

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**City Council Chamber, 1st floor, City Hall**

 **October 2, 2019**

**9:00 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Lindsey Brock (Chair), Jessica Baker, Frank Denton, Charles Griggs, Nick Howland, Heidi Jameson, Ann-Marie Knight, Emily Lisska, Nelson McCoy, Celestine Mills, Betzy Santiago, Matt Schellenberg, Ronald Swanson

**Excused:** Commissioner W.C. Gentry

**Also**: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements and Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Cheryl Brown – Council Secretary/Director; Jessica Matthews, Melanie Wilkes and Jessica Smith – Legislative Services Division; Will Coffee and Steve Cassada– Council Staff Services

**Meeting Convened**: 9:02 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of September 26, 2019 were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

Remarks from the Chair

Mr. Brock announced that the Commission’s Town Hall Meeting will be held on October 17th at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber instead of the Main Library as previously announced. He plans to appear on WJXT Channel 4’s “This Week in Jacksonville” Sunday morning talk show to promote the event. Commissioner Denton suggested appearing with Melissa Ross on WJCT radio’s “First Coast Connect” program as well as informing Mike Clark, Editorial Page Editor of the *Florida Times-Union*, to publicize the event. Commissioner Howland said he can’t attend the town hall meeting but asked if he could dial in to listen to the proceedings. Council Secretary/Director Cheryl Brown said that a media release will be sent out announcing the event, with copies sent to the CRC members who are free to forward it to anyone who may be interested.

Chairman Brock asked that a bullet item for at-large School Board member(s) be added to the commission’s potential topics list. At the October 15th meeting he wants the commission to agree on the broad topics and the distribution of bullet items among the topics. He asked commissioners to please send in comments and issue groupings in advance. Mr. Brock will make himself an *ex officio* member of all the committees for the purpose of making connections between committees and dealing with one-off topics that don’t fit within the broader issue umbrellas. One-off topics can be discussed at the monthly full CRC meetings. He will ask the commissioners to rank their interest in the various topics in preparation for the appointment of committees and chairs at the meeting of October 25th. Mr. Brock reiterated his intention to propose a recommendation for a Charter amendment requiring that the work of the CRC must be at least considered by the City Council and some action taken one way or another.

Public Comments

John Nooney said that the CRC needs to help make the Charter great again. He urged that the Pledge of Allegiance be made a regular part of the Commission’s agenda. He requested that the CRC propose an amendment to the Charter to mandate the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance at all board and commission meetings.

Dr. Leon Haley – CEO of UF Health Jacksonville

Dr. Haley gave a PowerPoint overview of UF Health, its various operating units and affiliates, its economic impact, and its relationship to the City with regard to indigent care funding. The history of the City’s public hospital goes back to the opening of the Duval Hospital and Asylum in 1870. The beginnings of the present Springfield campus date back to 1926 and the main hospital building was opened in 1971. UF Health operates 2 hospitals (downtown and North), had 130,000 emergency room visits in FY18-19, admitted 26,287 patients, and has more than 60 primary and specialty care centers throughout Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia. The hospital and medical school employ almost 7,700 total employees in the various elements of the medical center, making it the third largest employer in the City. It is the region’s only Level 1 trauma center and its proton beam therapy center makes Jacksonville one of only 3 cities in the United States with 2 proton therapy centers. Jacksonville will become the only city in the world with 3 proton beam facilities when the third opens at the Mayo Clinic. The proton beam facility draws a huge international clientele, and is the top center in the world for treating children with difficult brain conditions. UF Health is an affiliate campus of the UF College of Health and has 400 faculty physicians, 372 residents, and is planning to have UF medical students do their full third and fourth years of study in Jacksonville in the near future. The school recruits from all over the US and the world for its residency programs. It offers an accelerated bachelor’s degree in nursing for persons making a mid-career change. The College of Pharmacy’s doctoral program has an additional 200 students. UF Health currently has $21.5 million in research funding contracts on the campus and that figure is growing. Jacksonville’s Aging Studies Center provides many geriatric research opportunities that will produce benefits for the city’s elderly population.

Dr. Haley said that UF Health provides health care to everyone who comes in the door and is a safety net hospital, shouldering a disproportionate share of the community’s health care challenges. About 38% of their patient care is unfunded (no insurance) or underfunded (patient has some insurance coverage, but insufficient to pay the full bill); 35% is covered by Medicare and only 26% is covered by commercial insurance or managed care. State funding to UF Health has been declining over last 5 years. The hospital has the highest Medicaid patient base of any hospital in the state, and Jacksonville is the only county in the state prohibited from having a dedicated funding source (sales tax) for indigent care because we are specifically excluded by state law as consolidated government. Last year the hospital provided $62 million in uncompensated care and another $31 million in community health support initiatives (health fairs, screenings, health promotion, counseling and support services, professional education, etc.). For the last 5 years the City of Jacksonville has provided just over $26 million per year for indigent care purposes which has not kept up with either basic inflation or the cost of care provided. The Mayor has pledged to propose $120 million over multiple years ($15 million in FY19-20, $20 million each in FY20-21 to FY22-23 and $25 million thereafter) to deal with capital repairs and maintenance on the hospital’s campus. Dr. Haley said that UF’s goal is to be one of the best hospitals in state, to anchor downtown’s north end, and to help make Jacksonville a health care hub for the US and the world.

Commissioner Griggs said the community doesn’t realize what a gem it has in UF Health. He asked for details on the indigent care funding model and why Jacksonville doesn’t have a dedicated funding source. Dr. Haley said the CRC could be helpful in pushing this issue. The hospital gets approximately $26 million per year from City for 8,000 to 9,000 indigent care patients who have to prove residence in the city and prove low income. The care provided to those patients actually cost double the amount the City provides. The $26 million has held constant for the last 5 years and needs to be more sustainable, perhaps at least based on an annual increase by the amount of the Consumer Price Index. There’s another $14.5 million in costs for uninsured patients who are not covered by the City indigent care contract (out of county residents, in-county who don’t file the eligibility paperwork, etc.). UF Health North plays a large role in keeping UF Health Jacksonville afloat – the current indigent care system couldn’t work if they didn’t have the private pay patients there to help subsidize the overall system.

Commissioner Schellenberg said he understood that comparable public hospitals get far more public funding than UF Health - Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami $300 million per year , Parkland Memorial in Dallas $400-500 million, and Grady Hospital in Atlanta a similar amount. He asked about UF Health’s primary care network and the option for City employees to use that network for their primary care under the City’s self-insurance program. Dr. Haley said UF Health has a very large primary care network in Jacksonville and tries to divert emergency room patients with less serious conditions to those facilities, including the one on the downtown campus, where the cost is less. He said that mental health is a big challenge because UF Health deals with the Baker Act cases; anyone with mental health issues who has nowhere to go during a hurricane comes there. They don’t have a separate facility for those patients so they’re mixed in with the general population, which is off-putting to other patients.

Chairman Brock asked what could be done about getting a dedicated indigent care funding source, since the state law already authorizes the use of a sales surtax as a dedicated funding source. Dr. Haley said Jacksonville is prohibited from using that tax option. UF Health sends the $26 million City indigent care contribution to the state to leverage about the same amount back in matching funds. He said the CRC could try to be influential with the Mayor and City Council to encourage more funding.

Commissioner Santiago asked how involved the hospital is with the City and how often they talk to city officials. Dr. Haley said that happens frequently with the Mayor and Council, but not often with the City departments. He invites new mayors and council members to the campus for tours and discussion of health care issues. He hopes that at the very least a way can be found to get the City’s indigent care funding back up to 60% of the cost of uncompensated service as it was in 2002 and to pay the doctors (in addition to the hospital) for the care that’s provided. That coverage ratio is now down to about 40%. He estimated it would take an additional $17 million to achieve that ratio.

Commissioner Schellenberg explained that the City is self-insured for employee health care and that employees can use UF Health as their primary provider for no employee premium. Dr. Haley said that currently about 400 employees are participating in the no-cost system, plus their dependents, for a total of about 1,000 patients, which is growing slowly. He said the City promotes this no-cost plan during its annual health insurance renewal process, but most people like their current doctor and don’t want to change, so it’s hard to grow faster.

In response to another question from Commissioner Schellenberg about how the Low Income Pool (LIP) program reimbursement works, Dr. Haley said there are three factors: 1) the state’s Medicaid reimbursement rate is decreasing over time (in part because the available funds are increasingly being shared with non-public hospitals that also provide indigent care); 2) Florida can’t draw down more federal match because it didn’t expand Medicaid coverage when the Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and lacks sufficient intergovernmental transfers for matching purposes; and 3) the LIP pool increased somewhat this year when the state allocated some funding for the physician practices to get some payment for their work in addition to the hospital’s payments.

Commissioner Lisska asked about the status of the Duval County Hospital Authority which is found in the Charter’s Related Laws. Dr. Haley said he doesn’t think that entity exists any more. Ms. Lisska said if that is the case then it needs to be removed from the Related Laws. In response to a question about whether there is anything that could be changed in the Charter to make UF Health more effective at doing its job; Dr. Haley said the crux of the issue is the funding problem with the City. They need a reasonable funding model and formula that guarantees annual increases to at least meet inflation, possibly in the form of a CPI adjustment annually.

Commissioner Jameson asked Paige Johnston of the General Counsel’s Office to look into whether the Duval County Hospital Authority still exists. Commissioner Griggs said the Hospital Authority was created around the time of consolidation to handle the transition of the city and county health offices and the public hospital; after the creation of the state Health Department and changes in the state’s funding mechanism there was less need for it. He noted that the state law on county public health funding deals not only with indigent care but also with 3 Health Department functions (primary care service, environmental health, and disease control). Mr. Griggs asked if UF Health partners with other entities such as the Health Department to increase their recorded intergovernmental transfers for matching purposes. Dr. Haley said they partner with the Health Department as well as with private physician practices and other partners to maximize those matchable transfers. Mr. Griggs said the Task Force on Consolidation made a recommendation on public health funding, both indigent care and Health Department, that called for “a funding formula that is insulated from political influence and that will meet the current and future public health needs in the City.”

Commissioner Schellenberg asked if all of the city’s hospital CEOs all get together regularly to talk. Dr. Haley said they try to meet monthly to discuss collective issues and find common ground on issues like disaster preparedness and cybersecurity. Jacksonville is a hyper-competitive health care market so competition among the hospitals is an issue. At his urging the JAXUSA Partnership took a group to Houston to see how the Texas Medical Center consortium (65 different health-related entities) works. It is a great model for cooperation among health care providers of all kinds on innovation in the field. In response to a question from Commissioner Schellenberg about the use of telemedicine, Dr. Haley said they are still doing it with the jail and in a variety of other settings.

Dr. Sherry Magill – retired President of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund

Dr. Magill described her experiences with serving on several City task forces so she understands how the Commission is feeling about its work and its relevance. Her sense is that the City is not well equipped to address the most difficult physical and human challenges it faces, including things like sea level rise, flooding, lack of affordable housing, low wage jobs and poverty. There is no mechanism for interpreting what current trends mean for the City or to forecast the future. With the demise of JCCI we no longer have the annual Quality of Life Study to collect data and track trends and we don’t have an organization that deals with engaging the public and setting the public policy agenda regarding quality of life and the welfare of the citizens. The Charter says the City “shall furnish” child care, health and welfare services, among many others (Sec. 2.04 – Services in the General Services District). The City government bears responsibility for the collective welfare and the quality of life of the citizens.

Dr. Magill said the Blueprint for Improvement II report of the Task Force on Consolidated Government was exhaustive and thorough and contains numerous very good recommendations that are worthy of continued consideration. Her reading of that document identified the following themes - in general Jacksonville: is tax-averse city despite its many needs; is uncomfortable with the role of the General Counsel; wants a strong mayor but recognizes that the character of that person is both critical to the city but also uncontrollable; feels guilty about the disparity in living conditions among its citizens; is concerned about pension reform (she is personally skeptical that the changes made several years ago have solved the problem); is skeptical that the work of citizen boards, commissions and task forces has any influence; is concerned that every new mayor and city council starts all over from scratch, discarding the work of their predecessors (lack of institutional knowledge); and is concerned that too few people care to participate in city government any more. More citizen participation is needed along with a way to hold elected leaders accountable for the decisions they make. She recommended joining the open government and participatory budgeting movements that are sweeping the country, improving the City web site, and creating a truth in campaigning mechanism for local elections, especially since local journalism is shrinking.

She said that local non-profits engage a much greater percentage of the citizenry than does local government, and bear the brunt of providing needing services and dealing with critical needs, but are never invited to participate in policy setting despite their wealth of institutional knowledge of the community’s needs. They’re treated like beggars trying to feed at the public trough instead of as hard working problem solvers. She sees the non-profit organizations as the “civic glue” that binds the community together in a common enterprise, although the City government refuses to recognize them in that light. The City persistently underfunds the Kids Hope Alliance, Public Service Grants, and the Cultural Council but expects the non-profit sector to solve the problems that those agencies deal with. The City’s 5 Year Consolidated Plan for federal funding talks about the lack of sufficient funding and the importance of partnerships with the non-profit sector to need the needs of underserved populations in a number of areas, but the City persistently underfunds the efforts in all those areas. She urged that a mechanism be created for the mayor and city council members to learn from the vast knowledge of front-line providers of services who have been in the trenches meeting the challenges for decades. The City needs a real comprehensive plan, needs a real commitment to adequate funding, and needs to expand the number of people involved in public policy decisions to address service provision with inadequate funding.

Commissioner Schellenberg said that City revenues have been going up in recent years because of property value increases even without much in the way of millage increases. Dr. Magill said she had looked at 10 years of City budgets (which was not easy to do – another problem) and found that quality of life funding was reduced by $77 million in real dollars since 2007; we still haven’t caught up to pre-Great Recession funding levels for public service grants and cultural service grants and other issues.

Mr. Schellenberg said that part of the affordable housing problem is NIMBYism (not in my back yard) and excessive government regulation. Dr. Magill said that the nation has an affordable housing crisis and Ability Housing is one of the best in the nation at providing affordable housing but they’ve never been embraced in Jacksonville like they have been in other cities, particularly in Orlando. LISC is an important affordable housing funding broker but the Council and Mayor don’t seem to understand their program. Affordable housing is not just emergency housing for the homeless, it’s also workforce housing for people with jobs that don’t pay enough to live on. LISC is a financial intermediary that uses tax credits of various kinds and philanthropic and banking capital to finance community development corporations and affordable housing developers. The City needs to understand the need, to have an effective plan, and to be committed to meeting the crisis. The non-profits have found mechanisms that work, but the City has never committed to supporting them adequately through a formal framework.

Dr. Magill said the City Charter needs a thorough edit to make it an easier read; perhaps we could make better decisions if we knew better what the document actually says or doesn’t say.

Commissioner Denton asked what about the concept of a development authority (similar to the Downtown Investment Authority) for neighborhoods left behind, particularly the Northwest area. Dr. Magill said likes the idea of collecting data and implementing programs on a place-basis. Ask the people who live there what they want and need and ask the people already working in those neighborhoods. The City is too big to run everything from central command. The DC Agenda in Washington is an example of a good process for focusing attention on downtown DC poverty and children’s issues. Priority setting and then sticking to it is important. Jacksonville tends to put issues into silos even within the consolidated government. Performance measurement and holding people accountable for results is crucial. She quoted from the City Council’s recently adopted 1, -3- and 5-year Strategic Plan and said she was shocked by some of the items on that list.

Commissioner Griggs emphasized the need to understand the real problems and priorities before you can determine what needs to be done, and that’s hard to do without JCCI to provide the baseline of information they used to provide. He asked how that problem can be overcome. Dr. Magill said she would choose a small group of non-profit leaders working in the field and ask them what data sources they produce and use. The City’s previous effort to create a data center was, to her mind, half-hearted. She questioned how city council members make their decisions these days without good data sources. There’s precious little data, but lots of lobbying. She recommended asking the leadership of the United Way, the Community Foundation, LISC, and CDC executive directors what they know and what they don’t know and urged that if some sort of new urban core development authority for communities in need is created, that the welfare of the people be at the top of the agenda and not just economic development. The Blueprint for Prosperity II points out the need for continuity of efforts and plans over time.

Chairman Brock asked if there is a need to create some sort of Public Service Authority with a dedicated funding source to manage City funding going to the non-profit sector. Dr. Magill said that’s been tried in a variety of forms over the years and is ever-changing. She sees a need to step back and look at the big picture of what we want the City to be in 10 years. Terms need to be defined (what is “the welfare of the people”, what is “quality of life”). She advocated for not being so overly focused on 1-year results from non-profits. Decide where you want to go before deciding if a new structure is necessary; she is reluctant to recommend creating yet another new agency if it won’t be any more effective than any of its predecessors.

Mr. Brock asked how to create a structure to drive good public policy decisions. Dr. Magill recommended looking at Louisville, Kentucky’s participatory budgeting system as a model. Jacksonville is very poor at asking what the public wants and has very little current data on which to make decisions. We know relatively little about what citizens really want and have very little hard data about actual conditions in the field and about how well existing programs really work. Evaluation needs to be done in a non-punitive environment.

Commissioner Denton asked why we haven’t already learned what works and what doesn’t after decades of trying various programs to solve the perennial problems. Dr. Magill said that the people who do the work in the field know what does and doesn’t work, but policy makers are generally ignorant of what’s really happening and what works. That’s why non-profits are treated as “professional mendicants” and punished if they don’t produce stellar results in year 1. But how do you deal with that in the Charter, to encourage “stick-to-it-iveness”? The strategic planning recommendation from the Blueprint II would be a good start. She believes we have to quit trying new things every few years and then giving up on them when they don’t work right off the bat.

Audrey Moran –Executive Vice President of Baptist Health Jacksonville

Ms. Moran briefly reviewed her history working for 4 different mayors. She said her main topic would be to talk about non-partisan elections, which 80% of cities across the nation have. The JCCI election study in 1988 said partisanship was a problem that caused depressed turnout because we were a 1-party city (then Democratic), and voters of the other party had little incentive to participate in elections. Jacksonville went to a unitary election system in 1992 after only Democrats got to vote for Mayor in 1991 because no Republican ran, and only 20% of registered voters turned out to elect the mayor. The unitary election referendum passed with 84% of the vote. She noted that turnout for the City general election in 2019 was an abysmal 14%. She recommends trying non-partisanship as a way to improve voter interest and turnout, particularly among young people. It would help to focus candidates on real quality of life issues and not so much on partisanship. Ms. Moran said that one objection she hears to non-partisan elections is that city and county government are training grounds for higher office, so partisan identification is important. She rejects that argument. She went on the Chamber of Commerce leadership trip to Oklahoma City several years ago and was tremendously impressed that the then-current mayor and 2 of his predecessors all talked about how they built on each other’s work to keep the city vision and plan for downtown revitalization moving forward, and they felt that non-partisan elections was crucial to that effort.

Commissioner Schellenberg agreed that non-partisan elections would probably help improve turnout. He thinks the Government in the Sunshine Law noticed meeting requirements make it hard to be a City Council member or a member of any board or commission and makes the strong mayor even stronger because council members can’t talk outside of a noticed meeting. Ms. Moran said that there can’t be talk about making any changes in the Sunshine Law until public trust is restored so that citizens feel comfortable thinking about making a change. There’s too much distrust of elected officials now for any change to be possible.

Commissioner Jameson asked what jurisdictions in Florida have non-partisan elections. Ms. Moran said there are many, and suggested consulting the National League of Cities’ database for that information.

Ms. Jameson asked about the impact of the recent Florida Supreme Court ruling on non-partisan elections (an Orlando case) that she believes ruled that non-partisan elections were not legal in Florida. Ms. Moran said that she doesn’t know that case. Ms. Jameson suggested inviting Supervisor of Elections Mike Hogan to speak to the commission.

Commissioner Baker said that the Florida Supreme Court ruled that constitutional officer elections must be partisan, but city council could be non-partisan. Ms. Moran said that it would be better to have the mayor and city council elected on a non-partisan basis. The constitutional offices were made elected positions because of political compromises needed to get consolidation passed; in her opinion they don’t need to be elected offices.

Ms. Baker said the commission needs to see the turnout in the City elections for both the March and May elections. She believes the March turnout was probably higher than the 14% in May and asked staff to check on that figure.

Commissioner Swanson asked if changing the timing of elections from spring to fall would be more effective in helping turnout than non-partisan elections. Ms. Moran felt it would and said it has been suggested many times, but it seems to be a political non-starter in Jacksonville. She believes it would be helpful and that the voters could devote sufficient attention to local races in the context of a ballot filled with other races.

Commissioner Denton asked if an Urban Core development authority would be useful. Ms. Moran said it would only be as strong as its members, so would need a good appointment mechanism and sufficient funding to do the needed work. She believes the City’s independent authorities are not as strong as they used to be because they are not as independent as they once were.

Commissioner Howland said that November election turnout is always stronger than other times of the year, and partisanship may be part of that larger turnout. He believes that non-partisan elections deny voters an important piece of information, so that’s detrimental to voters who are starving for information. Ms. Moran said that if people really care about party, they’ll find out who belongs to what party. Non-partisan elections would facilitate people not depending entirely on the party label as their only source of information and learning more about individual candidates’ positions on the issues.

Commissioner Griggs asked how to remedy 50 years of neglect without an urban core investment authority of some kind. Ms. Moran said the answer is to elect people who truly care about what’s best for the community as their primary motivation and won’t tolerate a continuation of the tale of two cities.

Commissioner Griggs wondered if voters would be confused in a November election if they find a race on the ballot with no party affiliation among all the other partisan races. Can the public really overcome the effects of advertising? Ms. Moran said we need to convince citizens that voting is most important at the local level and inform them about the issues.

Mr. Griggs asked who would appoint the constitutional officers if they weren’t elected. Ms. Moran said they are effectively department heads so would probably be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by Council like the others.

Commissioner Lisska asked Ms. Moran to elaborate on her earlier remarks about the independence of the authority boards. Ms. Moran said perception drives reality, and when a mayor asks all sitting board members to resign after an election, that sends a bad message that they’re beholden to that mayor. The independence of subject matter experts was supposed to span mayoral administrations and carry knowledge over time and it looks bad to replace them all at once. The perception of their independence has been hurt in the public’s mind by that practice.

Commissioner Jameson asked how a non-partisan city election would fit into a partisan election format. Ms. Moran said there could be a separate ballot for the local elections or a local section on the state ballot without party affiliation listed.

Commissioner Schellenberg said that City Council members don’t represent just those who voted for them, they represent every citizen in their district in all their diversity. He recently taught a class at Jacksonville University and asked the students how they get their information about issues, and their universal answer was Google. He noted that the Railroad District development on the Westside is being driven entirely by private entrepreneurs who have yet to ask the City for any funding other than perhaps infrastructure assistance. He wondered if private initiative might be a better way to attack problems.

Ms. Moran said the City needs to be a partner with the people and groups who are dealing with problems at the local level and support them, not get in their way. Darnell Smith and Ellen Wiss have a new initiative underway to attack poverty, and she recommended that they be invited to speak to the CRC.

Commissioner Swanson said there are already non-partisan elections on partisan ballots (School Board, judges). He looked up the Supreme Court case on the partisanship of constitutional officer elections discussed earlier and it doesn’t apply to city councils. He believes the City has broad flexibility on how it chooses to elect non-constitutional officers. He asked about election timing and why the City votes in the spring and not the fall. Ms. Moran said she advocates for non-partisan elections first, and a change in timing would be a secondary issue.

Paige Johnston gave the voter turnout for the City’s spring 2019 elections from the Supervisor of Elections’ web site: March 2019 - turnout 24.5%; May 2019 – turnout 14.3%.

Chairman Brock asked Ms. Moran her opinion of ranked choice voting. She said she didn’t know much about it and couldn’t comment.

Mr. Brock asked her opinion of the Office of General Counsel structure and selection process. Should the mayor’s office get an assistant counsel to represent it so the General Counsel is not seen as the mayor’s personal lawyer? Ms. Moran gave the disclaimer that she is representing the School Board in a lawsuit against the City regarding the Council’s refusal to schedule a sales tax referendum, so has strong feelings on the subject. She said that the General Counsel being at the elbow of the Mayor has a long history in Jacksonville – it’s always been that way. There will always be conflicts that demand hard calls, so there has to be a mechanism that ensures that all parties feel like they’re being adequately represented. She is intrigued by the suggestion made by Mike Weinstein at a previous meeting that the General Counsel should act as a judge, hearing testimony from OGC attorneys representing different parts of the City government and making an impartial decision based on the evidence presented. That would help with the public perception.

Mr. Brock asked if, aside from a Florida Attorney General’s opinion, there another mechanism for appealing a General Counsel’s decision and whether such a mechanism should be inserted in the charter. Ms. Moran said she hadn’t thought about that and didn’t have a suggestion.

Mr. Brock asked her opinion on the General Counsel selection process and the possibility of adding a mechanism for more input from more parties. She agreed that would be good idea.

Commissioner Knight returned to the discussion of the City’s data gap from earlier in the meeting and wondered if the Mayor’s Director of Strategic Partnerships could be the leader in convening a group of community partners to tackle that need. Ms. Moran said that is a new position and could play that role, but it needs to be a priority and that person needs to have the ability to make things happen. It needs to be strengthened if it’s going to play that role. Ms. Knight asked if Dawn Lockhart, the Director of Strategic Partnerships could be invited to come and address the commission.

Commissioner Griggs asked about the idea of moving the General Counsel’s appointment to the second year of a mayor’s term rather than immediately after the election to help build public trust in the perception of independence. Ms. Moran said it was an interesting idea. She said a conversation would need to be had with candidates for the position to judge their willingness to serve across mayoral terms.

Commissioner Updates and Discussion

Chairman Brock said that the JTA has responded that they would like to come and speak to the CRC. Supervisor of Elections Mike Hogan will also come and speak. State Representative and former City Council Member Clay Yarborough said he’d like to reschedule his earlier appearance at which time ran out before he could speak, and Downtown Investment Authority Executive Director and former Council Member Lori Boyer has also agreed to come. Dawn Lockhart, the Mayor’s Director of Strategic Partnerships was suggested today as a future speaker. Dr. Pauline Rolle, Director of the Duval County Health Department was also suggested. That many speakers can’t be fit one meeting so the fact gathering process will be extended to the Oct 11th and 15th meetings and the commission will start prioritizing issues at the next meeting on October 25th. The November meeting schedule will be set in the coming weeks. The Chairman recommended that any future speakers be limited to those already invited by the commission who have not yet had a chance to appear and asked that questions in future meetings be limited to Charter issues and what recommendations they have for changes.

Commissioner Mills said she previously asked former City Council member Glorious Johnson to come and had asked staff to check with her again regarding scheduling an appearance. Commission Knight said that the Mayor’s Chief of Strategic Partnerships could come to a committee meeting rather than a full commission meeting. Chairman Brock suggested that commissioners who had spoken to others about potentially appearing before the CRC could talk to them individually and pose questions, then report their findings back to the commission in lieu of an appearance by those other resource persons.

Public Comment

Billee Bussard said the commission missed a chance to ask an important question about campaign finance reform during Ms. Moran’s appearance earlier. Nothing will change as long as campaign contributions still govern how races work and who wins. The power of dark money in elections is destroying democracy. She will report back on the state of Montana’s recent campaign finance reform changes.

John Nooney distributed a set pf handouts for the record. He commented on the previous restrictions on commercial vessels docking at the Jacksonville Landing and advocated for charter amendment mandating Community Redevelopment Areas and the DIA to provide public access to the water as part of any of their projects. The public needs water access at the School Board building on the Southbank and the Armory building downtown on Hogan’s Creek.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:53 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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Posted 10.4.19 3:30 p.m.