

**Official**

**Minutes Of The Escambia County Charter Commission Meeting  
Held May 22, 2003 - 7:00 p.m.  
Escambia County Courthouse – Third Floor  
(Sixteenth Meeting)**

Members

Present: M. J. Menge, Chair  
Rita A. Riffel, Vice Chairman  
Charles F. Beall, Jr  
Johnny W. Blackmon  
Le Roy 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

Members

Absent: Lamar Smith (conflict in schedule)  
Garrett W. Walton (out of town)

***AGENDA NUMBER***

1. Call to order - Chairman Menge at 7 p.m.
2. Approval of the Agenda.

**Motion made by Mr. Jones and seconded by Ms. Rentz to approve the agenda carried 12 – 0 with Mr. Beall arriving late and Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

3. Statement regarding the 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 of the public attending the meeting.

Mr. Menge 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 charter government.

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER-Continued

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

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

- 1) Jim Taylor – has reservations about the charter and is concerned with his right to vote being taken away, he would like to retain the right to vote for the Constitutional Officers. He believes that taxes will go up under Charter Government. He would like to see a recall provision and seven BCC members, with one at-large member elected only by citizens living within the city limits and the other at-large member elected only by citizens living outside the city limits.
- 2) Rita Jones – believes all five Constitutional Officers need to be elected and has not heard that charter government takes away a citizen's right to vote. Constitutional Officers need to work more as a team and be more open to public input. She likes the idea of an auditor, non-partisan elections, term limits (2-3), more defined recall, and fill a vacancy by election if more than one year is left in the term otherwise the BCC should appoint.
- 3) Ron Jackson – discussed finance and accounting function of the county, would like for the charter to consider a different organization and streamline some functions to include better checks and balances. Would like to see the County Administrator responsible for all accounting and finance procedures. A finance director would respond to the County Administrator, budget process would be supervised by the Director of Finance, clerks office would continue the audit function, combining accounting functions of elected officials would be a cost savings, eliminate the budget office, shift accounting function to administrative office, centralize the budget process, BCC should serve as an audit committee. Six other charters have transferred the finance and accounting functions from the clerk's office to the County Administrator.
- 4) Mike Adkins – co-presented with Ron Jackson and responded to questions from the Charter Commission, members requested that they submit their idea in writing. Believes their idea would enhance the audit process and the Constitutional Officers would know what the other departments are doing. States his idea would allow the county to function more like a private business. Their process would focus on operating expenditures for consolidation, technology could aid the consolidation, it would deal with purchasing, vendors, most of the functions that the public has very little dealings with.
- 5) Kevin Martin – Opposed to any alteration of the duties of the Constitutional Officers. Florida Statutes have specified the roles and duties of Constitutional Officers. Voters have the ability to evaluate their duties every four years and judge effectively how they operate and manage funds. He is impressed with

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER-Continued

the public servant attitude when dealing with the county and believes there is a nice system in Escambia County.

- 6) Wanda McBrearty - Works in the Clerks office and wanted to clarify that they do not have an audit committee, but she does want one. Requested that the Charter Commission take a look at the organizational chart from the clerk's office before deciding to make any changes. They do contract with a CPA from out of town for an independent opinion, audits are selected where there is the highest risk, and not all of the money in the budget for internal audits is spent. Comptroller's office was abolished and the accountant and the auditor fall to the Clerk of the Circuit Court, and purchasing went to the board. Use internal audit process not only to find inefficiencies as well as efficiencies and non-compliance issues. Feels as is there would be a great loss of independence and objectivity if they were moved to a different department.
  - 7) Jerry McIntosh – Feels as if people should be able to elect who they want to represent them, against charter government and believes that charter would represent only a few, sees nothing wrong with the County Commission and if people do not think that the County Commissioners are doing a good job, then they need to vote them out.
  - 8) Sharon Barnett – Supplied the chair with detailed information on the demographics of Escambia County. The comptrollers office was abolished when the county nearly went into bankruptcy, then the functions were moved to the Clerk's office with no voter input. The function of the Constitutional Officers are prescribed by statute, all of them have defined responsibilities and roles, believes it is inappropriate to vote for ministerial jobs, there is no representation because the person is just a function. She prefers the elected executive form of government with absolute checks and balances.
5. Approval of the minutes of the May 15, 2003, meeting.

**Motion made by Mr. Blackmon and seconded by Mr. Boyd to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2003 meeting. Motion carried 13 – 0 with Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

**Motion made by Mr. Nickinson and seconded by Ms. Rentz to approve the revised minutes of the May 6, 2003 meeting. Motion carried 13-0 with Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

6. Communications

- 1) Agenda for the May 27, 2003 meeting.
- 2) Agenda for the June 3, 2003 meeting
- 3) Official minutes for the May 6, 2003 meeting.
- 4) Unofficial minutes for the May 15, 2003 meeting.

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER-Continued

- 5) Letter to the legal advisory team for additional questions to be addressed by the Charter Commission.
- 6) Memo from Ted Nickinson Re: Reasons to support or oppose a Charter.
- 7) Memo from Frank Montenes Re: ECCC Charter Government Bulletin Board.
- 8) Civil Service Board Proposed Rules Booklet.
- 9) Draft of proposed Human Resources Management Reorganization.

7. Discussion regarding future meeting sites and meeting times.

The Whitman Center has located and secured the following locations for the rest of the public input meetings.

- 1) May 27, Tate High School Cafeteria, 7 P.M.
- 2) June 3, BCC Chambers, 7 P.M.
- 3) June 19, Molino Elementary Auditorium, 7 P.M.
- 4) June 27, Perdido Bay United Methodist Church, 7 P.M.

Discussion held regarding the planning of a town hall meeting at a yet to be determined location in order to present to the public what the Charter Commission has heard from the public. This is an opportunity for the Charter Commission to give feedback to the community. A written document will be compiled by the Whitman Center to summarize what has been reflected in the minutes. **Motion Made by Mr. Montenes and seconded by Mr. Jones to plan a town hall meeting to present to the public what the charter has heard so far. Motion carried 13-0 with Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

Mr. Beall wanted further discussion on the dates and suggested that the town hall meeting take place on July 17, the last date scheduled for public input meetings. Several members requested that the meeting to not be held on a Thursday night.

**Motion was made by Ms. Brown and seconded by Mr. Dick to pay the custodian a minimum of three hours of his time at \$10 an hour to accommodate a public input meeting at Molino Elementary. Motion carried 13-0 with Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

**Motion was made by Mr. Dick and seconded by Mr. Jones to approve the new dates, times, and locations for the public input meetings. Motion carried 13-0 with Mr. Smith and Mr. Walton absent.**

8. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

MINUTES OF THE CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING – Continued

AGENDA NUMBER-Continued

9. Items added to the agenda.

There were no items added to the agenda.

10. Announcement regarding the next public input meeting.

Next meeting will be in the Tate High School Cafeteria at 7 P.M. and the topic will be Personnel and Civil Service or whatever the public desires to speak about.

11. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 P.M.

Action Items :

- 1) **The Whitman Center to obtain the first two quarterly fiscal reports of Escambia County.**
- 2) **The Whitman Center to find out how many Constitutional Officers have appealed to the Legislature.**
- 3) **The Whitman Center to provide a summary of the Public Input from all Charter meetings.**
- 4) **The Whitman Center to follow up with Ron Jackson and Mike Adkins to obtain their ideas in writing.**

**APPROVED BY:**

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**THE CHARTER COMMISSION**

**PREPARED BY:**

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**UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA WHITMAN CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**