

**Public Hearing of Charter Review Commission**  
**June 18, 2008**  
**Cuyahoga Community College Metro Campus**

Charter Review Commission Chairperson Phyllis Cleveland began the meeting at 6:28 PM and proceeded with introductions of some of the Charter Review Members that were in attendance (Kevin Kelley, Roosevelt Coats, Robert Triozzi, Bill Callahan, Vickie Johnson, Anton Farmsby, and Greg Huth).

The Chairperson explained to the audience the set format of the meeting and Richard Horvath, Assistant Director of the Law Department came to the front of the room to explain what the charter is to the audience in attendance. Chairperson Cleveland then explained to the audience about the process being used for the charter commission. The Commission would receive testimony from the audience at various public hearings that are being held through the city and then the Commission will meet and make decision on those charter recommendations that have been submitted.

The Chairperson also indicated that 3 minutes will be allotted to members of the audience to present their concerns and ideas to the Commission members.

**First Speaker** - 3 main points were brought up to the Commission which were the reduction of city council, making council members become more accountable and changing the terms of office from four to two year terms. Resident indicated that he is not in agreement with reducing the size of council, however there needs to be more accountability of all council members. Citizen suggested that there should be a 2 year term instead of the present 4 year term in order to make all of the council members work harder, thus making them becoming more accountable to the citizen in their wards. Citizen also suggested to the commission members that citizens should be allowed to address the council at council meetings, since this is down in other communities.

**Speaker 2** - Republican, West Park - spoke about the reduction of council and commented that the typical council ward is the same size as any suburb in the region. The salary of a Council member is comparable to a Mayor who runs a suburb. People have a right to challenge a councilperson at a reasonable price. The cost for running

for a council seat would increase by 19% if there was a reduction. This could take away the right of city residents to run for public office. There is not many people who could run for office because the cost would be too high. The business and council proposals has disadvantages.

**Speaker 3** - Accountability where is it, especially since it has already been approved by the citizens, and this is not happening. Why somebody isn't held accountable needs to be explained. Citizen mentioned that Anton Farmsby, the chairperson of the civil service subcommittee recommended that the subcommittee be eliminated and wants an answer as to why this is so. Citizen also expressed concern that the voice of public is not being heard and the same problems could still occur and that the process is unfair.

Some of the people in the audience raised the question when will the citizens know what the commission has decided on civil service? Such decisions have to be approved at least 60 days before the general election according to Kevin Kelley.

**Speaker 4** - raised a question about the proposed city council reduction from 21 to 17 members, citizen questions how is that number arrived at, and will a scientific methodology be used to determine the number of council members based on the city's population.

(Council has engaged a consultant to determine this)

**Speaker 5** - Spoke about a very casual approach is being taken to a depressed city and commented about the number of meetings that council members have missed and that has to change. Recommended that council be reduced to 7 council members and 4 members elected at large, which would be the more appropriate size? Citizen recommended that the city council should put into place an educational committee and believes this is the way to go. Something is wrong with the way the city is presently being governed. Citizen commented that the Council website is a sorry piece of information being given to the public and accused the Plain Dealer newspaper of running City Council.

**Speaker 6** - Commented about the administration trying to get rid of Civil Service and mentioned about the elimination of the civil service subcommittee, and questioned why it is being disbanded. There was also a

comment made that the administration is trying to eliminate jobs in the city.

**Speaker 7** - heavy equipment operator - if you get rid of civil service, employee skilled jobs will be threatened. Another concern raised regarded the use of non-operators on certain jobs. This can be a threat to employee safety especially if the non-skilled operator is not trained properly to operate the equipment. Why is the Law Director on the Charter Review Commission and identified this as a conflict of interest, and the people of the city need to be the ones making the decision. Everybody must work as a team.

**Speaker 5** - believes that the process is skewed and does not see the present process as being fair.

**Speaker 8** - why were the hearings not done earlier and included all of the wards, and expressed concern that the commission members selected to the Charter Review Commission are connected to somebody and this is not good representation and does not give citizens an opportunity. It was also mentioned that the city of Cleveland does not have a vested interest in the citizens of the city.

**Speaker 9** - raises the issue of service delivery and uses Baltimore as an example on how services are delivered. We need to have a transparent government initiative to identify services and post those in a way that are accessible to the citizens. This would also free council members to do their job more effectively without worrying about getting city services to their citizens.

**Speaker 10** - many citizens don't have computers and work during day and how can the citizens find out information on what the Charter review Commission is doing, and how can we expect city council to do justice to the charter.

Make information on all charter activities at city hall or in the downtown libraries.

**Speaker 11** - dissemination of information and using the board of elections and precinct people to pass information to the citizens of Cleveland was also suggested.

Someone commented about a literacy problem in a certain percentage of the city's population and suggested the use

of public service announcements to get the information out to citizens who don't have access to television.

**Speaker 12** - Comment was made about the City Council summer break and raised the question as to whether the city council would have enough time to review the recommendations provided by the Charter Review Commission, and when would these recommendations be decided on by the council?

**Speaker 13** - Stated that he agrees that city council should not be reduced and that the term of office be reduced for two years and that citizens be allowed to speak at council meetings.

**Speaker 14** - asked about subcommittees and what are the chances of these proposals getting on the ballot. Have the sub-committees made any decisions in regards to those charter change recommendations that that they have already reviewed?

A comment was made from the audience regarding what other issues are potentially controversial that citizens need to know about.

There was a comment made by a member of the audience who proposed that the charter review should be done every ten years, due to the advancement in technology.

Communication is another problem and does not believe this is being done carefully and thoroughly and expressed concern about the way things are being done, and feel that the citizens are not going to be listen to.

Chairperson Cleveland mentioned that a video record and DVD was being made of this public hearing.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.