

City of Reading  
2013 Charter Review Commission  
September 18, 2013  
6:00-8:00 p.m. City Hall

The meeting of the 2013 Charter Review Commission was held on Wednesday, September 18, 2013 at City Hall, 815 Washington St, Reading, PA 19601, Penn Room. The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chairperson Rosemary Frank-Vitale.

Members of the Commission present were: Rosemary Frank-Vitale, Anne Sheehan, Randy Corcoran, David M. Cituk, John Slifko, Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz, Carl E. Geffken, Vaughn D. Spencer and Frank B. Denbowski.

Members not present were: Michael H. Reese and Thomas Anewalt

Also present was, Susan Gibson, Gerald Richter and Elizabeth Stanley, City Charter Board, Eric Smith, Solicitor for the Charter Board, Eron Lloyd, City Administration, Paul Janssen, Charter Review Commission Facilitator, and Carol R. Lewis, Recording Secretary.

**Minutes** - Motion by A. Sheehan second by D. Cituk and unanimously carried to accept the minutes of September 4, 2013 with a correction to the spelling of Carl Geffken's name.

**Public Comments/Visitors** – None to note.

**Presentation from the City of Reading Charter Board** – S. Gibson, Chair of the City Charter Board presented a history of the Charter Board and their activities since they were founded. Their three main objectives are to enforce the Charter, educate about the Charter and issue advisory opinions. The top advisory opinions they have been asked for relate to:

- Residency provisions
- Membership on boards and commissions in regards to eligibility to serve
- Initiative and referendum
- Purchasing

The residency issues have been heavily litigated all the way to the Supreme Court. All their activities are available on their website. S. Gibson indicated that they could not answer any of their questions or give recommendations but they would be happy to give them an advisory opinion or review any documents they may produce. She did point out that some provisions of the Charter have been deemed unenforceable such as recall, limitations on property tax increases and general housekeeping to the Charter. J. Slifko asked for a copy of the annotation project. S. Gibson will give them what they have so far.

**Continued discussion on options to secure public input** – M. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed concern regarding their capacity to fully engage the public in the limited time they have. They discussed whether or not it would be helpful to interview the transition team. They have not done much since everything was set up. M. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the new form of government has not been fully embraced. It is no longer legislative and administration in one but the citizens do not fully understand this. They discussed the possibility of having a focus group and how it would be handled. This would be done in addition to the questionnaire. There would be a facilitator who would report back to the Commission. There was concern regarding getting

the information second hand. F. Denbowski pointed out that the goal is to have the citizens approve the revisions and to get community leaders and residents to provide input.

It was agreed that they need citizen engagement. It was decided to add October 9 and 23 and November 6 to the list of meetings. Each meeting will be held in a separate district starting with District 1 on October 2 and District 2 on October 9. The Councilperson for the District will be consulted regarding the best centralized meeting space. If no input is received within 3 days, E. Lloyd will assign them in order and make the arrangements for the meetings. He will also advertise them in one large legal advertisement then separate ones 2 days before the designated meeting. The Penn Room will be posted with the meeting place. The focus of this road show is to garner citizen input. The regular meeting business will also be conducted.

P. Janssen will post the questionnaire for the members to review. It will be sent out to the identified groups by October 2, 2013. The FAQs will be posted on the website in both English and Spanish. Physical copies will be provided at the offsite meetings and an interpreter will attend. P. Janssen will be on BCTV on October 8, 2013 to discuss the FAQs. R. Corcoran will look into going on WEEU to discuss getting public input and P. Janssen will check into WXAC student radio at Albright which has a very large Spanish following.

Motion by C. Geffken second by R. Corcoran and unanimously carried to take the meetings on the road with October 2 being in District 1, October 9 being District 2 and Districts 3-6 to follow in order unless picked otherwise by a councilperson. The addition of November 20 and December 11<sup>th</sup> will be tabled until after the Roadshow to see what kind of response is received.

**New Business** – No additional new business was discussed.

**Public Comment** - None to note.

Motion by R. Corcoran second by V. Spencer and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol R. Lewis  
Recording Secretary