

Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, February 18, 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: Chief Deputy Clerk Jackson, Deputy Clerk Drever, Attorney Rewa

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

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

Adopt the Agenda

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of minutes

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to approve the February 4, 2025, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Randy Dykhuis spoke about adding a sustainability department to the City in the Charter.

Olivia Vaden spoke about the importance of council support staff, increasing the number of wards, and public notices from the Board of Water and Light.

Tasha Canty spoke about the Board of Water and Light.

Nicklas Zande spoke about increasing the number of wards.

Linda Keefe spoke about paths to affordability regarding the Board of Water and Light.

Deborah Mulcahey spoke about long term vision in the charter and increasing the number of wards.

Loretta Stanaway spoke about having voted for changing the charter and commissioner responsibilities to listen to the public.

Officer Reports

Chair

Chair Jeffries expressed interest in adding a meeting in March to discuss the Board of Water and Light and sustainability.

Vice-Chair

No Report.

Clerk

Clerk Jackson acknowledged written communications in the packet and provided a budget update: The Commission has spent \$171,421.23 with a remaining available balance of \$328,578.77.

Old Business

A. Article 2: Line-by-line Review

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to reduce the council members to seven, with four wards and three at-large.

Much discussion proceeded about representation, population, endorsements, and money in politics. The following comments were made by Commissioners clarifying their stances.

Commissioner Washington expressed opposition to the motion because of its limits to representation.

Commissioner Anderson expressed opposition based on the number of people who have expressed interest in increasing the number of wards to increase representation.

Commissioner Dowd expressed opposition based on the desire to increase the number of wards.

Commissioner Qawwee expressed that his rationale is to decrease the number of Council seats because the City's population is not growing and to have an odd number of members.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed opposition based on wanting to increase the number of wards and not limit the number of at-large seats.

Commissioner Bauer expressed wanting a balance of ward and at-large seats so every resident has multiple Council members to represent them.

Commissioner Anderson offered an amendment to the motion for seven wards and two at-large.
Amendment not accepted.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon offered an amendment to the motion for five wards and two at-large.
Amendment not accepted.

Moved by Commissioner Lopez to call the question.

Motion failed by the following roll call vote:

YEAS: Commissioners Lopez, Washington (2)

NAYS: Commissioners Anderson, Bauer, Boyd, Dowd, Jeffries, Qawwee, Adams Simon (7)

No further discussion.

Motion [4 wards, 3 at-large] failed by the following roll call vote:

YEAS: Commissioners Bauer, Boyd, Jeffries, Qawwee (4)

NAYS: Commissioners Dowd, Lopez, Washington, Adams Simon, Anderson (5)

Moved by Commissioner Anderson to have seven wards and two at-large for nine council members total.

Much discussion proceeded about council structure and representation. The following comments were made by Commissioners clarifying their stances.

Commissioner Boyd expressed opposition to increasing the number of council members to nine.

Commissioner Dowd expressed support for increasing the number of council members because residents have expressed not being able to be in touch with their representatives.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed opposition to increasing the number of council members, and she expressed support for increasing the number of wards.

Commissioner Anderson expressed her rationale for seven wards and two at-large is harm reduction.

Commissioner Dowd reminded everyone that it is not the Commission's purview to redraw the wards.

Commissioner Washington expressed support for seven wards and two at-large.

Commissioner Lopez expressed a preference for five wards and four at-large, and that he is not opposed to seven wards and two at-large.

Motion failed by the following roll call vote:

YEAS: Commissioners Dowd, Lopez, Washington, Anderson (4)

NAYS: Commissioners Boyd, Jeffries, Qawwee, Adams Simon, Bauer (5)

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to have nine council members.

Motion withdrawn.

Moved by Commissioner Anderson to have six wards and two at-large for eight total council members.

Commissioner Qawwee expressed support for an odd number of council members.

Motion failed by the following roll call vote:

YEAS: Commissioners Dowd, Washington, Anderson (3)

NAYS: Commissioners Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee, Adams Simon, Bauer, Boyd (6)

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to have five wards and two at-large for seven total council members.

Motion carried by the following roll call vote:

YEAS: Commissioners Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee, Adams Simon, Bauer, Boyd, Dowd (7)

NAYS: Commissioners Washington, Anderson. (2)

The Commission took a five-minute recess.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 2-104 to consider Council Compensation by per diem.

Commissioners discussed equity of committee assignments and days with multiple meetings.

No action taken.

B. Article 4: Line-by-line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 4-102.

Commissioners discussed the role of transparency in the mayor's annual reports; the meaning of transparency, and provisions to address noncompliance with the Charter.

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to amend 4-102.8 to add "The report shall be presented to the City Council no later than the last regular City Council meeting of each year"

Motion carried.

Commissioners discussed anti-discrimination efforts and enforcement of the Charter.

Moved by Commissioner Washington to amend 4-102.9 to read “.10 The Mayor shall be responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination ordinances. The Mayor may also develop programs and initiatives that resolve disputes and foster mutual understanding among the residents of the community.”

Motion carried.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend 4-102.10 to read “The Mayor shall make an annual report on the status of initiatives and programs of the City that promote opportunity and inclusion. Such report shall include information concerning the demographics of city officers and employees, including promotions, hiring, and turnover. The support will be presented no later than the last City Council meeting of each year.”

No action taken, following questions about the particulars of the report.

Motion carried, my unanimous consent, to amend 4-102.12 to align the numbering with other edits in this chapter.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses Article 4-301.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to change “Law Department” to “Office of City Attorney.”

Motion carried.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to change “Planning Department” to “Economic Development and Planning Department.”

Motion carried.

Commissioners discussed legal representation for City Council.

Public Comment

Loretta Stanaway spoke about medical services in the City and expressed opposition about Commissioners directly addressing public commenters by name.

Nicklas Zande spoke about increasing the number of wards.

Fred McLaughlin spoke about the purpose and naming of the Planning Department.

Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Bauer remarked that she would be absent on March 11.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jeffries at 9:27 PM.