Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, February 4, 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 (tardy), Qawwee,

Absent: Commissioner Washington (excused)

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 Commissioner Boyd to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion Carried.

Approval of minutes

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to approve the January 21, 2025, minutes as presented.

Motion Carried.

Public Comment

Joy Gleason spoke about the people voting for changing the Charter.

Randy Dykhuis spoke about creating a Sustainability and Environmental Affairs Department in the Charter.

Heath Lowry spoke about expanding the number of wards, strengthening Council's investigative powers, and echoed Randy Dykhuis' comments about a Sustainability Department.

Trini Pehlivanoglu spoke about service as an At-Large member of City Council; increasing transparency in the appointments process; auditing the Board of Water and Light; implementing a conflict wall for the City Attorney; expanding the Internal Auditor's role; and adding a strategic plan to the Charter.

Stan Shuck spoke about having voted for changing the Charter, conducting audits of City Departments, and expanding Board of Water and Light oversight.

Michael Dombrowski spoke about making board appointments more transparent and making the boards' oversight more effective.

Nicklas Zande spoke about increasing the number of wards, aligning wards with established neighborhoods, and about having voted for changing the Charter.

Brad Jorae spoke about section 4-303.5: updating the language to protect ambulatory services.

Nancy Mahlow spoke about having voted for changing the Charter and establishing a Sustainability Department.

Linda Appling spoke about keeping the at-large seats on Council and monetary influence in elections.

Fredric McLaughlin spoke about building community through city planning.

Farhan Sheikh-Omar spoke about eliminating at-large seats on Council.

Officer Reports

Chair

No Report.

Vice-Chair

No Report.

Clerk

Clerk Swope acknowledged written communications in the packet.

Old Business

A. Article 2: Line-by-Line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses the definition of default.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to amend 2-103.2 to read “No person who is in default to the City shall be eligible to hold any City office, unless such default is eliminated within 15 days after written notice thereof by the City Clerk. No person seeking elective office shall be in default to the City at the time such person files for office or any time thereafter during the person’s candidacy or term of office. Any officer in default to the City during the term of office is subject to forfeiture or dismissal. The City shall develop, through ordinance, such procedures to ensure that the provisions of this section continue to be met during an officer’s term in office.”

Motion carried.

B. Article 3: Line-by-Line Review

Attorney Rewa

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to amend 3-207 to add .6, which reads “No employee shall be discharged, threatened, or otherwise discriminated against regarding the employee’s compensation, terms, conditions, location, or privileges of employment because the employee is requested by the City Council to participate in an investigation, hearing, or inquiry of the City Council, or participates in same.”

Motion carried.

New Business

A. Article 4: Line-by-Line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion which addresses topics in Article 4: City Attorney, typos, enumeration of departments, and bringing language up to date with regards to implementation and diversity.

Motion carried, by unanimous consent, to fix the typos in 4-102.

Commissioners discussed attorneys for the city and mayoral staff position descriptions.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to change "Executive Assistant to the Mayor" to "Deputy to the Mayor."

Discussion followed about the position title and duties.

Motion carried 7-1 with Commissioner Anderson against.

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to add the strategic plan language as 4-102.4 and renumber the subsequent sections. 4-102.4 will read "Within one year of being sworn in, the Mayor shall present to the Council and public a written three-year strategic plan for the City of Lansing that provides a vision, goals and objectives, and how progress will be measured. The plan shall include

1) comprehensive data on and analysis of the city's current situation, including demographic and economic trends; environmental and health threats and trends; technological trends; regional factors and opportunities; education needs; land use and transportation; neighborhoods and housing, and the social landscape;
2) active involvement of citizens, community organizations, local businesses, other government agencies, and internal staff from all levels and functions;
3) high-level strategic goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART);
4) detailed strategies and action plans for achieving the goals; and
5) a system for regularly measuring and reviewing progress and publicly reporting on the implementation of the plan. The Mayor shall report on the progress of creating and implementing the plan at the annual State of the City Address and in the annual budget presented to the City Council."

Motion carried.

Commissioners discussed the timing and content of mayoral annual reports and presentations to the Council.

Moved by Commissioner Anderson to amend 4-102.9 to add "shall make an annual report <u>no later than the last regular City Council meeting in January of each year</u>"

Motion withdrawn.

Commissioners discussed how the mayor reduces discrimination and reports on diversity efforts.

Commissioners discussed the organizational structure of the City's departments and agencies throughout review of this article.

Moved by Commissioner Anderson to remove the list of agencies in 4-301.3.

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to strike 4-301.7

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

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to keep the language 4-303.2 the same.

Motion carried 7-1, with Commissioner Boyd against.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend 4-303.5 to read "The department shall maintain and operate ambulance services, advanced life support (ALS), and other lifesaving and emergency services necessary for the welfare of the residents of the city of Lansing. The Lansing Fire Department is designated as the primary provider of emergency medical services, ensuring the highest standards of care, as directed by the Council."

Motion carried.

The Chair suspended new business.

Public Comment

Mike Lynn spoke about the work of the Commission and recommended implementing punishments for noncompliance with the Charter.

Randy Dykhuis spoke about the Board of Water and Light administration and oversight. He Echoed Mike Lynn's comments about punishments for noncompliance.

Fredric McLaughlin spoke about specific language in 4-201.3 and recommended 4-306 names the City of Lansing Planning Department, without reference to economics.

Erica Lynn spoke about having voted for changing the Charter and how the Commissioners allocate discussion time.

Linda Appling continued her comments supporting having At-Large seats on Council.

Brad Jorae expressed his thanks for the commission adopting his amendment and explained the importance of transparency with the Fire Board.

Joy Gleason spoke about increasing transparency between the City Attorney and Mayor. She proposed a City Council structure of 6 wards and 3 at-large.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Anderson spoke about the timeline of the Commission's work.

Commissioner Boyd spoke about her approach to work on the Commission.

Adjournment

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