



King County

## CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

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### **King County Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes – February 27, 2007**

Seattle Municipal Tower, 5:00pm-7:00pm

The February 27, 2007 meeting of the King County Charter Review Commission was called to order by co-chair Mr. Lowry at 5:10 p.m.

#### **Commission members in attendance:**

Mike Lowry, Co-chair  
Lois North, Co-chair  
Trisha Ann Bennett  
Jim English  
Dan Gandara  
Bryan Glynn  
John Groen  
Kirsten Haugen  
Tara Jo Heinecke  
Gregg Hiramawa  
John Jensen  
Terry Lavendar  
Gary Long  
Sharon Maeda  
Allan Munro  
Sarah Rindlaub  
Mike Wilkins  
James Williams

#### **Absent:**

Juan Bocanegra  
Doreen Cato  
Darcy Goodman

#### **Executive Staff:**

Mark Yango, Charter Review Coordinator  
Corrie Watterson Bryant, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission  
Charlotte Ohashi, Administrative Assistant, Charter Review Commission

**Council/PAO Staff:**

Rebecha Cusack, Council Liaison, Charter Review Commission

Nick Wagner, Council Co-Liaison, Charter Review Commission

Mike Sinsky, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

**Guests:**

Larry Gossett, King County Councilman

Ron Sims, King County Executive

Ed Ollie, Office of the Executive

Lindsey Nussbaum, citizen

**1. Opening Remarks**

The first meeting of the 2007-2008 Charter Review Commission (CRC) opened with remarks by King County Executive Ron Sims. He stressed that King County needs a 21<sup>st</sup>-century government, including a modern structure and tools. He hopes that the CRC will be a force for change, and that it will provide county government with an updated and innovative set of governing directives. Executive Sims expressed that he was in favor of sending the CRC's final recommendations straight to voters. He also noted that his overarching goal for the county is a good return on investment for voters.

Executive Sims opened the floor for questions. Mr. Long asked him to describe his most pressing and consistent challenge in governing the county. Executive Sims responded that fiscal integrity and budget discipline are the biggest ongoing difficulties. In particular, he noted that maintaining a AAA bond rating is frustrating for the county administration. He recommended formal spending policies and a biennial (rather than annual) budget, to allow for more thorough review of the budget by the County Council.

Co-chair Mrs. North asked Executive Sims to clarify whether he believes that the CRC's recommendations should be sent directly to voters, without prior approval by the County Council. He offered his strong opinion that the recommendations should go straight to the ballot, to strengthen people's respect for the government and reduce government stagnation.

Executive Sims broached another challenge facing the county government: the trend toward decision-making along party lines. He called for a more bi-partisan process in the formulation of public policy, and for a thoughtful discussion on the subject.

The Executive thanked CRC for their service, and complimented Mr. Yango on his skills and preparation for the Coordinator position.

Executive Sims departed.

**2. Introductions**

All commissioners, staff, and visitors introduced themselves, and provided brief biographies.

**3. Presentation**

Mr. Yango gave a presentation on the charter review process, its history, and our current work plan and next steps. The presentation can be accessed on the Charter Review Commission's website –

[www.metrokc.gov/exec/charter](http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/charter). Mr. Yango made a correction in the presentation, on page 10: previous commissions have voted using a *simple* majority, not a *super* majority.

Comments were welcome from the commissioners throughout the presentation.

Co-chair Mrs. North recommended that the CRC should plan to have an in-depth discussion on the current workload of the Council members. Currently, members sit on 3-4 Council committees, plus regional committees and the PSRC, leaving them little time for other work. This is largely because the existing committee structure was designed for 13 members, not nine. Ms. Cusack noted that one member sat on 42 committees last year.

Councilmember Gossett entered the meeting, and was recognized by Mr. Yango. The Councilmember remarked that he was looking forward to the recommendations of the CRC, and the unique perspective that they will bring to the table. He noted that the CRC's diverse ideas will complement and add to those of the Council. Councilmember Gossett departed.

Mr. Yango presented information on the committees used by the 1996-1997 CRC, including the regional, structural, technical, and public outreach committees. Co-chair Mrs. North commented that many previous commissioners found the issues considered by the regional committee to be the most compelling. For example, regional committee members spent a significant amount of time discussing the formation of a new government for incorporated areas (though they decided not to take action). She noted that commissioners joined committees according to their areas of interest, and that some committees had more members than others.

Mr. Yango reviewed the outcome of the previous CRC's recommendations, explaining that the commission proposed three ordinances, none of which were accepted by the Council. Mr. Glynn asked for clarification on whether the CRC is permitted to recommend ordinances, pointing out that the field of possible ordinance changes is so broad as to be essentially limitless. Mr. Yango explained that the CRC does not typically suggest ordinance changes.

Mr. Williams asked for clarification on whether the CRC's recommendations go to the Council for its approval, or if they go straight to the ballot. Mr. Yango replied that while Executive Sims would like to see the recommendations go directly to voters, the charter currently grants the Council that decision-making authority. CRC members discussed the need for a dialogue on how charter amendments are approved.

#### **4. Committees**

The group discussed how to begin their work, including which committees to create, how to elicit input from the public, and how to scope the range of possible issues.

Co-chair Mrs. North explained that most of the 1996-1997 CRC's work was done in committee. Large group meetings were rather brief, and with the purpose of hearing reports from committees. External speakers were also sometimes invited to address the group on topics under the CRC's consideration.

Co-chair Mrs. North believed that the CRC might want to form a public outreach committee to begin the information and issue-gathering process, as the 1996-1997 CRC did. Mr. Williams recommended that the CRC reach out to the public and relevant outside organizations, as well as looking to the Council and other groups inside government for ideas. Mr. Yango noted that we will involve a wide range of people and groups by using the internet and media coverage, among other means.

With regard to issue scoping, Mr. Munro suggested that the most relevant issues for the CRC might be transportation, land use, rural autonomy, development, and services. Mr. Long asked whether the group will first examine the long-term issues facing the county and look for top-level solutions, or simply dive into the ‘issues of the day’.

Co-chair Mr. Lowry suggested, and the group agreed, that the CRC should encourage innovative thinking and not be limited by the approaches of past commissions. He advised that the major item for the next meeting should be our approach to scoping and dividing the work.

**Action items:**

- The staff was directed to develop a suggested list of committees for the CRC’s review, not limited to what was done before.
- Ms. Heinecke requested that the staff research whether previous commissions recorded their ‘lessons learned’ at the end of their terms.
- Ms. Maeda asked the staff to circulate the executive summary from the recent Budget Advisory Task Force.

**5. CRC Logistics**

CRC’s timeline – The group reviewed the timeline for their work. Mr. Sinsky noted that there was some ambiguity in state law regarding how many days the Council was required to be given to review the CRC’s recommendations. The King County charter states a 45-day period, while the State of Washington mandates 84 days. Mr. Sinsky said that though the 45-day period probably would apply, it is safer to follow the state-mandated 84 days.

Meeting logistics – The group agreed that:

- The entire CRC will meet on the last Tuesday of every month, in the evening. The next meeting is Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30pm – 7:30pm on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower.
- Once formed, committees will also meet at least once per month, and report to the CRC at the monthly meeting.
- The staff will arrange for dinner. CRC members will cover the costs of their own dinners.

Communication logistics – Mr. Wilkins asked for opinions on the use of email to conduct group discussions. Some commissioners felt that an email digest or bulletin board might be a good alternative to a large quantity of individual emails. It should be noted that Co-chair Mrs. North does not use email, and will receive the emails by fax. **Action item:** the staff will investigate digests and bulletin boards.

Mr. Sinsky remarked that we need to consider what constitutes a public record with regard to email.

**Action item:** He and the staff will follow-up.

For the next meeting –

- **Action item:** Commissioners should submit photos to Mr. Yango for the CRC website.
- **Action item:** Mr. Yango requested that the commissioners get familiar with their binders.

Co-chair Mr. Lowry adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm.

Minutes submitted by Corrie Watterson Bryant.