



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Charter Review

200 S. Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Sheila P. Vitale- Chair
Ellen T. Zehner- Vice Chair
Ross Beckmann
Bill Dutton
Shane W. Ewald
Alvin J. McKenna
Isobel L. Sherwood

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

6:00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Meeting Call-in Details:

Tel- 513-306-4583

Conf. ID- 187 421 610#

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Vitale called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present 4 - Alvin J. McKenna, Sheila P. Vitale, Ellen T. Zehner, and Isobel Sherwood

Absent 3 - Ross Beckmann, Shane W. Ewald, and Bill Dutton

B. ITEM FOR APPROVAL:

1. [2021-0075](#) Meeting Minutes for approval: April 20, 2021.

A motion was made by Sherwood, seconded by Zehner, to Approve the Minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - McKenna, Vitale, Zehner and Sherwood

Absent: 3 - Beckmann, Ewald and Dutton

C. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Proposed Amendments from the Director of Planning

Director of Planning, Michael Blackford, provided a summary of his proposed changes to 11.03 of the Charter; there are some approvals which are allowable by code to be administratively approved, without having to go before Planning Commission. The way the current language reads, it appears that Planning Commission must approve everything, which could be building permits and zoning permits, for other minor improvements.

Vitale asked if any of these issues have come up in Planning Commission before. Blackford said not recently but he has been with the City for seven (7) years, and they have in the past, on occasion. The question would be “what is the purview of Planning Commission?” Would like to eliminate gray areas when possible.

Mularski asked if there were particular words that Blackford had issues with. Blackford read his proposed wording (see attached in file 2021-0043). Sherwood asked for clarification on wording “plans, maps” are those for the City, Planning Commission would not see development plans anymore? Blackford said that’s existing language, but believes it references land use plans, etc. which would get adopted through council; would be in favor of further clarifying that part in addition. Sherwood said “reviewing public buildings and structures” would come out. Blackford said we regularly review processes; believes permitting and processing of development applications is administrative in function; more important to have Planning Commission more involved in the rules that set those parameters. Planning Commission would set up rules for engagement, but not the permitting. Sherwood said it is bothersome to a degree but understands the concept overall; there are some specifics that are concerning, but just does not know yet to what extent they concern her; will analyze further.

Vitale said 11.05 and 11.06 were brought up; regarding public hearings and action by Council; Council has 90 days to review and can have an extension of 60 days; asked if there have been any issues with that in general. Blackford said he saw that concern in the minutes; could be too long or too short depending on opinions; had a recent occurrence with a rezoning; could hinder development relations by making it harder to work with the City; believes it is a very long time. The City has lost projects due to the length of time it takes. Sherwood said that section was put in because there were instances where a project would be recommended to Council and it would just sit there with no action taken; time limit was put in to prevent items from falling off. Jadwin said she would be in favor of reducing the time. Sherwood asked what the norm is in central Ohio. Jadwin said they could look into some surrounding communities.

McKenna said he understands the concept of the timeframe; asked if they could set a more specific timeframe. Blackford said they could include that in their research. Gonchar stated that MORPC has recommended decreasing the time it takes to rezone due to the rapid growth in central Ohio; the demand can’t be met with lengthy process times; MORPC spoke at a Council meeting recently and discussed this

during their presentation.

Zehner said the 90 days could be problem because Council sometimes could not make a decision that quickly; based off their notes, they were asked to look into other communities. Sherwood said they could leave language as is in 4.13 but amend 11.05 to say something such as "by other manner described in Council Rules."

Blackford said for 11.05, a Council member had concerns about where to post notices of public hearings; there was a question about what triggered the 30-day notice; is it the record of action or date of Planning Commission meeting. Mularski said to keep in mind that these are the minimums; we can always go above the minimum; do not want the minimums to be too burdensome. Vitale asked about thoughts on when the 30 days begins. Gonchar stated that she starts the clock on the date of the record of action, but sometimes it takes up to a week to process those, sometimes two (2) days; the current language is not specific. Blackford said he has had projects turn away due to the processing time in the City.

Jadwin asked about the changes to 11.01. Vitale said that had to do with timing; on Jan. 2 everyone gets appointed; concerns about when people can be appointed; can newly elected officials have a say in appointments when those are made earlier than Jan. 2. Jadwin said there is an overlap; have had an issue with that; terms go through end of year, and a new term begins Jan. 2, should have been new mayor's appointment and it caused confusion; can see it both ways because the board/commission could want to begin work right away. Sherwood asked for 11.01, the memo from Planning Commission states that they are opposed to the change.

Gonchar summarized the memo; stated that in the past, and currently, there are members of the Planning Commission who also serve on other boards/commissions. Sherwood stated that they could remove that line from that proposed change; is still concerned with proposed wording; is concerned about not having staggered terms, because we have done away with the previous commission when it says "is hereby created". Vitale said the terms are staggered currently. Mularski confirmed. Vitale said she agreed that it would be an abolishment of the entire board/commission. Mularski said to leave in the first paragraph and that would prevent that. Sherwood said she does not know how the office does it now, but they would contact people in October for people who were expiring at the end of year; Council would interview in November

and December, but Council would not actually appoint until Jan. 2. Sherwood said that would be an issue in election years. Zehner said she has concerns with this adjustment; does not want to prevent someone from serving but asked why we would have people serving on multiple boards when we have a city of 35,000 residents.

Jadwin said traditionally CIC has had an appointment from Planning Commission for example; so planning could have a say. Mularski said charter trumps the rules of the board. McKenna said there could be language added that says “unless the appointment is related to your role on planning commission. Zehner said she doesn’t understand the problem so she can’t explain how to solve it. Gonchar stated that she believes that was added, as proposed, due to administrative duties in the back end, because it takes time and work to get the appointments started in January, so having extra time at the end of the year to get those appointments onboarded would help clerks and city staff; but it is not critical to the office; we would work it out either way. Secondly, although there are 35,000+ residents, the citizen engagement is not always proportional to the population; there are instances where you have an engaged resident, who has professional qualifications that would serve a board/commission, and the seat would otherwise be vacant, sees no reason to not allow an appointment on more than one board; some boards only meet once a year or as needed, and require specialized knowledge, the TIRC board is an example; this was not a proposal submitted by the Council body, so it is not that Council members had issues with it as it is currently.

Zehner said there is no reason to change something that isn’t broken. Vitale agreed, and said it allows the newly appointed elected official to weigh in, when the appointments are made Jan. 2. Jadwin said you have two months from the time you are elected to identify individuals to serve. Sherwood pointed out that 11.01, 12.01, and 13.01 all have the same wording, so if we are to change one, we must change all. Vitale suggested removing those since there is no current issue, and then they can begin whittling through the remainder of the items.

Mularski wanted to discuss the composition and term of the Charter Review Commission; there shall be appointed 7 qualified electors; does not address resignations or removal if a person who has been appointed can no longer serve; in order to determine a quorum for future meetings, must ensure that at least 4 members are present; must have at least four (4) in order to vote on anything.

Vitale listed off the following sections: 3.01, 3.02, 4.03, 4.04, 4.13, 4.18, 5.01, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 11.01, 11.03, 11.05, 11.06, 12.01, 13.01, 18.01, 21.01, 22.01, for review. Vitale said they received proposed language for 5.13, so they don't need to revisit that one. Gonchar stated that she can pull a Word version of each of those sections so that they can begin redlining those. Vitale said they can remove 11.01 from their list; Sherwood said to remove 12.01 and 13.01 as well. McKenna and Zehner agreed.

Sherwood concerned about the Fire Department sections. Vitale said for the sections that affect the Fire Departments, they will have an evening for public input and those folks can weigh in during that time if they are opposed to those changes. Gonchar stated that based off the deadlines for publishing legal ads in the local newspaper, they could have public input on 5/18/21 or 5/25/21. All agreed to set that date for 5/18/21.

Vitale said for 5.15 the biggest change was moving it from approval by Council to approval by Mayor. Sherwood said since the Mayor appoints the Safety Director, has no issue. No one else had issues.

[2021-0042](#)

Charter, City of Gahanna & Other Communities

[2021-0043](#)

Proposed Charter Amendments

2. Memo From Planning Commission

[2021-0069](#)

Memo regarding proposed charter amendments.

This memo was filed as part of the minutes.

3. Set Date For Public Input

Public input date was set for 5/18/2021 at 6:00 p.m.

D. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 7:15 p.m.