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**PORTLAND CHARTER COMMISSION
MINUTES of JULY 30, 2009**

The scheduled meeting of the Portland Review Charter Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m., with Commissioners Plumb (Chair), Cohen, Valleau, Mermin, Spritz, O'Brien, Gooch, Trevorrow, Chipman and Smith present.

The Chair called for public comment on the Commission's agenda.

Bob Hains – Holm Avenue

Asked why Section 4.a.ix. includes the clean election issue only for at-large seats.

Charles Bragdon – Munjoy South

Stated that he favored an elected mayor; term limits; and immigrant voting

Chris O'Neill - Community Chamber of Commerce.

Recommended the Commission set a deadline for its work; and commented on section 4.a.ii, re City/School relationship, should consider whether it needs fixing and whether the change would improve the relationship.

Steve Hirshon – Hanover Street

Commented on the existence of the bogus facebook page and that he would like the Commission to have its own facebook page.

Priya Natarajan - Portland

HS teacher at Deering; favors non-citizen voting rights

Pious Ali - Munjoy Hill

Citizen originally from Ghana; supports non-citizen voting; he works with youth, they become more engaged when given opportunity

Supports elected mayor; referred to articles on change in 1923 to City Manager form as a way to dilute political power of immigrant groups.

Jill Duson – 101 Pennell Avenue

On the elected mayor issue – she strongly endorses letting the people decide how they want to be represented; on School Committee functioning – want Commission to consider the existing language in Charter re: school finances – on same financial system; monthly statements; do not need City Council to take over financial management of schools; Voting should be privilege of citizenship; should remove barriers to citizenship; Paying taxes is a franchise of receiving city services, which everyone receives.

Jenna Vendil - League of Young Voters – Munjoy Hill

Supports legal immigrant voting as a way to strengthen democratic process and be a springboard to civic engagement; extending right to vote to immigrants would strengthen democratic process and would be springboard to civic engagement.

She read testimony from others not present.

With no further public comment, there was a Motion to approve the 7/16/30 minutes Mermin/Cohen – unanimously approved.

DRAFT

Commission discussion of Agenda Item #4 (List of Issues to be considered):

The members discussed the following in regard to the issues in Section 4 of the Worksheet:

- Grouping issues in categories (though not necessarily as they would be on ballot)
- Getting all issues on the table – but need to be able to bring up new issues
- Need to get recommendations on the November 2010 ballot
- Primary issues – form of government (e.g. elected mayor) and relationship between City and Schools, with subissues of both
- Whether city planning should be discussed as a Charter issue
- What issues are full Commission versus Subcommittee issues
- Begin with elected mayor issue as other issues flow from that decision

Following discussion, the Chair proposed the following organization of the issues:

“Leadership and Vision”

i, v, vi, ix, (can add planning issue here)

“School Committee Issues”

ii,

“Engaging Citizens” & “Voting Representation”

iii, iv, v, vi, ix

“Others”

vii, viii (plus technical amendments)

Motion made to use the above organizing principles (Valleau/Smith).

Public comment on Motion:

Jill Duson – should use terminology of “residents” rather than “citizens”

Robert Hains – glad to see finally getting to substance. Charter needs wordsmithing.

Chris O’Neill – Chamber; must bear in mind what the end game is going to be. Might want to put out comprehensive plan for powers of mayor, manager and council, or might contemplate giving the voters a choice, A, B, or C. Previously urged them to consider clarifying planning and historic preservation. Portland’s way of amending comprehensive plan is unique.

Pious Ali – reaffirms support for right to vote for legal immigrants. How is Commission going to decide on immigrant issues if they do not need immigrant votes?

Justin _____ - Sawyer St, Portland

Support how you are dividing up issues. Want government to be accountable and equitable, want system that allows leaders to get support for leadership and vision; need to distinguish between charter issue, state law, federal mandates, particularly on schools.

Commission discussion followed:

DRAFT

Want to be clear the language and groupings are fluid and may change over time.
Move to amend “citizens” to “residents” (Gooch/Treverrow); unanimously approved
Discussion by Commission of terminology of “leadership and vision”;
Acceptance of friendly amendment to change “Other” to “Technical Review” passed
unanimously
Main motion as amended – unanimously approved.

Commission discussion of Agenda Item# 6 (Public Outreach Committee) - taken up out of order

John Spritz presented review of Ideas from Public Engagement Committee (7/29/09)
Might add in some workshops after the public panels – need to pull in some experts from outside to provide Commission and public with benefit of their experience.

After discussion, there was consensus to start work on having a panel discussion for the early fall; gather names of potential panelists; John Spritz to work on getting a place for a panel discussion; thoughts and suggestions for the panel should be sent to John and John to come back with proposal on 27th. Focus of panel would be the issue of potential change in government to elected mayor

Commission discussion of Agenda Item #5 – Research needs

- Research on various forms of government in Maine and around the country and be able to compare forms; develop a matrix of powers and checks on power
- Find matches for Portland: Charlie Colgan; 2007 Portland Chamber report on 24 benchmark cities; Burlington, VT has Mayor and rank voting
- Find towns specifically that have rank choice and legal resident voters and clean election funding; talk with people there
- Identify cities that have achieved what we want to achieve; what form of government worked for them?
- What are the “best in class” cities in our scale? Then look at their governmental forms.
- Look at Portland, Oregon
- Understand the history of how we got to this place
- Data on voting for legal, resident immigrants; where does it exist? How does it work? Examples: 4 in Massachusetts; Chicago, for school Board; Ron Juyduk is an expert on the subject
- What pieces of the matrix of governmental forms do we want?
- What cities do we want to compare ourselves to?
- What background resources have other commissioners found to be useful?
- Need a data driven analysis of the School Committee issue
- Need to hear from the City Finance Director on the school committee issue
- Want to hear from city staff, including the Manager; need to find an appropriate way to do that.

DRAFT

- Data on the changes in laws governing school committees; involve state level people
- Data on charters with prohibitions against elected people interfering with staff
- Demographics around the legal, resident immigrant population in Portland
- Experts in the field of immigration

How to get information

- Testimony from experts, people with different points of view
- Intern from the Muskie School or University
- Bibliography of books and articles

Motion made to authorize executive committee to move forward on hiring an intern (Smith/Mermin); Motion passed – 9-1 (O’Brien)

Commissioners agreed to share their ideas for speakers, books and articles with Jim Cohen and Elizabeth Boynton, who will compile a list for everyone.

In addition, people should share ideas for a panel discussion on the elected mayor question with John Spritz.

John Spritz and Jim Gooch agreed to work on the Facebook issue to either take over the existing site to make it official or to create our own site.

Jim Cohen and Jim Gooch in charge of putting the agenda for August 27 meeting together.

Bob Hains asked to speak at end of meeting; denied as Commission had decided it would take public comment at the beginning and then on each action items. There will also be quarterly open public hearings.

Elizabeth Boynton to distribute final rules of commission as approved on July 2, 2009.

Unanimous motion to adjourn.