

Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 6:30 PM

Tony Benavides City Council Chambers,
Lansing City Hall, 10th floor, 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Present: Commissioners Adams Simon, Anderson, Bauer, Dowd, Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee, Washington

Absent: none

Staff Present: City Clerk Swope, Deputy Clerk Drever, Attorney Cross (virtual)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jeffries at 6:30 PM.

Roll Call

Chair Jeffries took a moment of personal privilege to thank everyone for their regards

Clerk Swope called the roll of the Commission. A quorum was present.

Adopt the Agenda

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to approve the November 26, 2024, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to approve the December 3, 2024, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Randy Dykhuis spoke about audits, giving the City's internal auditor jurisdiction over the Board of Water and Light.

Sam Iyer spoke about the proposed ethical investment clause.

Dominic Finch spoke about the proposed ethical investment clause.

Anna Martinez-Hume spoke about the proposed ethical investment clause.

Luqa Zoughbi spoke about the proposed ethical investment clause.

Mat T spoke about the proposed ethical investment clause.

Officer Reports

Chair

Chair Jeffries yielded to Commissioner Bauer.

Commissioner Bauer updated the commission on communications with former Mayor Hollister regarding his presentation.

Vice-Chair

No report.

Clerk

Clerk Swope acknowledged written communications in the packet, provided a budget update: \$143,600.18 spent with \$356,399.82 remaining; and thanked intern Lexi Hodges, whose last meeting is today.

Old Business

A. Article 1: Line-by-Line Review

1-205

Attorney Cross recommended leaving the definition of officer unchanged.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to keep the definition of officer unchanged.

Motion Carried.

Attorney Cross introduced proposed language for the definition of publish.

Clerk Swope recommended against narrowing the determiner of widespread dissemination to the Clerk.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to approve the proposed language as is.

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Adams Simon to amend 1-205 to add “VOTERS means ELECTORS.”

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to adopt chapter 2 as amended.

Motion carried.

1-300

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to adopt chapter 3 as amended.

Motion carried.

1-500

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to approve Chapter 5 as presented.

Motion carried.

Moved by Vice Chair Adams Simon to approve Article 1 as amended.

Motion carried.

B. Article 2: Line-by-line Review

Attorney Cross explained that there is no prohibition to making the City Attorney elected, though there are not other cities in the state that do so.

Commissioner Washington explained that benefits to electing a city attorney are accountability to the public rather than to the mayor or council, independent and impartial stances without political pressure, and builds more confidence from the public.

Discussion followed from Commissioners Bauer, Washington, Qawwee, Anderson, Boyd, Lopez, and Jeffries regarding logistics of elected city attorneys.

Chair Jeffries explained his opposition to electing the attorney and explained some alternative provisions to increase accountability.

2-101.2

Atty Cross explained the simplified language for 2-101.2 which reads “Term of Office. The term of every elective city officer is four (4) years and commences at noon on the first (1st) day of January after the regular city general election.”

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to adopt the proposed language.

Motion carried.

2-101.3

Attorney Cross explained the proposed language, noting that if the Commission moves to end staggering of terms, the years in the proposed language will need to be adjusted to later years to account for the timing of

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to end staggering of terms and adopt the proposed language which reads “In 2025, there will be four (4) vacancies upon the council to be filled. The four (4) qualified candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected to a term of office of two (2) years. Beginning in 2027, each councilperson shall be elected to a four-year term.”

Moved by Vice Chair Adams Simon to amend the language to change 2025 to 2027, and 2027, to 2029.

Motion carried.

Motion carried.

2-102

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to adopt the proposed language, which reads “A person seeking elective office must be a citizen of the United States, a resident, and a qualified and registered voter of the City of Lansing for one(1) year by the deadline for filing for office, and retain that status throughout their tenure in any such elective office. In addition, a ward Council Member shall be a resident of the ward from which elected or chosen for one (1) year by the deadline for filing for office, and retain that status throughout their tenure as a ward Council Member.”

Motion carried.

2-103.2

Attorney Cross talked about options for clarifying the term “default”, by adding a definition in 1-205 or clarifying within 2-103.2.

Clerk Swope suggested defining default to the City to include property tax transferred to the County.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon clarified that it would apply to all counties in the City.

Chair Jeffries suggested clarifying default in the City by adding “at any time”.

Commissioners decided to review language further before moving anything.

2-301; 2-302

Commissioners Washington, Qawwee, Boyd, Adams Simon and Jeffries discussed the importance of clarity in this language.

Attorney Cross reminded commissioners about the complications of first amendment rights in defining reasons for forfeiture.

2-304

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to adopt 2-304.6, which reads: “For purposes of this section, “temporary absence of the Mayor from the City or inability of the Mayor to perform the duties of office” shall mean such an absence, condition, sickness, or other cause that renders the Mayor incapable for the time being of performing the act that may be in question, which act must present such a necessity for immediate attention as to require it to be then executed.”

Motion carried.

2-401

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to amend the language to “Any official holding an elective office may be recalled and the office be filled in the manner provided by law.”

Motion carried.

2-406

Next meeting- chris workw attys

2-410

Charter revision question

Commissioner Washington spoke against a standing charter commission because of cost and potentials for resistance to change.

Commissioner Washington expressed support for automatically submitting the question of revision to the people, and the importance of combining the question and the candidates on the same ballot.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed opposition to the 12-year cycle because of its length. She suggested removing a timeline, and combining the elections.

Commissioner Boyd expressed support for combining the elections for the question and the candidates. She then suggested 16 years as a timeline, in line with the State’s timeline.

Commissioner Anderson expressed support for combining the elections for the question and the candidates because of increased awareness.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon: I move to adopt the following language for 2-410: “.1 The question of whether there shall be a general revision of the City Charter may be submitted to the voters in the manner provided by law. .2 When the question of having a general revision of this Charter shall be submitted to the voters as required pursuant to subsection .1, the charter commission shall be selected at the same election at which the proposition to revise is submitted; the selection shall be void if the proposition to revise is not adopted. .3 No city officer or employee, whether elected or appointed, shall be eligible to a place on the commission.”

Motion carried.

Commissioners Dowd and Washington voted no due to the barrier to transparency.

New Business

A. Article 3: Line-by-Line Review

Commissioner Bauer asked for more input from current and recent council members.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon: City Council members have been invited.

Commissioner Boyd asked for additional information from the internal auditor as it relates to the Board of Water and Light, and on the City’s investment practices.

Commissioner Washington suggested the retirement board as a source of information for investment.

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to adopt chapter 1 as presented.

3-202.2

Clerk Swope acknowledged the dated provision of being served personally. He proposed “to receive actual notice of the meeting.”

Commissioner Boyd expressed the importance of receipt for notification.

Commissioners discussed using broad language like majority instead of using specific numbers.

3-303

Commissioner Anderson expressed the amended definition of publish applies to this section .

3-304

Clerk Swope explained the codification procedure for the City.

3-305

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to change the veto timeline to nine (9) working days and three (3) weeks.

Motion Carried.

3-306

Clerk Swope explained how the timeline in this section conflicts with state law.

3-307

Clerk Swope explained the negative impacts of this section, and that the City is rare in having this provision.

Commissioner Dowd suggested a provision for optional expiration dates, which could be indefinite. Brief discussion was held by the attorney and commissioners about removing this section.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to remove 3-307 and renumber the remaining sections in this chapter.

Motion carried.

3-401

Clerk Swope explained that the City has a new auditor, so the Council has established an ad hoc committee on audit, which may become a regular Committee.

Chair Jeffries ended discussion, pending a revisit once input from Council is received.

3-501

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to adopt chapter 5 as presented

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Amanda Castillo spoke about the ethical investment clause and the importance of community.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioners wished each other happy holidays.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jeffries at 9:02 PM.