission Meeting

235 West Tenth Street

Members Present: Robert Thimjon, Pauline Poletes, Sue Aguilar, Jill Entenman, Justin Smith

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Daniel J. Brown, Assistant City Attorney; and Cari Hanzel, Paralegal/Clerk

1. Call To Order

Commission Chair Robert Thimjon called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.

2. Approval Of Minutes

A. June 13, 2018

A motion was made by Justin Smith and seconded by Sue Aguilar to approve the minutes dated June 13, 2018.

Vote to approve: Roll Call: Yeses, Robert Thimjon, Pauline Poletes, Sue Aguilar, Jill Entenman, Justin Smith, 5. Noes, 0.

Motion Passed.

3. Old Business

A. Charter Article IX - Transition/Separability

Section 9.05. Schedule, (f) salary of mayor and council members

The mayor's salary having been established in the amount of \$75,000 by this provision in 1995, each other council member shall receive an annual salary i

n
1) the amount of fifteen (15) percent of the mayor's salary. The mayor's salary shall automatically be adjusted annually for inflation or deflation with each

other council persons salary thereafter adjusted to be equal to fifteen (15) percent of the mayor's new adjusted salary. No meeting fees shall be paid to the

mayor nor city council members.

2) Compensation and Benefits Study - Salaries of Mayors and Council Members

Danny Brown, Assistant City Attorney, stated there was no new information available but that the Tom Huber, Assistant Director of Finance, and Bill O'Toole, Director of Human Resources, were present to answer any questions.

Sue Aguilar asked questions about the study that was conducted. She asked whether or not the same cities were used for researching the Mayor/City Council positions as were used for researching the staff positions. O'Toole stated they were.

Aguilar asked if this information has been published or presented to the City Council. O'Toole stated this information was requested as an addendum to the primary research so this data was submitted directly to the Charter Revision Commission.

She asked if the results of this study were incorporated into the 2019 budget for the staff positions? O'Toole stated yes, they were.

Aguilar and O'Toole discussed the variations in the charts including the compensation rates in St. Paul, Minnesota and whether or not the City Councilors in Omaha, Nebraska were full or part time.

Jill Entenman wanted to know where the funds would come from if an increase was on the ballot and approved. O'Toole stated there were a variety of factors that would need to be considered which included: the timing of the approval; direction given from upper Management; and reorganizing priorities within the Council's budget. Entenman and O'Toole noted that we are doing well for salaries given our community is vibrant and progressive.

O'Toole provided the commission with an update regarding additional compensation provided to the Mayor and City Council regarding: mileage, benefit package costs, car allowances, cell phone stipends, and workman's compensation. He also provided information regarding the City's self-insured health plan costs and the fact that part time employees do not qualify for health insurance coverage.

Smith reminded the commission and audience members that the Charter Revision Commission does not have any specific proposals and has not received any recommendations at this time from either City Council Members, citizens or the Commission Members.

He stated that only two entities, the City Council and the Charter Commission Members, can propose amendments. He asked if the City Council can propose an amendment to adjust their own salaries. Brown stated the City Council could pass an ordinance to do that; he noted the Charter addresses salary, not benefits. (Later in the meeting, Brown clarified that section 2.04 makes reference to the employee benefits program being available to the Mayor, but not to the City Council. Brown stated the Council could not pass an ordinance that makes them eligible for city benefits).

Discussion was held about future meetings to discuss this topic. It was noted that ballot issues would be considered on the April, 2020 ballot. Items that need to be considered include what is an appropriate amount for the Mayor's and City Council Member's salaries; should any increases be based on a percentage of the Mayor's salary or should they be a flat increase.

Additional discussion was held regarding the fact that some commission members may be replaced with new members as their terms are ending in March, 2019. Should future conversations be delayed until the new members are on board so they have an understanding of the issues and decisions made?

Brown reminded the Commission that any recommendations that are made prior to the April, 2020 ballot could be handled separately with a special election.

The next meeting of the Charter Revision Commission will be scheduled for May, 2019. This will allow any new Charter Revision Commission members an opportunity to review the issues and provide additional time for any input regarding this subject. Thimjon noted that if the members have questions or need additional research, the City Attorney's Office would be able to assist as the first point of contact.

4. Public Input

Council Member Greg Neitzert stated that the amount of time spent on council items depends on the Council Member - some spend more time than others.

He recommended that if there are adjustments to the City Council Member wages, consideration should be given to the time commitment necessary so that the position would not be out of reach for everyone. This position is part time and should be accessible to people from all walks of life and not limited to those who can only apply if they are independently wealthy. He stated that any changes should be simple and that, as this is a part time job, benefits should not be included. He noted that adding health insurance to the package would be a big impact on the city's budget.

Smith asked Neitzert to estimate how many hours he spends on City Council related activities in an average week. Neitzert stated that the average is 20-30 hours per week. Neitzert stated there are weeks when he takes vacation time from his full time job for council related activities.

5. Open Discussion

The Agenda for May, 2019 will include this topic for additional consideration.

The Commission requested that a survey be conducted among current and past City Council Members to include questions regarding the average number of hours a week used for City Council or constituent activity. This should reflect time spent on: attending City Council meetings, meetings with Administration or staff, public events, responding to citizen requests or research, and any other direct or indirect responsibilities related to the position. The survey should also request the number of hours spent when serving as the City Council Chair or Vice Chair, as opposed to a Council Member. Additional survey questions should include whether or not they feel the current salary is commensurate with the workload or if it should be increased or decreased; does the individual feel this subject should go to a vote of the people; and should benefits be included in this position.

Thimjon stated he will work with staff to get a survey compiled.

Thimjon thanked the members of the Commission for their hard work and input and thanked the Directors and staff for gathering the information for this meeting.

6. Adjournment

Commission Chair Robert Thimjon adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

Tamara Jorgensen, MMC

Assistant City Clerk