Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, March 25, 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 (6:43), 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 Commissioner Bauer to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to approve the March 18, 2025, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Linda Keefe spoke about the Board of Water and Light and expressed support for sustainability efforts in the Charter.

Officer Reports

Chair

Chair Jeffries reminded everyone that next week the Commission will have a presentation from the City's Internal Auditor.

Vice-Chair

No report.

Clerk

Clerk Swope acknowledged written communications in the packet and provided a budget update: the Commission has spent $189,693.35 with a remaining balance of $310,306.65.

Presentation

A. Lori Welch and Jeremiah Kilgore from Public Service

Lori Welch, the City's Sustainability Manager, and Jeremiah Kilgore, Deputy Director of Public Service, presented to the Commission on the City's current sustainability efforts and the impacts of creating a sustainability department.

The Commissioners asked questions about the role of the Sustainability Manager, regional sustainability efforts, the City's sustainability efforts, funding, size of office, and future plans for sustainability.

Old Business

A. Article 4: Line-by-line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the March 14 legal opinion that addresses Article 4 references to affirmative action.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to adopt the following language for 4-102.11: "The Mayor shall make an annual report on ~~the status of affirmative action programs of the City~~ **initiatives and programs of the City that promote opportunity, diversity and inclusion. Such report shall include, to the extent permitted by law, information concerning the demographics of city officers and employees, including promotions, hiring, and turnover, and demographics of persons holding contracts with the City**."

> Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend the motion to replace "diversity and inclusion" with "for all employees".
>
> Motion carried. The section now reads: "The Mayor shall make an annual report on initiatives and programs of the City that promote opportunity for all employees. Such report shall include, to the extent permitted by law, information concerning the demographics of city officers and employees, including promotions, hiring, and turnover, and demographics for persons holding contracts with the City."

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to strike "affirmative action" from 4-401.4.

Motion withdrawn.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to amend 4-401.4 to read "The head of each department of the City shall be responsible to the Mayor for the administration of the department and shall, under direction of the Mayor, implement the policies, including ~~affirmative action~~ **pursuit of opportunity in hiring and promotion within the department in accordance with law, as expressed in the ordinances and resolutions of the City Council**."

> Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend to add "and fairness" after opportunity.
> Motion failed by the following Roll Call Vote:
> YEA: Commissioners Bauer, Qawwee, Adams Simon
> NAY: Commissioners Boyd, Dowd, Jeffries, Lopez, Washington, Anderson

Motion carried.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the March 14 legal opinion that addresses the meaning of indefinite term and the hiring of police and fire chiefs in Article 4.

Commissioners discussed the process of hiring police and fire chiefs.

Attorney Rewa overviewed the March 14 legal opinion that addresses the City Attorney.

A majority of commissioners expressed support for appointing the City Attorney.

Commissioner Dowd suggested both the Mayor and City Council should be able to hire and fire the City Attorney.

Commissioner Washington agreed with Commissioner Dowd and suggested Council having their own full time attorney.

Commissioner Boyd expressed that the Charter should specify that hired outside council should be paid.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed support for appointing the City Attorney, and for Council being able to retain their own attorney.

Attorney Rewa will return with proposed language following the Commissioners' discussion.

The Commission took a brief recess.

Chair Jeffries called the meeting back to order at 8:20 PM.

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to amend 4-102.5 to read "No later than ~~the last regular City Council meeting in January~~ **March 1st** of each year, the Mayor shall present a state of the City report to the City Council and to the public, outlining the activities of each of the departments and agencies of the City, their existing programs and services and an analysis of their adequacy. The report shall contain the Mayor's observations on the effectiveness of the organization of the several departments and agencies of the City and any recommendations for reorganization to increase efficiency, effectiveness and economy of operation. The report shall also contain a summary of the financial conditions of the city. **The report shall also outline and provide analysis of the transparency efforts of the Agency of the Executive Branch.**"

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to amend 4-302.2 to read "The Department of Finance shall ~~be in charge of~~ **coordinate with** the divisions of Accounting, Assessments, Budget Management, Income Tax, and Treasury."

Motion carried.

4-303.1 and 4-303.4 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

4-307.1, and 4-307.4 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon suggested inserting language about the Police Chief being licensed.

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to remove "Public Service Director" from the 4-308.3 list of City employees who should be registered professional engineers.

Motion withdrawn, until the Commission receives more information.

4-501.1 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Commissioner Washington asked why the Clerk's presence is needed at City Council, because Council staff can take minutes.

Discussion followed about record taking and record keeping.

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to approve 4-501.2 as presented.

Motion carried, 8-1 with Commissioner Washington against.

4-501.3-.9, and 4-502 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

B. Article 5: Line-by-Line Review

Chair Jeffries solicited discussion on the structure of boards and commissions, following the move to seven City Council members.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed support for 8-member boards and commissions, with 5 members representing the wards, and 3 at-large. She also supports term limits, for 2 consecutive 4-year terms.

Washington expressed the structure should mirror the Council, and that 8 member boards face the issue of a tie vote.

Chair Jeffries spoke about not minimizing citizen participation.

Commissioner Anderson echoed Chair Jeffries and pointed out that participation was reduced on Council. She expressed the two should mirror each other, but that she supports a 9-member Council.

Commissioner Washington expressed support for Commissioner Anderson's comments.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to maintain board members at 8: 5 ward representatives and 3 at-large.

Motion carried 5-3 by the following Roll Call vote:
YEAS: Commissioners Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee, Adams Simon, Bauer
NAYS: Commissioners Dowd, Washington, Anderson
Commissioner Boyd passed on voting because she had not decided on the issue.

Public Comment

Randy Dykhuis spoke about recognizing sustainability in the Charter.

Commissioner Remarks

No remarks were made.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jeffries at 9:03 PM.