



**Minutes of the Charter Review Commission from Tuesday April 29, 2025, 6:30 p.m.**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Dennis Campbell, Denny Mariola, Amy Jones, Rick Charles, Nancy Binzel, Janice Arch

Charter Review Commission Members Absent: Christina Staats

City Officials Present: Steven Hooten, Hannah Morris,

**3. Approval of Minutes**

- Approval of April 16, 2025 minutes

Motion made by Nancy Binzel, seconded by Rick Charles to approve April 16, 2025 minutes

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

Nays – None. Motion carried unanimously.

**4. Hudson City Council**- Mr. Charles had discussed having a member of Hudson City Council come to Stow's Charter Review meeting to discuss their process in Hudson. He stated that he was aware that Hudson had also been discussing Rank Choice Voting.

Mr. Charles then introduced Hudson Council Member Skylar Sutton. Mr. Sutton explained that their city also does Charter Review Committee every five years. He stated that he suggested to Hudson Charter Review regarding Rank Choice Voting this year and that they are having similar conversations in Hudson. He stated that Hudson Charter Review has also had Stow City Councilman Kyle Herman come and speak regarding Rank Choice Voting. He explained that he is independent and has no party affiliation and that his thoughts on Rank Choice Voting are his genuine opinion and that he feels that it would lead to more candidates running and more satisfying election results.

He explained that in 2019 Hudson's ward election, the winner won with only 38% of the

vote, and he expressed that 61% of the people did not vote for the winner, but based on the current voting system, that person did win the election. He just felt that this was a perfect example that in a Ward election 61% of the people in that ward were not fully represented by someone they wanted in office.

Councilman Sutton opened the floor up for any questions for him from Stow's Charter Review members.

Mr. Mariola wanted to know what he thought was the biggest issue / challenge that Hudson had to overcome in their discussion. Mr. Sutton explained that the biggest issue is just the voters understanding the process and how it works. He expressed that it would take possibly one election cycle to get people over the learning curve.

Mr. Charles wanted to know where Hudson currently stands on the discussion.

Mr. Sutton stated that they have had a few residents speak on the issue, a few council members and as well as Mr. Herman from Stow. He stated they hadn't got that portion in the charter as of yet, but once they do that's when decisions will be made.

He also mentioned that any changes presented by Hudson's Charter Review Committee automatically get put on the ballot for Hudson to vote on.

They discussed Senate Bill 63 and the repercussions it could have on Rank Choice Voting.

The commission then thanked Mr. Sutton for coming and speaking and sharing this opinion and a neighboring community.

## **5. Old Business**

- **Term length draft for Law Director**
- **Term length draft for Finance Director**

Mr. Hooten noted that these are both addressed in section 21.08 the draft that was created included both, since only one paragraph is being altered. The law department added in section (b) that with the exception of completing an unexpired term, the Finance Director and Law Director shall serve no more than three consecutive four-year terms in the same elected office and no more than a total of 14 consecutive years.

He stated the language is adding another term and changing the 10-year limitation to 14-year limitation.

Ms. Binzel explained why they wanted to see a change in this section due to some commission members not being at the previous meeting.

Mr. Charles stated that he feels by adding this it could bring in more candidates with having longer terms. Feels this allows a longer path for their career.

Mr. Campbell wanted to know when was the last time the City had a Law Director Term out. He just wanted to know when residents ask that question to have that answer ready.

Mr. Hooten stated he would research and let them know by the next meeting.

Ms. Binzel made a motion to move this item to council for their review.

Mr. Campbell stated he would like to wait until the after the next Town Hall meeting to get feedback from the residents. The Commission agreed to wait on moving this item to council.

- **Term limit examples for At-Large Council / Ward Council seats**

Mr. Hooten had provided the commission with copies of possible ward term changes. Since there are quite a few different options, he wanted to provide the commission the changes and also where in the charter that would also need changes if they decide to move forward with that change. Mr. Charles asked that

there would be no way to put on the ballot one issue that would change the charter to four-year terms for the council seats versus two years since it is mentioned in multiple places and sections within the charter.

Mr. Hooten stated that in previous years when the charter review commission had tried to change the term limit for council because they did individual ones for each of the places where its at within the charter. It was noted that council had not put it on the ballot either times the charter review commission had made suggestion for that change. Mr. Hooten stated there is nothing stopping the commission from submitting an amendment that changes two separate sections but that is just not how it has been done in the past.

Mr. Campbell had asked if there would be challenges from the Summit County Board of Elections to present the ballot in that way, or did it violate any of their policies, systems, or processes from the state level as well.

Mr. Charles stated that if they put it in one amendment, and council passes it and it goes to the board of elections, he stated that it was up to council to split it out to make two issues or if there is some flexibility to do what they want with it. They also stated they could alter section 4 of the charter so then they are really only having to amend it in one section if it is removed from section 4. He stated that if this is something the commission is serious about changing, he wanted to do it a different way since the last two times council has rejected any sort of change or amendment to the term limits since this is a major change to the City.

Mr. Hooten will look into the changes the commission had submitted previously and how they were worded as well as any difficulty they could run into with the board of elections.

Mr. Mariola wanted to know the reasoning on why it was turned down in the past.

Mr. Hooten stated that there was no definite reasoning, but that this is just the way it's been.

Mr. Campbell had asked that they have a combined version of the changes for the charter, see what the Board of Elections says as well as feedback from the Town Hall and then go from there.

Mr. Charles spoke about what happened at the last council meeting when he was there and the feedback he received. He stated that council had an overall opinion in regard to they have always received the changes in one lump sum rather than getting them piece by piece as they have gotten them this time. Ms. Arch had questioned how many of the council members are currently on council that were there previously when the last commission submitted items. They discussed that this is more of just how the process has been done not how they have seen it done as members of council. Mr. Charles stated there is back and forth between council members on how it should be handled.

Mr. Charles stated that the council members would like to see the changes prioritized by the Charter Review Commission. He stated that council members McIntyre and Coffey was not in favor of the changes regarding the acting mayor stating the changes were not big enough to go to the ballot.

Mr. Mariola wanted to be sure that the council members know and understand that we want to work with them and get their feedback as well as the residents.

Mr. Charles stated too that the members could reach out to the council members individually regarding their feedback on possible changes. They discussed contacting their individual ward representatives to speak regarding their thoughts and feedback.

## 6. New Business

- **Article XVI: Nominations and Elections**

Mr. Hooten gave a summary of this article. Stated that in 2019 the City of Stow removed Primary elections to nominate candidates for the regular municipal election.

Ms. Jones wanted to know why they decided to get rid of the primary elections, she wanted to know the reason behind that choice. Mr. Hooten stated he can get the minutes from the council clerk and get those to the commission. Mr. Charles had stated his thought would be that since stow is a nonpartisan city that that would be main driver and also cost of holding a primary election.

Ms. Binzel stated that she is surprised all of this is within the charter when it is also state law and election law. She stated she's not making any proposal to change anything within this section.

Ms. Binzel asked if the commission was going to make a decision on Rank Choice Voting that this is the section (16.06) that it would be part of.

Mr. Hooten stated that it would be a new section, rather than amending any of the current sections. Mr. Charles stated he felt that they needed to have a meeting where they specifically discuss Rank Choice Voting. Ms. Jones added that possibly having someone be present that knows more about the process for Rank Choice Voting. Mr. Campbell stated that since this is such a large possible change that is Rank Choice Voting could be another recommendation to council to look at further as they had discussed with changing the number of wards the city currently has. Mr. Campbell expressed that since Rank Choice Voting is such a substantial change and requires a lot of education he's hesitant to send to a ballot where it could be crushed because people just do not understand it.

- **Article XVII: Initiative, Referendum and Recall**

Mr. Hooten gave a summary of this section of the charter, Ms. Jones wanted to clarify that section 17.03 doesn't list any specific reasoning on why a recall would take place. Mr. Hooten explained that the reason behind not naming reasons is because there could be a lot of different examples and by naming them could limiting in itself, and its already self-limiting by requiring you get 25% of the electors. Mr. Charles wanted to know what was changed or amended in each of these sections in 1998 and 1997 just to know. Mr. Reilly stated that he could find out and send out to the members.

## 7. Public Comment – no one from the public present.

## 8. Other –

The commission discussed when the next meeting and Town Hall would be scheduled. They decided to hold a Town Hall meeting on Tuesday May 20 and 7pm. A meeting to discuss with available council members on Wednesday May 21 at 6:30 pm. Then Tuesday May 27 at 6:30 as a follow up of the Town Hall and meeting with Council.

Mr. Campbell wanted to know if the commission thinks at this point that Rank Choice Voting is something they want to send to council this time around or put it in the place

with the wards where they do grunt work on the topic and then recommend to council that they can decide.

Mr. Mariola asked if he feels if anyone is feeling prepared to make that choice. Majority of the members did not feel as if they were prepared to present Rank Choice Voting.

Mr. Charles did not agree, and he felt they could prepare something to send to council. He stated he understood that they vote as a team and he would support whatever the choice would be.

Mr. Mariola stated he is fearful that if they send a piece for Rank Choice Voting and Ward changes since they are such big changes, the council members may not have the time to get feedback from their constituents and then they turn it down for going onto the ballot. He wanted to know if they present it, and council rejects it, can they submit it again.

Mr. Reilly explained that you cannot submit the same piece of legislation again once it's been turned down and they would have to substantially change the piece of legislation and not just resubmit it.

Ms. Jones asked the commission if they feel they could realistically educate the community and the council on Rank Choice Voting in time to have things submitted to the Board of Elections.

Ms. Arch stated that it isn't the commissions duty to educate on the topic.

Mr. Campbell agreed that it isn't their duty to educate but his biggest concern is that is it DOA. They have to be able to get the majority of council to get on board for it to even get to the ballot, and say they pass it and move to the ballot and then that's where it dies since there is not enough education on the topic. He felt it moving too quickly since it is such a foreign topic to a lot of voters and being the first municipality around here to implement it and not having another local municipality that is already utilizing it.

Mr. Charles and Ms. Arch stated that Rank Choice Voting has been the most talked about topic at the meetings from members of the city. Mr. Charles stated that all they can do is vote as a commission to send it to council and then its up to council to decide to put on the ballot or not.

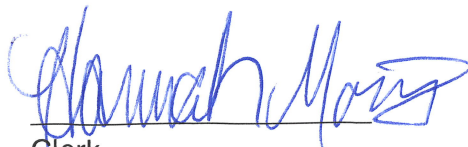
Mr. Campbell is fearful if they submit legislation with Rank Choice Voting and rank it high on the priority list for council, he's fearful they will turn down all the other ideas that come forth after that.

Ms. Arch suggested that the meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>, they bring forth all the ideas of changes, including Rank Choice Voting and get feedback from them. Afterwards then decide on moving forward at that point or not, rather than making that decision right now.

## 9. Adjournment

Motion made by Rick Charles, seconded by Amy Jones, to adjourn.

Motion carried unanimously.

  
Clerk

  
Chairman