



**Minutes of the Charter Review Commission from Wednesday March 25, 2025, 6:30 p.m.**

**1.) Call to Order**

**2.) Roll Call**

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Denny Mariola, Dennis Campbell,  
Rick Charles, Amy Jones,

Charter Review Commission Members Absent: Janice Arch, Christy Staats, Nancy  
Binzel

City Officials Present: Drew Reilly, Hannah Morris,  
Steven Hooten

**3.) Approval of Minutes**

Approval of March 12, 2025, Minutes:

Motion made by Denny Mariola, seconded by Amy Jones to approve March 12, 2025,  
Minutes.

Vote – Yeas: Denny Mariola, Dennis Campbell, Rick Charles, Amy Jones

Nays – None. Motion carried unanimously.

**4.) Old Business**

- 4.08 Meetings held in different locations to accommodate larger crowds

It was discussed that the way the charter is currently written is fine and would not need to be updated to accommodate larger crowds. It leaves it open to move within the City if needed. No changes were recommended.

**• Research Topics**

- i. Changes made to City Wards

The last change to the City Wards was made in 2001. Mr. Reilly gave a breakdown of population and percentages of each of the current wards in the city.

The commission discussed using this information at the upcoming Town Hall meeting to share thoughts of recommending it to the council about possibly revisiting the ward breakdown.

Mr. Charles had questions on how to go about recommending the topic of Wards to the city council. Mr. Reilly had recommended that once they charter review commission gets their recommended changes for the first half of the charter ready, that the chairman of the commission be present at the council meeting. The changes that the commission would be recommending to the council would be an agenda item for the meeting but not necessarily a resolution where the council would vote on.

Mr. Reilly explained that the law department would draft the recommendations and then the charter review commission could vote and approve it to be submitted to the council.

ii. 4.16: Timeline of filling a vacancy- State Code

Mr. Reilly explained that since the state code on filling a vacancy, stating that the 45-day timeline is longer due to having state qualifications about getting out notice of vacancy or meeting notices as well. He also stated that he would always recommend having more time as the 45 days to fill a vacancy and not rushing that appointment.

5.) New Business

• Article VI: Department of Finance

Mr. Reilly gave an overview of the Department of Finance, that they are the head of the finance department, and it is an elected 4-year term. They hold their office until a qualified successor is elected.

Mr. Charles wanted clarification that the finance department, as well as the law department, are still Stow employees but they report to their department director. Mr. Reilly stated that that was all correct.

Mr. Reilly explained the qualifications of the Finance Director. They must have lived in the city for at least a year prior to declaration of candidacy. Mentioned that they had added requirements of knowledge of municipal accounting, taxation, budgets and financial control and must hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, economics or public administration from accredited college or university. You must also have 5 years' management experience in accounting or finance. The director must be full-time and not hold any part-time position within the city.

Mr. Charles had questions in regard to how full-time status is not necessarily defined and that if the finance director or law director is only devoting 2-3 hours a week and

is holding a job outside of the city, they could be subject to impeachment. Mr. Reilly stated that is correct.

Mr. Reilly explained that the Director of Finance oversees the fiscal affairs of the Municipality. They are to serve as the financial advisor to the Mayor and the Council, assist the council in preparation for its annual financial budget. They give updates during the council meetings. There is a section on contracts that the Director of Finance certifies that the funds exist for said contract.

The Director of Finance establishes and maintains accounting procedures necessary for keeping complete records of assets and liabilities, receipts and disbursements, and property records of the Municipality. This section states that our policies and procedures must align with auditing purposes as well.

The finance department receives and is held accountable for all the funds belonging to the municipality. Mr. Reilly explained that each department may collect their own funds- but they all go to the finance department daily.

Within the vacancy section of this article, it states that the Finance Director and Law Director serve until the next municipal election which differs from the mayor. The one provision that could be temporarily waved would be residency by the council for the remainder of the term due to the vacancy.

The one recommendation for a change would be: The Assistant Director of the General Division shall have immediate acting power of the Director, regardless of residency, until a replacement Director of Finance is appointed.

The Charter states it's in the event of death, resignation, recall or removal. There is no provision to have an acting Finance Director in the event that they would become incapacitated.

The commission asked for a draft for similar to the Mayor's vacancy section to have added the Assistant Director would become acting Finance Director if they become incapacitated.

Mr. Mariola had asked if that is technically stated there, but Mr. Reilly stated that since there is no mention of temporarily absent. But the law department will have language to include that to be added to the Charter.

Ms. Jones had said it would be beneficial to have a draft of that, and Mr. Mariola would like it added in simple language.

Mr. Charles had asked if there was the position of Assistant Director of the General Division. Mr. Reilly stated that they are working on getting that position back onto the payroll table after the previous Assistant Director had retired.

- **Article VII: Department of Public Service**

The Director of Public Service is the head of the department and appointed by the mayor with confirmation of the council. They are selected based on executive and administrative qualifications and they are not required to be an engineer.

Their duties include the responsibility for construction, improvement, and maintenance of all public works, buildings, grounds, cemeteries, parks, roads, streets, and all other public places of the Municipality, and all collection and disposal of wastes. They oversee the maintenance of all municipal property and equipment, and the storage of all materials and supplies.

They approve the purchases by the city and make sure they have followed proper procedure. Within the cities codified ordinances it goes through the formal bidding processes.

*Christy Staats arrived during the discussion regarding the Department of Public Service approximately 7:00 pm*

- **Article VIII: Department of Public Safety**

The Director of Public Safety is the head of the department and the Mayor is the director of public safety but they can appoint someone if that is necessary and then the council would have to confirm that person.

Ms. Staats had asked if we had a police chief and if that is different, Mr. Reilly states that the Police Chief reports to the Director of Public Safety, which in Stow's case- is the Mayor.

The Director of Public Safety is the head of the Emergency Medical Service, Police and Fire Department and all dispatchers. Mr. Reilly explained that the city no longer has dispatchers, they have moved to the Safety Services Communication Center. He had recommended that portion stay in the charter incase they ever come back to the City or move into another agreement for another Dispatch Center. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Mariola agreed to leave it in the charter as is. Mr. Reilly had stated in the last section that it mentions that before the city can enter into another regional or multi-agency agreement it would need to go to the ballot before they could agree to enter into said contract.

The Police Chief consists of a Chief of Police and other officers and personnel as the council deems advisable. The Chief is subject to the civil service provision of the charter and Director of Public Safety appoints the Chief in accordance with the civil service law from those eligible for the position. The City has its own Civil Service Code as well as the State has their own.

The Fire Department consists of a Fire Chief as well as other officers and personnel. They are very similar to the Police Department provisions and they have their own section within the Civil Service Code.

Mr. Reilly stated he spoke to the departments regarding their sections and neither had requested changes.

- **Article IX: Department of Law**

Mr. Reilly stated that this is very similar to the Department of Finance, in that it is an elected position to a four-year term. It was changed from an appointed position to an elected position in 1991.

Ms. Jones wanted to know the reason for it changing from an appointed position to an elected position, and why not keep it appointed.

Mr. Reilly stated that he will pull the minutes to see why it was changed. He stated that across the county it ranges from elected to appointed based on jurisdiction. He thought that there may be a total of 4 elected, with the remaining either being part-time or appointed by the mayor and confirmed by council. Mr. Reilly explained that there are arguments for both sides of appointed versus elected.

As for qualifications, they must be an attorney in law in good standing and admitted to practice in courts of Ohio. Their office must be within City Hall, and they must devote full-time hours during business hours as well as other times as necessary.

The duties of the Law Director is the legal advisor and attorney for the Municipality.

The Law Director is also authorized to make typographical errors or corrections to the charter, if there are misspellings or making things more coherent. They can change those sorts of errors without having to go to vote of the city but would have to be changed unanimously by the council.

The vacancy section discussed similarly to the Finance Director and there is no provision for if the Law Director becomes incapacitated, and the commission had asked for a draft with language to have that included as well.

In discussion regarding outside legal counsel, it was explained that council must approve, even if its pro bono help. The resolution would have to state which specific attorney or firm, and what representation they are limited to. Mr. Reilly gave examples of why and when the city would look for outside legal counsel.

The one time the council would not need to approve an outside legal counsel is when an insurer would provide legal counsel, since council had already approved the policy.

**6.) Next Meeting Topic Discussion:**

Mr. Campbell had suggested to keep going in order and discussing Article X: Planning Commission and Zoning Procedure as well as Article XI: Board of Zoning and Building Appeals. He wanted to leave time to discuss the feedback of the Town Hall meeting the day before if they had the feedback they wanted and possibly vote on the proposed changes to send to the council for their approval.

Ms. Staats had asked if they had discussed going back to the election cycles and term limits, which the commission confirmed that will be discussed in that section of the code. Mr. Reilly suggested how to break down the next few meetings based on the complexity of the articles coming up in the charter.

Mr. Mariola had stated he has concerns about the Town Hall. How it will proceed and potential issues coming forward from the residents. The commission has discussed how they will handle any questions they feel cannot field. The commission had stated they are there to listen to the residents' concerns and/or comments regarding the feedback on the charter.

Mr. Campbell gave a breakdown of how he would like the town hall to run and explain that the Charter Review Commission does not make any final decisions and reiterate that they are here to get feedback on potential changes.

**7.) Public Comment**

No public comment at tonight's meeting

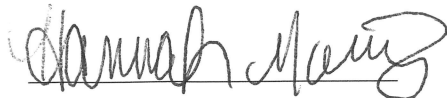
**8.) Other**

No other Business at tonight's meeting

**9.) Adjournment**

Motion made by Christy Staats, seconded by Denny Mariola, to adjourn.

Motion carried unanimously.



Clerk



Chairman