

June 26, 2008
Charter Review Commission
Public Hearing at
Harvard Community Service Center

Councilperson Nina Turner provided the introductions and recognition of public officials and Charter Review Commission members who were in attendance and Chairperson Cleveland called the public hearing to order at 6:56 PM.

Chairperson Cleveland provided an overview on the charter review process and the role and function of the commission. Phyllis Cleveland also recognized Council members and commission members that were present and then had Richard Horvath from the City Law Department explain the charter to the audience and the process involved in reviewing the city charter and making changes.

Topic - Civil Service

Speaker 1. - This individual stated attending the all of the charter review meetings and opposes elimination of section 132 of the city charter. There is also opposition to the patronage activities that are being done by the city administration. Unskilled laborers are performing tasks for which they are not trained, which can cause harm and create unsafe conditions to both citizens and fellow employees. There is also the practice of hiring private contractors and in some cases this can lead to corruption and kick-backs from private contractors. Eliminating civil service policies can lead to the creation of an environment that is prone to corruption.

Also is opposed to the reduction in the size of city council, which could have the administration influence a smaller council in eliminating civil service. Speaker believes that there is a waste of resources by the city administration. Need to eliminate the use of private lawyers and prevent the downsizing of city council and oppose the involvement of the law director in the activities of the charter review commission because it creates a conflict of interest. City Council should have a procedure and process for holding the administration accountable. Both the union leaders and members of city council have a shared interest in preventing this reduction because this will not benefit the city of Cleveland and its citizens.

Speaker 2 - There have been a number of issues and all sections of civil service are a big concern. Opportunity to obtain a civil service job is important for all citizens to access jobs and employment. The civil service policy should stay the way it is and should not be changed. Keep everything in place with civil service because it benefits the city employees and citizens.

Speaker 3 - Speaker is an operator and mechanic for the city of Cleveland, who cleans the city streets. The regular machine operators do their best to try not to hit the cars parked on the streets because the operator is skilled, if you have unskilled laborers operating this equipment who are not trained this could create unsafe an environment, you need to keep skilled laborers involved.

Topic - Size of Council

Speaker 1. - Reduction of council can do more harm to the city rightsizing is just a latter version of these ideas. Need a vision for the public and one based on common justice. We need to look at a council that provides the best representation for the people, in order to be competitive in the changing world we need to attract people. We need to reinvent the foundations of urban government. We need reform, but it should come by normal means, leave council at 21 and look at what would be the proper representation for citizens and what could be achieved.

Speaker 3 - The City Council reduction plan is a republican idea and scheme that is also being planned by the suburbanites as well. Debbie Sutherland also backs this plan, and as well as Jim Trakas. Mentioned Virgil Brown Sr. when this platform was proposed he mentioned that when he was a councilperson he remembers what it was like to serve as a councilperson. This is a Democratic Party institution that is being attacked.

Speaker 4 - The Plain Dealer article talked about absenteeism on city council. Speaker mentioned that the City Council should be reduced, but change the Councilmatic position to full-time jobs.

Speaker 5 - Lots of generalities are being said tonight at this meeting, we are talking about reducing council by 4 people, and they have 6 to 7 staff and we are not getting service anyhow. It would be very difficult if the council members had more constituents to deal with.

Speaker 6 - What wards would be affected by the council reduction? Is there a population decline in the eastern and western portions of the city? There is no one from ward 1, 2 and 3 serving on the Commission and Ward 1 has the largest voter turnout in the city of Cleveland. We need to make sure that the right thing is done for the African American community.

Speaker 7 - Going to need to have an independent organization look at what other cities are doing in regards to governance and organizational structure. We need to look at delivery of services and this is also something that can racially polarize the city. Cleveland needs to have 11 council members with 4 at large. There is no council representation on the school board. Propose that the council have an education committee to look at the operations and management of the Cleveland schools. We need to have an independent outside source study this and make the recommendation on rightsizing council. Need to look at other cities and look at the size of council in these cities. There is also a lack of cooperation in the council between the council members. In regards to the proposed Council reduction plan some citizens could take the issue to court if they have a problem with it. When the commission finishes its review, the Council may not have enough time to read it.

Topic - Civil Service

Speaker 4 - ratify sections 129 to 142 which have to do with services and the people who manage and govern civil service. They need to enforce the civil service rules and to make sure that people are tested and the test scores be posted for the positions that are being applied for. There needs to be more transparency and the selection for employees should be based on top scores and the same policy should be used for promotion as well. There was a concern expressed about people not civil service qualified who are

moving into supervisory positions. There are also complaints and concerns regarding nepotism that is also going on in the city of Cleveland. Charter sections 129 to 142 should not be changed.

Miscellaneous Items

What wards will be affected by the council reduction?

What does city council reduction has to do with regionalization?

The political leadership in certain suburban areas that is talking about regionalization is republicans who seek council reduction as first step towards regionalization.

Who proposed the number 17 and 11 numbers for the council reduction, and it is up to the people to accept it or reject it?

When was the last time that the city council was reduced?

The city can no longer support the population at this current level, we still need council members to bring people back to Cleveland, and if we support reduction this will hurt the city even more so.

Provide an additional number of Council members at large. Increase the city residents, increase businesses, and other opportunities.

Is same weight given to the members of the audience who provide comments to the commission about the proposals?

What will happen after tonight's meeting and what will the next steps be?

What about a deadline and is there a time deadline - 5:00 PM and of business day.

Need to see council work together and their job more effectively.

Where does the commission meet and where do you send the proposals to?

Abandoned houses in city and there are contractors coming in.

Protect civil service, and enhance safety and keep our jobs in the city and hire people who are qualified.

Took civil test in 1997 and came in at no. 22, but the city is putting people on equipment who do not know what they are doing and have seen unskilled workers ruin and damage equipment after being on the job for three weeks. Nepotism and patronage are big problems with the city of Cleveland.

1981 council reduction plan was discussed and there was also much infighting going on in city hall during that time. There is no infighting going on in council today.

Level of involvement that council has with the realignment that is being proposed by the board of elections, need to find out what the board is up to in regards to the decrease in council.

Competitiveness of civil service testing to give the employees and citizens well qualified employees and excellent level of service.

Chairperson Cleveland thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.