

**Escambia County Charter Commission
Minutes of May 6, 2003 Meeting
Pensacola Campus of Pensacola Junior College
Baroco Center – Room 2142
(Fourteenth Meeting)**

Members

Present: M. J. Menge, Chair
Rita A. Riffel, Vice Chairman
Charles F. Beall, Jr.
LeRoy Boyd
Barbara Forehand “Bobbie” Brown
Laurel Dick
Elbert Jones, Jr.
Denis McKinnon, Jr.
Frank Montenes
E. P. “Ted” Nickinson, Jr.
Lucy Rentz
Phyllis D. Sims
Lamar Smith
Garrett W. Walton

Members

Absent: Johnny W. Blackmon

AGENDA NUMBER

1. Call to order - Chairman Menge at 4:00p.m.
2. Approval of the Agenda.

Motioned by Mr. McKinnon and seconded by Mr. Nickinson to approve the agenda and carried 10 – 0 with Mr. Beall, Ms. Brown, Ms. Sims, and Mr. Walton arriving late, and Mr. Blackmon absent.

3. Statement regarding public input meetings.

Mr. Menge made a brief statement regarding the work of the Charter Commission since its initial meeting on November 14, 2002.

Copies of the Public Input Meetings pamphlet were provided to the members attending the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER – Continued

4. Input from the public on the topic of “The Board of County Commissioners.”

Nine people addressed the Commission. Their statements are as follows:

- 1) Ellen Roston – Supports Charter Government that would allow for a part time, legislative, policy making body with an appointed administrator. Increase the number of BCC members to ten, reduce salaries, two year term, non-partisan, and have a non-interference clause.
- 2) Jerry McIntosh – Looking for answers about how charter government works and is curious as to how charter will affect the other government entities. He also believes that if a charter is written it needs to cover the entirety of Escambia County, all the way to Century. He is against charter government and does not believe that it will do anything to prevent corruption in the future. He would like to see seven BCC members with two from District 3 and one in each of districts one, two, four, and five, with one at-large member. He would also like to know what will be done about the civil service board.
- 3) Karen Rubel – Prefers the County Manager form of government and would like to see ten members on the BCC, with three at-large and the district lines to be re-drawn to represent the minority population. She prefers part – time, four year staggered terms, no term limits, and a salary of \$28,000 per year to be set by the charter document. BCC needs be responsible for policy and budget. The BCC would vote for a chairman that would be on a one year rotation. She would like to see the County Manager hired, non-interference clause, secretarial pool, if a member is unable to complete his or her term then a super majority vote would be required to replace the member with a special election to follow within 6 - 12 months. The county will continue to grow and is in need of ten BCC members to represent the citizens.
- 4) Lois Benson – Would like to see at least seven Commissioners with as many as nine or ten. She believes that two at-large would allow for more diverse backgrounds. She is for non-partisan elections but questioned whether the political parties would object. She does not agree with term limits. The salary needs to be lowered to one-half or less of the current salary. The BCC should be a policy making body with an appointed administrator and staff and she favors a secretarial pool. BCC should be responsible for filling a vacancy if there are two years or less left in a term and a special election should be held if there is more that two years left in a term. A non-interference clause should be added and the initial term should be for two years and if person is re-elected it would then be to a four year term.

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER – Continued

- 5) Gail Fournier – Will not make a decision for or against charter government until she sees the document. She likes the two year trial period as suggested by Ms. Benson. She would like to see a reduction in salaries, seven members with two at-large, and a quicker way to remove someone from office than referendum. Suggested citizen panel to review County Administrator actions.
- 6) Rita Jones – Would like to see some multiple of five for BCC members, term limits of two or three out of four year terms, lower salaries (no more than half of what we have now), she does not believe that the charter can set the salaries. Suggested that salaries be set as a percentage of salaries set by state law. She is for the County Manager form of government, a legislative body, due process of evaluating and dismissal of administrators, and a vacancy needs to be filled by BCC or elections if more than one year of a term remaining. A non-interference clause, recall of an ill-performing member, one small office should be shared and made available to the chairman. Favors non-partisan elections.
- 7) Sharon Barnett – For at-large seats and, non-interference clause if separating the administrative and legislative bodies. Charter needs to be an organic document, all parts should fit together.
- 8) Gene Valentino – Would like to see seven members with two being at-large and cut pay to \$35,000 per year. Planning and zoning policies and land use matters should be handled by a planning and zoning board that is appointed by the BCC. The BCC members would each appoint one member to the planning and zoning board and the board members would receive a small salary of possibly \$1,000 per month, the terms would not coincide with the BCC's in order to show autonomy. He believes the initial charter should be a basic document and then it should evolve from there. Leave Constitutional Officers alone.
- 9) Michelle Schmitz – Believes that the county is in need of more representation and pointed out what the ratio is for the representatives of the City of Pensacola to its residents and what Escambia County has currently. Suggested expansion of Board of County Commissioners to ten members. She also believes that more people are needed at the public input meetings and suggested ways to get the word out to the public regarding the Charter Commissioner's work and meetings.

5. Approval of the minutes of the April 24, 2003 meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Dick and seconded by Mr. Montenes to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2003 meeting. Motion carried 14-0 with Mr. Blackmon

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER – Continued

absent. Mr. Nickinson would like the minutes reviewed for clarification on several points and he will be contacting the Whitman Center with those points. Any additional points will be reflected in the minutes of this meeting.

NOTE:

In regard to the second speaker (Admiral Timothy Wright), the fifth line in his speech should reflect this statement – a seven member board , including two at-large.

In regard to the eighth speaker (Janet DeLorge), the eighth line in her speech should reflect this statement – this will allow for each voter to vote for more than one Commissioner to represent them.

6. Communications.

- 1) Members were mailed a copy of an e-mail from Frank Montenes titled “Submittal of questions for the Charter Commission Legal Advisory Group.”

Mr. Montenes submitted the questions in order to stimulate discussion from everyone involved. He would like an opinion from legal, UWF, and Bonnie Jones on the questions raised.

Mr. Menge encouraged the rest of the Commission to send in any questions for the legal advisory team to the Whitman Center. Sharon Barnett will be working with the legal advisory team to answer some of the questions on the various combinations that are proposed for district representation to ensure that representation of the minority vote does occur.

- 2) Mr. Menge informed the members that The Whitman Center had submitted an invoice for their services in the amount of \$9,093.75 and asked for a motion to approve the invoice. **Motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Mr. Dick to approve the invoice, motion carried 14-0 with Mr. Blackmon absent.**

7. Discussion regarding the Charter Commission website.

Mr. Menge reviewed the changes to the website that he will submit to UWF. Mr. Menge reviewed the statements he will be adding to the website that will give more clarification to the public about charter government. The members would like to see more reference sources and links to charters already in place in Florida. Suggestions were made regarding how to make the website more user friendly to the public.

Many of the people attending suggested that the public input meetings need to be heavily publicized. Suggestions ranged from more television time to ads in the Pensacola News Journal to bring in more public input. Ms. Sims suggested

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER – Continued

letters to the editor and viewpoint articles. Others suggested appearances on radio and television talk shows.

8. Unfinished Business.

There was no unfinished business.

9. Items added to the agenda.

There were no items added to the agenda.

10. Announcement regarding the next public input meeting.

The next meeting is May 15, 2003 in the Baroco Center, Room 2142, at the Pensacola Junior College Pensacola Campus at 5:30 p.m.

11. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Action Items:

None

APPROVED BY:

THE CHARTER COMMISSION

PREPARED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA WHITMAN CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE