

Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, January 7, 2025, 6:30 PM

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

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

Absent: none

Staff Present: City Clerk Swope, Deputy Clerk Drever, Attorney Rewa

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

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

Adopt the Agenda

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to approve the December 17, 2024, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Nicklas Zande spoke about a City Council structure that increases the number of wards and divides the wards by the established neighborhoods.

Heath Lowry spoke about a City Council structure that increases the number of wards.

Leslie Arnell echoed Nicklas Zande's comments and spoke about an ordinance issue.

Officer Reports

Chair

No report.

Vice-Chair

No report.

Clerk

Clerk Swope acknowledged written communications in the packet.

Presentations

David Hollister, former mayor of the City of Lansing, presented to the Commission on his recommendations for the Charter. He then took questions from Commissioners about regionalism, strategic planning, sustainability.

Peter Spadafore, Council Member of the City of Lansing, and the Chair of the ad hoc Committee on audit, presented to the Commission on audits in the City. Then, he took questions on the size of the audit staff, the internal auditing process, the language in the Charter relative to audits, and audits of quasi-government organizations.

Old Business

A. Article 2: Line-by-Line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 2-103 Ineligibility for Office.

Commissioners discussed processes for determining default for current officers and candidates, and accountability and sufficient notification of default.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend the adopted 1-205 to add “DEFAULT TO THE CITY means the omission or failure to timely perform a legal or contractual duty owed to the City of Lansing. This includes, but is not limited to, failure to pay any monetary obligation, including taxes, fees, or fines. Default to the City includes failure to pay property taxes for property located in the City, regardless whether the tax liability is owed to the City or the County.”

Motion carried.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 2-302 Forfeiture and Removal for Cause.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to amend 2-302.1 to read “The City Council shall declare the forfeiture of the office of any elective officer or appointee and may remove for cause any person appointed to an office for a fixed term. In every case there shall be a public hearing before the City Council with notice published in the same manner as notices of proposed ordinances. A Council member charged with conduct constituting grounds for forfeiture is permitted to attend and speak at the hearing but may not participate in the hearing as a council member or vote on the resolution of the charge.”

Commissioners discussed implementing timelines of notice and positions covered by this provision.

No vote taken, by unanimous consent. Chair Jeffries requested proposed language at a future meeting which clarifies the scope of application, procedures for forfeiture, and meaning of cause.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 2-406 Special Elections and compliance with state law.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend 2-406.1 to read “.1 Special City elections shall be held when called by resolution of the City Council at least 90 days in advance of the election, or longer as otherwise required by this Charter or state law. Any resolution calling a special election shall set forth the purpose of such election.”

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to amend 2-406.2 to read “.2 Special elections to fill vacancies shall be called at least 90 days before the general election, or longer as otherwise required by state law. A special primary election shall be held at least 45 days before the special general election.”

Motion carried.

Chair Jeffries started a discussion on the timeline of the Commission's work. Commissioners discussed ways to meet their intended timeline.

B. Article 3: Line-by-Line Review

Commissioners discussed the feasibility of the proposed language for Article 3-202.2 Special Meetings.

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to amend 3-202.2 to read "At least 18 hours before the meeting, the clerk shall publish notice of the meeting in the manner/s pursuant to law; shall cause each Council Member to be personally notified and shall verify receipt of notification by each Council Member."

Motion carried.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 3-203 Quorum.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to amend 3-203 with the second option of proposed language, which reads: "A majority of the number of Council members established by this Charter shall be a quorum for the transaction of business at all of its meetings. In the absence of a quorum, any number less than a quorum may recess or adjourn any meeting or hearing to a later time."

Motion carried 7-2, with Commissioners Washington and Dowd voting against.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 3-205 Voting.

No action taken.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 3-206 Investigations.

Commissioner Qawwee left at 9:00 PM.

Commissioners discussed the proposed language.

Moved by Commissioner Washington to amend 3-206.1 to read "The City Council, or any person or committee authorized by it for the purpose, may make investigations into the affairs of the City and the conduct of any City agency."

Motion carried 7-1 with Commissioner Boyd voting against.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to amend 3-206.2 to read "The City Council may subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony and require the production of evidence in any matter pending before it."

Motion carried 7-1 with Commissioner Boyd voting against.

Moved by Commissioner Washington to amend 3-206.3 to read "To enforce a subpoena or order for production of evidence or to impose any penalty prescribed for failure to obey a subpoena or order, the City Council shall apply to the appropriate court."

Motion carried 7-1 with Commissioner Boyd voting against.

Commissioners discussed Article 3-207 Rights and Responsibilities of Council Members, with Attorney Rewa.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion on 3-306 Effective Date of Ordinance. Discussion followed.

Moved by Commissioner Washington to amend 3-306 to read ".1 Every published ordinance shall become effective at 12:01 a.m. on the 14th day after enactment or at any later date specified. .2 The City Council may

give immediate effect to any ordinance by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Council members serving whenever it finds that there is a public necessity for eliminating delay in making an ordinance effective.”

Motion carried 7-1, with Commissioner Boyd voting against.

Chair Jeffries entertained a motion to address new business at a future meeting, which passed by unanimous consent.

Public Comment

No comments were made.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Washington encouraged her fellow commissioners to treat everyone with respect.

Commissioner Anderson verified that comments and tags are not being deleted from the Facebook page.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jeffries at 9:32 PM.