

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY
Charter Review Commission**

Corrected Minutes

Wednesday March 15, 2006, 6:30 p.m.
Edmonds City Hall
Bracket Room 121, 5th Ave N
Edmonds, WA

Commission Members Present: Kim Halvorson, Gail Rauch, Ryan Larsen, David Simpson, Dianne Symms, Mike Cooper, Jim Kenny, Wendy Valentine, Kristin Kelly, and Eric Earling, Renee Radcliff Sinclair.

Commission Members Excused: Rick Oritz, Barbara Cothorn Hawksford, and Christine Malone.

Commission Member Absent: Mark Bond

Others in attendance: Gary Nelson, Joann Ribeiro, Janet Chalupnik, Steve Smith, Bob Dantini, Paul Anderson, Rebecca Wolfe, Lawrence Connor, Sheri Connor, Mark Smith, Cliff Wells, Randy Ross, Geri Modrell, Norman Bruns, Richard Wright, Stephen Reinig, and Allena Olson.

Call to Order: Chair Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Approval of minutes: Commissioner Kenny proposed corrections to page 2, paragraph 5, and page 6, paragraph 4. Commissioner Earling proposed corrections to page 2, paragraph 7. Commissioner Kelly also noted that there was a typo on page 3, paragraph 2.

ACTION: Commissioner Rauch made a motion that the minutes of March 8, 2006 be approved as corrected. Commissioner Kenny seconded the motion, and all commission members present unanimously approved it.

Approval of Agenda: ACTION: Commissioner Simpson moved that the agenda for the meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Larsen and unanimously approved.

Guest Speaker: Gary Nelson, Snohomish County Council Member. Mr. Nelson presented the Commission with proposals on many topics, including the codification of ordinances, a salary commission, term limits, the performance audit, and veto provisions. Please see the attached information for a more detailed description of Mr. Nelson's proposals.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Simpson asked Mr. Nelson to voice his opinion on appointed vs. elected officials. Mr. Nelson's feelings on the matter were that an elected official is more the voice of the public. He stated that the real issues of the public are brought to light when you must go out and campaign. Commissioner Simpson addressed Mr. Nelson's thoughts on increasing the size of the County Council, asking why Mr. Nelson would choose the trigger number of 700,000 citizens to increase the number of council members instead of simply increasing the number immediately. Mr. Nelson replied that he had chosen that number as to attempt a smooth transition.

Commissioner Rauch asked Mr. Nelson what he thought the salary difference was between appointed and elected officials. Commissioner Rauch said she thought that those appointed had higher salaries. Mr. Nelson said that he did not think there was much difference at all, although he couldn't answer that with certainty without first doing research on the topic. Mr. Nelson said that he thought salaries ought to be determined by the duties performed by the position. He also noted that appointed positions in Snohomish County paid less than surrounding counties.

Commissioner Kenny asked Mr. Nelson how he saw the balance of power working out between the Executive and the Council if Mr. Nelson's proposed sectional veto provision was accepted. Mr. Nelson replied that neither the Council nor the Executive truly works alone and that they often have to work with each other on certain issues. Mr. Nelson said that he felt the sectional veto provision would not change the balance of power currently in place.

Commissioner Kelly inquired as to how much time Mr. Nelson thought it would take for the Council to annually review the large number of ordinances that were not codified, and why not simply codify some of them. Mr. Nelson replied that if a time constraint arose that some of the ordinances could become codified to avoid that problem.

Commissioner Valentine addressed the topic of making the actions and decisions of the Council available to the public in real time. She said that the Council shouldn't have any secrets, and that she would like to see the majority of the work done by the Council spelled out for the public. Mr. Nelson said that the voting records of each Council member are indeed published, although the format is difficult for the public to understand. He continued, saying that the hearing room is already wired for real time technology, but that it is very expensive.

Commissioner Valentine asked why Mr. Nelson thought that a member of the Charter Review Commission should have to wait five years before being eligible for election in a county office. Mr. Nelson replied it was because of the importance of the job of the Commission. Commissioner Valentine continued, asking how that was different than a council member being re-elected. Mr. Nelson stated that as being part of the Charter Review Commission you are responsible for making changes to the charter and the five year wait would eliminate any possibility for favoritism on the part of anyone. He

continued by saying that Council members may only make changes if they pass with a four person vote, there by avoiding any risk of one person showing favoritism.

Commissioner Earling asked Mr. Nelson if there would be a downside to moving the Performance Auditor from the Auditor to the County Council. Mr. Nelson said that the only downside might be that the members of the County Council select the Performance Audit committee, and an unforeseen conflict of interest might arise. He also noted that the County Council only offers ideas to the Performance Audit Committee.

Commissioner Earling asked Mr. Nelson what his thoughts were of the Performance Auditor being allowed to select areas of audit. Mr. Nelson replied he had no problem with this, however at this time the Performance Auditor is so busy with requests he doubted that it would be an issue.

On the topic of inter-government relations, Commissioner Halvorson asked Mr. Nelson if he saw the impact of changing the word “may” to “shall” in section 1.30 of the charter. Commissioner Halvorson stated that she feels if you will be impacting the community through an inter local agreement they should be able to participate. Mr. Nelson replied that he would have no problem with making that language change.

Charter Overview: Chair Cooper stated that copies of the Charter, as well as issues given and to be deliberated on, are available to the public on the County’s web site. A copy of the League of Women Voters web material related to the Chart Review Commission was distributed to the Commissioners in their packets.

Public Comments: Mr. Mark Smith from the Lynnwood City Council expressed his opinion on the veto provisions. He believes that allowing these provisions would be giving too much power to one individual, taking away the need for the Executive to work with the minority members.

Ms. Rebecca Wolfe spoke of her opposition of term limits, stating that is what elections are for. She commended the Commission for their gender diversity but asked that the Charter language be changed to promote more ethnic diversity. Ms. Wolfe also voiced her desire to see the community take back the airwaves. She offered her insight as to how this could be accomplished, and said that as a community we need to start doing whatever possible to stop the abuse by large corporations.

Administrative Report/Chair Remarks: Chair Cooper informed the public of the Charter Review Commission’s meeting schedule. Those meetings on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month were held in Everett at the County Administrative Building East, and that all other meetings would be held in different districts, whose meeting places would be published in the paper the week of the meeting. Chair Cooper also stated that a timeline for the Charter Review Commission had been drafted. He noted that deliberation would begin May 17th.

Chair Cooper reviewed the budget numbers discussed at the last meeting, saying that he was still working on getting the approval from the County Council and that it seemed that all Council members would be in support of the additional funding.

Chair Cooper said that the commissioners had received a memo from the Prosecuting Attorney's office recommending that Commission members have county email addresses in addition to their personal ones. Discussion ensued about the possible benefits as well as downfalls of this. There was also discussion on the best way to handle the set up of such emails, and which provider would be the best. There was a consensus that it would not be beneficial to use the Citrix email system, as it is impossibly slow.

On the topic of email Commissioner Kenny asked how many Commissioners he could email regarding a commission issue and still not have it be considered an online meeting. Chair Cooper asked that Commissioner Kenny get together with Steve Reinig and form a question to put to Ms. Dykes about this topic.

The Commission was given the outcome of the first survey published on Survey Monkey and discussed the results. There was follow up discussion about the length of the next survey, the importance of asking those who take the survey for additional information regarding which district they are from, and the process in which the questions for the survey are formulated and chosen.

Commissioner Kenny asked that the issue of an office of public accountability, brought up by Mr. John Campbell, be added to the issue list of the Charter Review Commission. The question was asked, which issues brought up by the public were added to this list. It was said that all suggestions were added to the list as, long as they were not already mentioned, no matter how they were received. Additional items previously brought up by the public, and not found on the list, were discussed and Chair Cooper said that he and Steve were attempting to keep a running list, and to simply let them know what additions should be made.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by:

Allena Olson
Recorder

