

The Charter Change meeting for September 08, 2011 was called to order at 1:00 p.m. at City Hall.

In attendance:

Dr. Genevieve Miller, chairperson

Ms. Josephine Moore

Mr. James Vincent

Mr. Daniel Losco, City Solicitor

Mr. John Houben arrived at 1:12

Meeting was called to Order at 1:00 p.m.

Meeting opened with a discussion about revamping the Charter to make it a more modern, more concise, and easier to understand. Mr. Losco suggested scraping existing Charter and using Middletown Charter as a model to redraft with comprehensive sweeping changes.

Dr. Miller asked if we would be getting rid of concepts, or just better use of language. Mr. Losco said it would be better use of language, but there could be some concepts that change too. Both Charters address similar issues, fundamental to City government.

Committee was open to modernization of language, and making it more concise; making it easier for the public to understand.

Making a full-scale revamping of the Charter, this will be more alarming to some than making changes to existing charter.

Mr. Houben liked the Middletown Charter, it is in everyday language. He also felt that the larger size of Council was better.

Dr. Miller suggested council by district, or at least have neighborhoods assigned to specific Councilmembers. That way people would know which councilperson to address if they have a concern.

Dr. Miller stated that they just changed New Castle to one district, and it made the voting process more concise and efficient.

Dr. Miller said the concern is not the voting process, but the availability of representation.

Mr. Losco asked if there has been a problem with people feeling they did not have a councilperson to go to.

Dr. Miller stated that if a person was voted in by district, then if they did not represent in that districts best interest, it would be easier for the voters could vote them out.

Dr. Miller stated that Council is now responsible or a liaison for certain department and voting by district does not enter into that.

Consensus of the committee is that it would be impractical to reintroduce districts if they were just consolidated.

Mr. Losco suggested that the Name be modernized to City of New Castle.

Section 27: No Changes

Section 28: No Changes

Section 29: Annexation: Mr. Losco pointed out that the Charter states that all property owners would need to petition to annex a property. Middletown and Newport only require two-thirds; that might be a change we want to suggest.

Also states property owners and qualified voters. This would include renters, and other transient people such as adult children. Committee suggests we strike “and qualified voters.”

Mr. Losco stated that State law would supersede our charter; we should state in Charter that we follow the State law.

Mr. Losco suggested that instead of changing all wording to he/she, him/her put in definitions that all pronouns are gender neutral.

Addendum:

Change “Corporation” to “City of New Castle.”

Section 1- Take out portion that City Clerk should post bond.

Section 2- Leave in Council’s ability to appoint an assessor.

Section 3- Appointing a Tax Collector, a City employee does that now. Do we have an employee who is appointed as collector of taxes? Are they bonded?

Section 4- Is the City Clerk collecting taxes? Committee suggested this section be deleted, it does not seem to still be in effect.

Mr. Losco asked that the Charter be amended to state who will appoint the City Solicitor and City Engineer.

Mr. Houben pointed out that unlike other charters, we have nothing in the City charter describing what happens if a Councilperson or Council President does not attend meetings.

Discussion as to how many meetings would need to be missed, if that would include special meetings.

Should this include the Mayor, and should the Charter require the Mayor to attend Council meetings?

If a Councilperson misses 25% or more of meetings they could on motion from another person on Council and an affirmative vote of Council, they could be removed.

Dr. Miller stated that Mayor and Council should work in tandem; the Mayor should attend the meeting as a representative of the citizens of the City.

Mr. Losco stated that in the current Charter the Mayor has very little power, and it might not be a good idea to require the Mayor to attend Council Meetings.

Mr. Losco stated that he would work on a Draft of the Charter changes.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Burgmuller