



King County

Ron Sims

King County Executive

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Mark Yango
Charter Review Coordinator

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King County Charter Review Commission

Meeting Minutes – June 26, 2007

Seattle Municipal Tower, 5:30pm-7:30pm

The June 26, 2007 meeting of the King County Charter Review Commission was called to order by co-chair Governor Mike Lowry at 5:40 p.m.

Commission members in attendance:

Mike Lowry, Co-chair

Lois North, Co-chair

Juan Bocanegra

Jim English

Dan Gandara

Bryan Glynn

Darcy Goodman

John Groen

Kirstin Haugen

Tara Jo Heinecke

Gregg Hiramawa

John Jensen

Terry Lavender

Gary Long

Sharon Maeda

Allan Munro

Sarah Rindlaub

Mike Wilkins

James Williams

Absent:

Trisha Bennett

Doreen Cato

Staff:

Mark Yango, Charter Review Coordinator

Corrie Watterson Bryant, Project Manager, Charter Review Commission

Charlotte Ohashi, Administrative Assistant, Charter Review Commission
Hong-Nhi Do, Executive Intern

Council and PAO Staff:

Ross Baker, Chief of Staff, King County Council
Rebecha Cusack, Legislative Lead Analyst, King County Council
MerriAnn Osborne, Legislative Secretary, King County Council
Jane McKenzie, Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Grace Reamer, Legislative Aide, District 3, King County Council
Nick Wagner, Principal Legislative Analyst, King County Council

Others:

Michelle Hillyer
Margaret Nelson
Lindsey Nussbaum
Lorelei Robinson
Yoshiko Saheki
Denise Smith
Barbara Spindel
Sonny Putter, Suburban Cities Association

1. Opening Remarks and Introductions

Mr. Lowry asked for approval of the May 29, 2007 meeting minutes. Ms. Rindlaub asked to be removed from the list of those present at the previous meeting, and Ms. Haugen asked to be added. The minutes were adopted unanimously as amended.

2. Guest Speakers

Councilmember Kathy Lambert:

Councilmember Lambert thanked the commission for the invitation to speak, and for holding so many public outreach meetings. She noted that there was a large turnout at the meeting in her district, at the Preston Community Center, and that the discussion was productive. She commended Mr. Jensen for his excellent moderation of the meeting.

Ms. Lambert then presented a number of issues for the Commission's consideration. Her list of issues is attached to these minutes. Important themes in her presentation included:

- The balance of powers among the Executive and Legislative branches of government.
- Refocusing the county on its 'primary responsibility', of local services to the unincorporated areas. Ms. Lambert encouraged the county to fund unincorporated area services first, then regional functions. She gave the county a D- or F on local government services, and a B+ or A- on regional services.
- Unincorporated areas should be treated as an underrepresented minority group. The county should provide services equivalent to the median level of the surrounding

cities. The growth management board can work with unincorporated areas to organize new unincorporated area councils or to join a nearby government.

- A separate rural services department is not needed. More money, power, and staff would allow councilmembers that have significant incorporated areas in their districts to get the job done.

Ad Hoc Group of King County Library System Patrons – Barbara Spindel and Gary Robinson:

The Ad Hoc Group presented to the commission regarding problems with the King County Library System. Their issues were that:

- There is no oversight of the King County Library System (KCLS) board of trustees. The council appoints the board members with the Executive's concurrence, but neither the council nor the Executive oversees the board.
- The library system is a taxing district, but there is not direct accountability for the board of trustees. The trustees primarily hold closed meetings.
- The director of the library system has not listened to the voice of the people, or to the library employees, on many important issues, such as staffing systems or the decision to build a new library. The board of trustees supervises the director.
- The Seattle Public Library system owes KCLS 6.4 million dollars, which is not being paid back at an adequate rate.

The Ad Hoc Group proposes a charter change to give the council formal oversight authority over the board of trustees.

Mr. Lowry opened the floor for questions of the Ad Hoc Group. Mr. Glynn asked what the council's oversight would consist of. Mr. Robinson answered that it would take the form of a quarterly review. Mr. English asked how this situation was allowed to occur. Mr. Robinson again pointed to a lack of oversight.

Mrs. North noted that KCLS is formed under state law. She explained that legal advice would be needed to find out if the charter can address this issue.

Hearing no further questions, Mr. Lowry opened the floor for questions of Ms. Lambert.

Questions for Councilmember Lambert – Rural / Unincorporated Representation:

Mr. Jensen asked why more unincorporated area councils had not been established; i.e., why the existing mechanisms for unincorporated representation were not being well utilized.

Councilmember Lambert answered that 1) people don't have a lot of extra time for meetings, 2) UACs are not action groups, 3) the UACs have particular areas of interest, and 4) elected officials are much better than a volunteer committee at meeting everyone's needs and accepting day-to-day input.

Ms. Lavender asked if Ms. Lambert believed that all unincorporated areas should be annexed. And if so, if there would be any rural areas left? Ms. Lambert answered that to preserve the annexed land as rural, the annexations would need to be zoned as 'rural' under the GMA. This designation does not exist right now.

Mr. Glynn wondered if Ms. Lambert had considered the township model. She said that the Prosecuting Attorney's Office had looked into townships a few years ago. She would like to see a governmental model so that people in unincorporated areas could have a government without losing their autonomy and the rural nature of their land.

Mr. Glynn noted that the GMA conflates governance with urbanity. Ms. Lambert agreed that the government of a rural area needs to be more familiar with rural issues.

Ms. Lavender said that rural representation is one of the toughest problems of county government. There is an impression that rural people do not want government, and choose rural life to stay away from it. Ms. Lambert responded that rural people are frustrated that the county does not seem to believe they are competent stewards of the land.

Ms. Lavender added that a major dilemma is that the county does not have the same kind of funding that a city does, and cannot provide an equal level of services to unincorporated residents. Ms. Lambert said that rural residents can accept fewer services, though there is still a minimum level of service that everyone should receive.

3. Public Hearings

Mr. Yango reviewed the public hearings that were held in June. He reported that there was highly varied turnout based on location. At next month's meeting, the staff will prepare the full list of issues that have been raised by the public. Legal counsel Mike Sinsky will review the list by then, as well.

Each of the hearing chairs then gave a summary of their meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 26, 2007

Co-chair Lois North adjourned the meeting at 7:43 pm

Respectfully submitted by Corrie Watterson