

Official

**Escambia County Charter Commission
Minutes of May 27, 2003 Meeting
Tate High School Cafeteria
(Seventeenth Meeting)**

Members

Present:

Rita A. Riffel, Vice Chairman	Denis McKinnon, Jr.
Charles F. Beall, Jr	Frank Montenes
Johnny W. Blackmon	E. P. "Ted" Nickinson, Jr.
Le Roy Boyd	Lucy Rentz
Barbara Forehand "Bobbie" Brown	Phyllis D. Sims
Laurel Dick	Lamar Smith
Elbert Jones, Jr.	

Members

Absent: M. J. Menge, Chair (out of town)
Garrett W. Walton (out of town)

AGENDA NUMBER

1. Call to order – Vice Chairman Riffel at 7:04 p.m.
2. Approval of the Agenda.

Motion made by Mr. Beall and seconded by Mr. Dick to approve the agenda carried 12 – 0 with Ms. Sims arriving late and Mr. Menge and Mr. Walton absent.

3. Statement regarding the public input meetings

Ms. Riffel 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 and revised schedule were provided to the members of the public attending the meeting.

Ms. Riffel also informed the public that the format of the meetings has been changed to include not only the topic that is scheduled for the evening but, also any topic the public desires to advise the Charter Commission on regarding

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charter government.

4. Open public forum on provisions that the public desires to have included in the charter.

Nine people addressed the Commission and their statements are as follows:

- 1) Jim Taylor – Remains against charter government for the following reasons: taxes will go up, first step towards consolidated government, takes the citizens right to vote away, and he believes in partisan government. When the charter is written he would like to see seven County Commissioners with five representing individual districts and two at-large, one at-large would represent only citizens residing within the city limits and the other would represent the rest of the citizens residing outside the city limits.
- 2) Dana Fulford – Feels like she needs more information before she addresses the Commission. She does agree with increasing the number of County Commissioners, lower their salaries, part-time positions, eliminate some of the secretaries, and have some at-large representation. She was informed that Ch. 125 of the Florida Constitution is available online, at local libraries, and at the Whitman Center for further research on what is required to go into a charter.
- 3) Keith Wells – Attorney for the Civil Service Board. He informed the Commission that the Civil Service Board is working on re-writing the rules of the Civil Service and that they have taken public input in the process of drawing up the draft. They are currently on the third draft. He believes that if the Constitutional Officers who opted out of civil service were to not run for office again that they would try to get their employees back under the civil service board before they left office in order for the employees to have job protection. The board was appointed by the governor and he believes that they are not subject to local politics because of this. He would like to see a charter that would not be subject to the politics of the County. The Charter Commission wanted more clarification on the two documents they have reviewed (Civil Service Proposed Rules and the draft of the proposed Human Resources Management Reorganization). Members commented that the documents looked pretty much the same, what are the primary functions and goals of these proposals? Their document has been a work in progress for over three years. They have a rules discussion at every meeting and take five to ten rules and address them at each meeting. They are also working with Mr. Powell in some instances. He explained how raises were decided upon: the Constitutional Officers and County Commissioners who sit on the board vote on what percentage raises the employees would receive and everyone then has to go back and fit their budgets to follow how the board voted, if one member is absent, they are able to vote by proxy, even though some people have chosen to not exercise their vote by proxy. The current board has stated

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that if it does not serve a positive function to the employees then it needs to be abolished. There have been very few appeals to the board with numerous terminations within the system. One way to save money is: the six groups that are performing the same human resources function should1 consolidate.

- 4) Mike West – informed the audience that his website Gulf1.com is trying to keep the public informed of what the Charter Commission is doing. The website also allows for the public to post their opinion about charter government on the website.
- 5) Susie Williams - works in the Human Resources Department of Escambia County, she was of the understanding that the meeting was for public input, not just what the County Human Resources Department had to say.
- 6) Elizabeth Peaden- has worked for the Civil Service Board for twenty-seven years. She believes that there is stability from having a system and not everyone doing the same thing. The only answer to the people who opted out of the system is power. Those Constitutional Officers wanted to run their offices more like a business and it is not saving the taxpayers any money when services are duplicated. The main complaint of the Constitutional Officers that opted out was that the roster system was too slow and the rule committee is addressing this. She questions as to the reason why the County Administrator has hired a lobbyist. She wonders what the charter can have in it by way of recall. She stated that Escambia County did not collapse when three Commissioners were removed from office because of the dedicated county employees. She is currently more against charter government than for it.
- 7) Tom Gilliam – member of the Civil Service Board. Hopes to see improvements with a larger County Commission, possibly ten members, due consideration for the minority vote, at-large members, re-draw the district lines to insure the minority vote, keep the Constitutional Officers as an elected position, and recall based on the percentage of people who originally voted in the initial election.
- 8) Sharon Barnett – very much in favor of at-large Commissioners, helps make them more truthful overall. Needs race neutral districting, doubts if you can come up with only an African American district because the districts have to be roughly equal in population.
- 9) Ellen Roston – clarified the three ways that a charter can be changed: 1) proposed by the County Commissioners, 2) proposed by the revision committee, and 3) proposed by a petition. All three proposed system would have to go to the voters.

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5. Approval of the minutes of the May 22, 2003, meeting.

There were no minutes of the May 22, 2003 meeting ready for review.

6. Communications

- 1) Revised meeting schedule.
- 2) Copy of the ad in the Pensacola News Journal advertising tonight's meeting.
- 3) Dr. Teasley's response to budget appeals and budget reports.

7. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

8. Items added to the agenda.

There were no items added to the agenda.

9. Announcement regarding the next public input meeting.

Next meeting will be in the BCC Chambers, Third Floor 7 P.M. and the topic will be SRIA or whatever the public desires to speak about.

10. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

APPROVED BY:

THE CHARTER COMMISSION

PREPARED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA WHITMAN CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE