

PORTLAND CHARTER COMMISSION
MINUTES of JULY 16, 2009
6 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING

Scheduled public hearing begun at 6 p.m. All Commissioners present.

Opening by Chair with discussion of the handouts available – the Agenda; Overview; and the 4 page comment document, to be turned in and made part of the record.

Brief overview of Charter Commission process by Corporation Counsel.

Clarification that the agenda represents a brainstorming list only and no Commission decision has been taken on what the issues should be.

15 members of the public spoke to the Commission and noted the following:

Jo Coyne – 32 Salem St

Concern about City-School relationship and Reiche Community Center.
Need to engage citizens in local elections and recognize community as a stakeholder.

Nini McNamamy – Munjoy Hill.

Issue of conflicts of interest of appointed and elected officials.
Believe in “skinny” charter; strong mayor will not make people more active.
Decline in public participation came from “peeling” off the districts and having city-wide elections. Need to address qualifications for Councilors, conflict reporting requirements, nepotism and employment conflicts.

David Marshall – 41 Pine Street

Want to be able to elect chief executive of City. Need to be able to provide strong staff support to an elected mayor.
Issue of what scope of legal powers are appropriate.
Campaign financing.
How to make schools and city work better together.

Charles Bragdon – Munjoy South

City Manager should be replaced by strong mayor with veto power and line item veto power.
Term limits on City Councilors and other elected positions in the City.
Oppose all at large seats for city council; important to keep district seats.

Wendy Cherubini –May Street

Happy with list of brainstorm issues.
Leadership vision should be top priority.
Should look at all options for an elected mayor, up to strong mayor.
City-School relationship should be spelled out.
Need to engage citizens better and modernize.

Robert Hains – Holm Avenue

Handout with specific suggested charter amendments. Question about Article I language about power vested in City Council.
No change needed in structure.
Voting districts should be set by charter rather than ordinance.

Harlan Baker – 44 Mitton Street

Favors an elected mayor.
Not in favor of term limits. Should be able to vote for anyone you want.
Keep the recommendations fairly simple; don't want to do so much that it can be picked at and then important parts are defeated.

Ann Schink – South Portland – League of Women Voters

League of Women Voters has supported strong Council/Manager form of government across the country, but are here to observe and share with the public.

Diane Russell – 76 Morning Street

Favor instant run-off (rank) voting.
Do not favor term limits.
Separate out the recommendations when the issues go to the ballot.
Portland has a lot of accolades. How do we capitalize on where we already are?

Markos Miller – 17 Atlantic Street

Priorities should be leadership, vision.
No position on elected mayor or strong mayor but see problem with vision, accountability and follow-through.
Need citizen engagement.
Propose take comprehensive planning process which creates vision for housing, transportation, etc. for the charter

Wells Staley-Mays - West End

Support voting rights for immigrants.

Gary Higginbottom – West End

Would relish 2-3 month mayoral campaign in city. Should deal with public safety and law enforcement issues

Steven Scharf – 226 Verandah Street

Favors an elected mayor in city; doesn't need to be a strong mayor.

At large vs. Districts - if anything should increase the number of districts.

Favor term limits.

City school relationship - If have elected mayor, should have elected chair of School Committee. Support joint city/school budget. Stay on top of finance issues on a regular basis. Need to look at each section of the charter and bring language into 21st century. Are bonding parameters in Charter clear? Need to simplify.

Dan Jenkins – 103 Grant Street

More district council seats rather than at-large seats.

Non-citizen voting rights.

John Eder – 101 Gray St

Want instant run-off voting.

Expand voting rights to immigrants.

Expand number of district seats.

Statement from Chamber of Commerce made part of the record

Closed the public hearing at 7:10. Meeting adjourned.

Returned to recessed business meeting.