



Minutes of the Charter Review Commission from Wednesday May 21, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

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

Charter Review Commission Members Absent: Amy Jones, Christina Staats

City Officials Present: Drew Reilly, Hannah Morris, Cyle Feldman, John Baranek

3. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of April 29, 2025 minutes

Motion made by Denny Mariola, seconded by Nancy Binzel to approve April 29, 2025 minutes

Vote – Yeas: Denny Mariola, Rick Charles, Nancy Binzel, Janice Arch, Dennis Campbell

Nays – None. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment-

- Chairman Campbell had moved the public comment section up knowing there was one member in the audience wanting to make a public comment. Mr. Campbell swore in James Samels (4501 Plumwood Ct- Stow) he wanted to comment on the term limit discussion. He speaks as a public official within the City of Kent but also as a resident of Stow. He wanted to speak on having that continuity of leadership. His role in the City of Kent he has to provide a 5 year plan and having the continuity of leadership is key to be able to plan and provide progress the city. He states if there was a shift in people so often that just adds unnecessary stress that could be avoided by having longer terms. He thinks of his work experiences now as he's casting his vote as a citizen as well. He wouldn't want to have a complete change of crew every few years. He feels it would be better to have the staggered longer terms to provide that leadership and avoid any potential hurdles to deal with. Allows the departments and the city over all to make progress. Mr. Charles wanted to clarify that Kent had nine council members, 6 ward seats and 3 at-large with 4year staggered terms. He asked Mr. Samels that with his role that

the continuity is important from one council to another. And that it is critical when new council members come in that there are members with the experience and know the history of some of the items that will be brought up over possible years when it comes to large purchases made by the City. He feels like having to possibly start over with all new members at the same time its just added burden to the city. They thanked Mr. Samels for his time and his service as well.

Christina Staats arrived approx. 6:40pm

5. Old Business

- Town Hall Follow-up

Mr. Campbell asked the commission how they felt the Town Hall went the night prior. They all agreed they liked that there was more people and more feedback than the first one they held. They appreciated that they got comments on all their discussion items. No other discussion on old business.

6. New Business

- Discussion with City Council Members

Council President Cyle Feldman was present for the start of the discussion, Councilman Baranek did come in later into the discussion.

Mr. Campbell started with Section 3.06 Acting Mayor. Mr. Charles gave an overview of the possible change they want to hopefully see and gave the commissions reasoning behind their thought process. This change was to make this section more clear and less chance of misinterpretation of this section.

Mr. Reilly pointed out that this section is currently tabled by council.

Mr. Feldman wanted to generally comment on the changes. Stated he absolutely loves the work that the commission has been doing, and that he is just one of seven members of council and he can only provide his input to tonight's discussion. He stated that he likes 6.08, 9.07 those language changes are all good. And the change within the Public Posting section he feels is outdated and that those should be yes's in his perspective. He also feels that some of the others within the list of possible changes are big changes. He wanted clarification on 21.08. He stated that Rank Choice Voting is a big discussion. He is not sure if they go to big with changes off the bat. When you discuss changes as in ward changes, term limit changes, staggering terms those are all big changes. He understood the importance of staggering because in 2020 six of the members of council were new and they didn't have that continuity that was discussed in the beginning of the meeting. He felt like having 2-year terms he feels as if he is always campaigning and that he liked the idea of 4-year terms. He did say he likes 4-year terms and staggering. He said they have had the discussion regarding voter fatigue.

President Feldman stated that historically no changes were made in 2015 nor in 2020 so now things are behind in changes. He feels that he knows they are all

important and he was looking to maybe have four or five of the changes to put forward.

Mr. Charles wanted to discuss with President Feldman the process moving forward. He stated that they have submitted five changes, and they have been tabled, he stated the remaining discussion points may have legislation to be submitted may not, they are still discussing. He understands that council wanted the commission to prioritize the changes, but Mr. Charles explains that the commission feels as if all of them are important and he thinks if they rank them then council may not even look at the ones that are ranked lower. He wanted to know how Council will review the choices.

President Feldman stated that it may be more impactful if they only submit a few to council this time around and that there are other ways to get things on the ballot whether council puts them on at another time or the residents petition to get them voted on. He just felt that having more than five could be too much at one time. He didn't think prioritization is a terrible ask because they all answer to residents and he will have to answer of "why am I voting for this?" President Feldman doesn't think he can push a bunch of things onto voters. To him, a 4-year term would be number one and then since staggering goes along with that would be number 2 but that is because that is it affects him having to run more often.

Ms. Binzel explained that at the meeting the night before the commission had the consensus that it wasn't up to the commission to prioritize, they had gone through the charter and found things that they thought needed to be corrected or updated. The commission felt that it should be up to council as the elected officials to prioritize on behalf of those that they represent, including the members of the commission. She understood President Feldman's and she was interested on what the other members of council would prioritize. She also explained in regards to ballot fatigue this would be the year to do it since there is no big items on the ballot.

President Feldman felt that the council could do that by prioritizing them. He states the ones that have been submitted will not be a big change for the residents, no. But in regard to Rank Choice Voting and Ward changes are big ones. He felt they could put the easier less big changing ones on sooner than later. Then the ones that will be larger changes to wait on. He did not want the commission to take this as criticism. He likes that they have held Town Halls and getting the feedback from the residents. He wanted to view this as how do they get the 'wins'.

Ms. Binzel stated that the commission's role is not political and when it comes to voting that is obviously a political aspect of this process. That is why she feels it is councils' responsibility to choose and prioritize.

Mr. Campbell stated that it would be acceptable as well if council even chose to submit some of the changes in January to make changes as well.

Ms. Staats stated that she would like to be able to have the commission work with council and listen to the voices for the residents as well and if there is not a place in this election or if they need to change the language that has been created now to possibly move them forward at a later date.

President Feldman thinks they could get to all of the proposed changes eventually but not all of them right away as some of them are large changes and he himself is still learning about some of the changes.

Mr. Baranek stated that he has been on all three sides of this discussion. He was an elected official as a finance director with and without term limits, he stated he is not a fan of having term limits personally. He stated that he does agree with President Feldman on the list of changes the commission have, he feels that it would be too much to do at once. He thinks that some may be hard for the public to understand. When it comes to Rank Choice Voting he expressed that there would need to be a lot of education that comes with that. He likes the idea of staggered terms is good. He explained he also was on the Charter Review Commission previously, and they put forth eight changes and only got one or two put on the ballot. He thinks he likes how thought out the changes they have come up with have been great.

Mr. Mariola wanted to ask President Feldman to let council know that the commission is here to work with them and they aren't here to be adversarial and they want the feedback from council and if they need to adjust language they are willing to work with them and not against them. He wanted to be able to provide why they are proposing the changes and also hear councils input in the changes as well.

President Feldman explained that he loves dialogue and listening to everyone's perspective without being adversarial. The goal is to be productive for the residents of Stow.

Mr. Baranek feels like council would look at this list more open-mindedly than they may have in the past.

Mr. Charles stated he felt that as a commission they owe council a rationale for each one of the proposed changes. He felt if they don't prioritize the changes, if they stage them to do some this year and then next year propose a few of the other changes.

Mr. Feldman thinks he feels that council could prioritize them. He is also open to having things go forward this year and then some of the others another year. He likes that there has been open dialogue between the commission and members of council and that's a better way to create progress.

Mr. Baranek stated he doesn't like being on the leading edge on some of the new changes. Where he felt that if some other communities adapt some of these changes first and then Stow comes in after if some of the issues have been worked out after. He knows that a lot of people are averse to change.

Mr. Campbell commented on the discussion of leading edge; he feels that rank choice voting is top of the list of cutting edge. But he feels that Stow is behind on staggered terms and term length. He explained that the ward size discussion he originally brought up having another committee or group discuss the ward changes since it is a heavy lift and maybe just to have a recommendation to council to reevaluate wards.

Mr. Campbell stressed that they could share with the council what the commissions goals are and that they are not coming from an adversarial place and they are just looking to make progress and simplify the charter and have it work better for the residents.

Mr. Baranek thanked the commission for their time and effort that they have put forth.

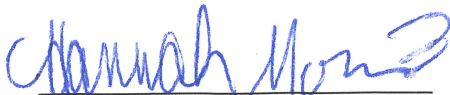
President Feldman stated that the commission has done great and that he appreciated the dialogue they have had and hopefully have the progress that comes from it.

7. **Public Comment** – No other public comment for tonight's meeting
8. **Other** – Mr. Campbell stated he would like to have another meeting after their upcoming meeting on May 27. They decided to meet Monday June 1, 2025. Mr. Reilly stated they can have a draft of the rationale and change if needed.

9. **Adjournment**

Motion made by Christina Staats, seconded by Janice Arch, to adjourn.

Motion carried unanimously.



Clerk



Chairman