



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425
4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
904-630-1377

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall**

**October 15, 2019
9:00 a.m.**

In attendance: Commissioners Lindsey Brock (Chair), Jessica Baker, Ann-Marie Knight, Emily Lisska, Celestine Mills, Betzy Santiago, Nelson McCoy, Chris Hagan, William Gentry, Frank Denton, Ronald Swanson

Excused: Commissioners Charles Griggs, Nick Howland, Matt Schellenberg, Heidi Jameson

Also: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Jessica Matthews – Legislative Services Division; William Coffee – City Council Support Services

Guest Speakers: Lori Boyer – Former City Council Member; Jessica Shepler – Jacksonville Transportation Authority; Mike Hogan – Supervisor of Elections; Ronnie Fussell – Clerk of the Courts; Richard Rossi – Jacksonville Aviation Authority

Meeting Convened: 9:02 a.m.

Call to Order – Chairman Brock called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Approval of Minutes – The meeting minutes from the October 11th meeting was approved as distributed.

Remarks from the Chair – Chairman Brock explained the busy nature of the meeting and laid out the procedure for accommodating all five guest speakers. Mr. Brock discussed the email sent by Paige Johnston of OGC regarding the septic tank issues that were brought up in the previous meeting. Mr. Brock discussed the handout of the resolution put forth by the Duval County School Board opposing the proposed local J-1 Bill.

Public Comment (up to 15 minutes) – Chairman Brock opened the floor to public comments.

- John Nooney: Mr. Nooney suggested requiring the Pledge of Allegiance as a mandatory part of all public meetings.

Presentation by Jessica Shepler of JTA – Ms. Shepler presented an overview of the Jacksonville Transportation Authority including the Authority’s functions, leadership, budget, and future plans. Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Brock opened the floor to questions:

- Frank Denton: Mr. Denton asked about the different responsibilities for the different types of roadways in Jacksonville and asked if anything about building roads was dictated by the Charter.
- Ms. Shepler: Ms. Shepler talked about the different types of roadways and mentioned that some of the differences revolve around the local option sales tax. Ms. Shepler was not sure if the requirements for JTA roadway construction are mentioned in the Charter.
- Ronald Swanson: Mr. Swanson asked if Ms. Shepler had any specific recommendations for Charter changes.
- Ms. Shepler: Ms. Shepler believes that the Charter has been working well for the independent authorities and she has no recommendations for changes.

Presentation by former City Council Member Lori Boyer – Ms. Boyer spoke primarily on two topics, term limits and timing of elections. She discussed some of the findings and recommendations from the Blueprint for Improvement 2. Ms. Boyer talked about the idea of moving the City Council elections to November when there isn’t a gubernatorial or presidential election. The reason for the November election is because March election turnouts are typically very low, but the focus on local elections is greater, and a November election would give new Council Members more time to get acclimated before having to work on their first round of budget hearings. Ms. Boyer also talked about term limits and noted that research has shown that the “best cities” in the United States have no term limits. Ms. Boyer talked about the Strategic Planning and Integrated Mission portion of the Blueprint for Improvement 2. Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Brock opened the floor to questions:

- Ronald Swanson: Mr. Swanson noted that the main issue with choosing between a March or November election comes down to deciding what is more important: More focus and less turnout in a March election, or greater turnout and less focus in a November election. Mr. Swanson asked Ms. Boyer about her thoughts on that issue.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer mentioned that they had that debate during the Blueprint for Improvement 2 meetings and they decided to suggest having a November election to get a bigger turnout, but with the caveat of trying to do it during a non-gubernatorial and non-presidential election cycle.
- Ronald Swanson: Mr. Swanson asked about the public’s perception of term limits and asked if the electorate would ever reject term limits.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer noted that it would be difficult to get the electorate to reject term limits and that the push for eliminating term limits would need to come from the “outside” and not be initiated by those that would benefit from eliminating term limits.
- Jessica Baker: Ms. Baker talked about the timing of elections and expressed concerns with voter turnout and the impact an election coinciding with gubernatorial or presidential elections would have on the candidates with having to pay more for ads and the bombardment of mail that voters receive.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer agreed with that sentiment and stated that doing an election on an off-cycle November would give local candidates that might not have significant funding the ability to still be able to compete and not get lost in the mass of other coinciding elections.
- W.C. Gentry: Mr. Gentry asked why the goal setting entities of the Strategic Planning and Integrated Mission were primarily government officials and not individuals from the general public.

- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer noted that the main reason for including only government officials was the size of the group. The group already had 50-60 government officials and adding more people would make it unmanageable. To include the public, they were given advisory roles, but could not vote.
- Chris Hagan: Mr. Hagan asked Ms. Boyer about her thoughts on staggered terms.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer noted that she is not a fan of staggered terms because it would create a situation where every other year half of the incumbents would be in full reelection mode and it could impact decision making and the legislative process.
- Celestine Mills: Ms. Mills talked about the public’s general lack of trust with politicians and asked Ms. Boyer for suggestions on how to change that perception and how to get more people out to vote.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer noted that many of the trust issues with politicians come from promises created during campaigns that cannot be carried out while in office. She continued stating that most of the time it is simply because the candidates don’t know the limitations of their powers while in office and make promises that the office or position itself has no authority over. Ms. Boyer suggested the creation of a candidate education program to help inform candidates of what the scope of their desired office is. She said that she is not sure how to change the Charter to change the negative public perception of local politicians.
- Celestine Mills: Ms. Mills asked about what could be done to make the City Council take the recommendations from the CRC more seriously.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer stated that the CRC would have to do a good job of marketing the recommendations to the Council and that if the CRC cannot convince the Council then they would have no chance of convincing the electorate to approve a Charter amendment.
- Betsy Santiago: Ms. Santiago asked why two six-year terms was not preferred to three four-year terms.
- Ms. Boyer: Ms. Boyer stated that two six-year terms could cause an issue with a possible greater single turnover of office holders than there would be with three four-year terms.

Presentation by Mike Hogan, Supervisor of Elections – Mr. Hogan spoke about some of the duties and responsibilities of the Supervisor of Elections. Mr. Hogan talked about term limits and how he is generally against them but has warmed up to them in recent years. He talked about trying to implement staggered terms while in office as a Council Member. Mr. Hogan provided multiple examples of problems with having term limits. He spoke about ranked choice voting and shared his disapproval of ranked voting and provided the Commission with an article discussing issues with the ranked choice voting process. Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Brock opened the floor to questions:

- Frank Denton: Mr. Denton asked about the frequency of receiving “bad ballots”.
- Mr. Hogan: Mr. Hogan explained the process of receiving and examining “bad ballots”. Mr. Hogan handed out an example of multiple types of “bad ballots” and went over some of the examples.
- Frank Denton: Mr. Denton asked if there is a way that the Charter could help with dealing with “bad ballots”.
- Mr. Hogan: Mr. Hogan stated that he feels that the issue is solely on the voters. The instructions are clear, and it is up to the voters to follow the instructions on the ballot.
- Emily Lisska: Ms. Lisska asked about special elections and if the Charter should be cleaned up to make it clearer on the process of holding a special election.

- Mr. Hogan: Mr. Hogan noted that special elections are actually quite rare and that focusing on that area wouldn't be a top priority.
- Ronald Swanson: Mr. Swanson commented on the "bad ballots" and asked Mr. Hogan if he had thought about having at-large school board members.
- Mr. Hogan: Mr. Hogan stated that he is in favor of having district and at-large members for both the Council and School Board.
- Jessica Baker: Ms. Baker asked if elections should be partisan or non-partisan.
- Mr. Hogan: Mr. Hogan noted that Florida has already made that decision and that elections should be non-partisan.

A brief discussion was had about term limits and Mr. Hogan expressed that he feels that the local constitutional officers should not have term limits because their function is administrative and it takes up to two years to get certified. It was also discussed that City Council Members might be seen as constitutional officers because they serve both the city and county.

Presentation by Ronnie Fussell, Clerk of the Courts – Mr. Fussell presented a brief overview of the functions and services offered by the Clerk of the Courts. Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Brock opened the floor to questions:

- W.C. Gentry: Mr. Gentry asked if Mr. Fussell feels that the Clerk of the Courts should be immune to any Charter changes.
- Mr. Fussell: Mr. Fussell believes that because of the unique nature of the office that it should be omitted from Charter changes and that the CRC should leave Article 5 of the Charter as is.

Presentation by Richard Rossi of JAA – Ms. Rossi presented an overview of the Jacksonville Aviation Authority including the Authority's functions, leadership, budget, and future plans. Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Brock opened the floor to questions:

- W.C. Gentry: Mr. Gentry asked what it would take to have a regional airsystem here in Jacksonville to be able to get to regional areas directly without having to layover in Atlanta or other cities.
- Mr. Rossi: Mr. Rossi stated that it would take more public demand. He noted that the major airlines gather information and dictate the flight itineraries.
- Frank Denton: Mr. Denton talked about the JAA's inclusion in the strategic planning process and asked if Mr. Rossi had any recommendations for Charter revisions.
- Mr. Rossi: Mr. Rossi discussed JAA's inclusion in the strategic planning process and noted that he does not have Charter revision recommendations.
- Ann-Marie Knight: Ms. Knight asked for clarification about the JAA budget from one of the presentation slides.
- Mr. Rossi: Mr. Rossi provided clarification of the budget confusion.

Other Business – Chairman Brock described the procedure for conducting the town hall meeting that is taking place on October 17th, 2019 in Council Chambers. The Chairman also discussed completing the topic list after the town hall meeting and laid out the schedule and expectations for the upcoming meetings, particularly the meeting that is being held on October 25th, 2019 where the commissioners will vote of the topics to focus on and will be broken down into subcommittees. Multiple commissioners asked if there was a way to attend the meeting digitally through various video applications or by

telephone. Paige Johnston of OGC will look into that issue to make sure that remotely attending the meeting is permissible and not in violation of Sunshine Laws.

Public Comment (as time permits) – Chairman Brock opened the floor to public comments.

- Billie Bussard: Ms. Bussard talked briefly about campaign finance reform.
- Perry Waag: Mr. Waag provided information about ranked choice voting and raised questions about some of the information presented by Mr. Hogan about ranked voting.
- John Nooney: Mr. Nooney talked about having CRAs providing mandatory access to Jacksonville waterways.

Chairman Brock ended the meeting and stated that the next meeting is the town hall meeting on October 17, 2019 in Council Chambers.

Meeting adjourned: 11:40 a.m.

Minutes: Anthony James Baltiero, Council Research Division
abaltiero@coj.net (904) 255-5157
10.16.19 Posted 4:00 p.m.