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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION TOWN HALL MEETING MINUTES - amended  
City Council Chamber, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall**

**October 17, 2019**

**5:30 p.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Lindsey Brock (Chair), W.C. Gentry, Charles Griggs, Chris Hagan, Heidi Jameson, Emily Lisska, Nelson McCoy, Celestine Mills, Betzy Santiago, Ronald Swanson, Ann-Marie Knight, Jessica Baker (arr. 6:00 p.m.)

**Excused:** Commissioners Nick Howland

**Also:** Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements– Council Research Division; Jessica Matthews, Jessica Smith and Crystal Shemwell – Legislative Services Division; Will Coffee – Council Staff Services

**Meeting Convened:** 5:33 p.m.

Remarks from the Chair

Chairman Brock welcomed the attendees and asked the commissioners to introduce themselves. Mr. Brock asked the assembly to observe a moment of silence in memory of the passing of U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings yesterday.

The Chairman gave an explanation of the ground rules of the town hall meeting and an overview of the commission’s work thus far in proposing and grouping potential study topics.

Public Comments

Searcy Dannheim – expressed concerns about 5G technology and its impact on Jacksonville because of its emission of microwaves. She and her neighbors don’t want a proliferation of towers in their neighborhood and are concerned with health effects from the microwaves.

Johnny Crews – said he has spent a lifetime working in the electronics field and is concerned about 5G technology and its impact on Jacksonville because of its continuous emission of microwaves. It is not a tested technology (the specific wavelengths in question) and the health hazards are unknown.

John Rooney – said the public is being shut out of access to waterways. He recommends that the Charter be amended to guarantee public access to waterways via projects supported by Community Redevelopment Areas and the Downtown Investment Authority. He fears excessive federal control of the waterways. He urged bringing in expert speakers on water access topics to inform the commission.

Wendy Collins – said she opposes and elected school superintendent because that would limit the candidates to Jacksonville residents only and prevents looking for the best candidates nationally. Bringing politics into administration of the school system is a bad idea and brings partisanship and the ill effects of campaign money into play.

Kenneth Covington – said the School Board sales tax referendum should have been approved by City Council and he urged the commission to do what it could to support that effort. He urged the commission to avoid the gamesmanship and political maneuvering that seems to infect politics at the local and national level and disadvantages many people. There are systems in place that are intended to perpetuate disparities and advantage some at the expense of others and those need to be overcome. The city needs to elect good people who have the best interests of the general public at heart. The promises of consolidation need to be fulfilled and that will be a huge task that's not being talked about. The city has a history of half-efforts and band-aids that pacify the electorate.

Commissioner Griggs asked about how the public will have future input into the commission's study process prior to the development of final recommendations. Chairman Brock said he encouraged the subcommittees to allow public comment at their meetings. He also envisions holding another town hall meeting later in the process once recommendations are being developed to get public input on those proposals.

Commissioner Mills assured the public that the commission is committed to doing the right thing and she is particularly interested in dealing with the unfulfilled promises of consolidation.

Jaquan Fulton – expressed confidence in School Superintendent Diana Green and opposed electing a school superintendent. The schools are in bad condition and have been for years and the sales tax for school repairs should have been done long ago.

Barney Roberts – the CPACs are supposed to be representing the needs of the neighborhoods and being the basis of planning. The citywide strategic planning element probably isn't needed if the CPACs and ShAdCos do their jobs properly. Commissioner Genty said the idea behind this suggestion was to get all of the branches of city government working in the same direction and would not impact CPACs and ShAdCos. Commissioner Griggs said that CPACs and ShAdCos exist at the will of each mayor and sheriff and could be eliminated by them at any time. Putting them in the Charter would make them more permanent.

David Hollingshead – said the nation is suffering from the effects of negative hyper-partisanship, a large part of which comes from campaign financing. He recommends a charter amendment to require council members to disclose financial conflicts of interest or appearances of such conflicts when voting on items that may benefit them. Someone is behind the flood of glossy mailers that pour into voters' mailboxes at election time but the identity of those funding the campaigns is often hidden. Commissioner Lisska said that donor lists to candidates are available, but the true source of donations made by PACs and interest group is much harder to determine.

Linda Deshauteurs – suggested that the charter be amended to add a recall provision to remove elected officials. She also believes that the City Council members are free to disparage citizens with impunity and there should be some mechanism to require civility on the part of the council toward citizens. Chairman

Brock said that there is a mechanism in Article 15 of the Charter to remove elected officials. Commissioner Swanson decried the lack of civility in current American politics. Ms. Deshauteurs asked what could be done about ensuring that action is taken on recommendations by the Charter Revision Commission. Chairman Brock said that the commission is interested in recommending a mechanism to ensure that action must at least be considered on the CRC's recommendations. Commissioner Swanson said that there is a Florida Statute governing removal of elected officials which may or may not impact on the City's ability to have a local process.

JoAnn Brooks – asked if copies of the report of the last Charter Revision Commission could be made available to interested parties and asked about the timeline for the commission's work. Chairman Brock said the commission would begin ranking its priorities and assigning subcommittees at its next meeting on October 25<sup>th</sup>. He recommended searching the online transcripts of the commission's meetings for discussion of specific topics. He gave the commission's email address - [crc@coj.net](mailto:crc@coj.net) – and invited comments and questions.

Winston Seabrooks – opposes electing a school superintendent. Big money interests are already financing school board elections to promote their interests and it would be bad to subject the superintendent position to the same possibility. Appointing a superintendent is the job of the elected School Board.

Mike Todd – asked for clarification of the bullet point suggesting a requirement for a 2/3 vote by Council to increase property tax millage. Chairman Brock said that suggestion was made by Rep. Jason Fischer. Mr. Todd asked if public comment at City Council meetings is controlled by Council Rules; it is. Chairman Brock distinguished between mandatory public hearings and optional public comment. Mr. Todd said he thinks most citizens would be opposed to electing a Council President for a 4 year term. He recommended that the septic tank issue be clearly labeled as an unfulfilled promise of consolidation. Commissioner Griggs explained his rationale for recommending a multi-year presidency that could serve as a counter-weight to the power of the strong mayor.

Commissioner Griggs recommended gaining clarity on how the City addresses its responsibilities under Chapter 154, Florida Statutes, regarding funding of both public health and indigent care.

Commissioner Gentry felt that the septic tank issue doesn't belong under the Strategic Planning heading and is more appropriate under the "fulfilling the promises of consolidation" heading. Commissioner Lisska said that some topics will span multiple headings and the subcommittees will determine what bullet points they think relate to each other. Commissioner Griggs said that strategic planning and unfulfilled promises are integrally linked – a strategic plan will be needed to meet the challenge, possibly via the mechanism of an Urban Core Investment Authority to deal with areas in greatest need. Mr. Gentry felt the unfulfilled promises topic needs its own specific emphasis because of its importance and because of the former existence of Urban Service District 1 that was intended to deal with old core city's issues.

Chairman ~~Bowman~~ Brock thanked the attendees for their presence and their suggestions.

**Meeting adjourned:** 7:07 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division  
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