

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

**CITYWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - amended**

**Don Davis Room, 1st floor, City Hall**

**November 8, 2019**

**11:30 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Commissioners Betzy Santiago (Chair), W. C. Gentry, Emily Lisska, Nick Howland

**Also**: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements– Council Research Division; Crystal Shemwell and Ladayija Nichols – Legislative Services Division; Melanie Wilkes – Council Staff Services

**Meeting Convened**: 11:35 a.m.

Chairwoman Santiago convened the meeting and the minutes of the November 1 meeting were approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gentry, who was excused from the last meeting, introduced himself and discussed his hopes for the committee. He hopes that the Commission will recommend a permanent strategic planning process that will overcome Jacksonville’s tendency to plan only for the term of one mayor and to make and then discard strategic plans every few years. Each mayor discards what his or her predecessor did and starts over with their own priorities, and the same happens at the City Council level as Council Presidents change from year to year. The City Council’s so-called “strategic plan” really is not that, but is instead a list of short term goals to be achieved over the course of a few years. The city suffers from its lack of continuity in vision and strategy. He recommended hearing from experts in the field of strategic planning who know how it should be done to be effective.

Chairwoman Santiago distributed and reviewed a list of potential discussion topics and proposed speakers on those topics. She asked staff to circulate to the members a copy of JCCI’s Jax2025 strategic plan from several years ago. The group discussed what types of questions should be posed to the proposed speakers that would help the committee to formulate what a strategic plan should include. Commissioner Lisska said that the list of speakers is full of interesting people, but the information they can provide may not be entirely relevant to the committee’s task of developing a strategic planning process recommendation.

Commissioner Gentry reported that he had communicated with Pinellas County which has a strategic planning process and suggested that research be done on other local governments that have such a process. The Pinellas model has a relatively few goals and ties into the annual budget process as an enforcement mechanism to tie expenditures to identified strategic goals. Chairwoman Santiago asked about inviting Pinellas County officials to address a committee meeting by Skype or teleconference. Commissioner Howland said that former Council Member Lori Boyer and former Council President Elaine Brown should be able to provide a wealth of information on what has been considered in the past and how it did or did not work. Ms. Santiago asked about what would be a good procedure for the visiting speakers – let them make presentations, provide them with a list of specific questions, or some combination?

Commissioner Gentry said that he and several other Charter Revision commissioners are also members of the Crime and Public Safety Task Force and the meetings are conflicting with those of the Charter Revision Commission. He asked if something could be done to separate the meetings to eliminate the conflict for those members. The committee members discussed their availability for meetings in December and compared calendars. December 5th and 16th were chosen for early afternoon meetings, as well as January 3rd at 9 a.m.

Chairwoman Santiago suggested a representative from the now-defunct JCCI and from the Northeast Florida Regional Council as potential speakers to discuss the efforts they have made in the strategic planning arena. Commissioner Lisska suggested perhaps top administrators from former mayoral administrations would have good perspectives on how strategic plans have actually worked in the past. Mr. Gentry suggested Suzie Wiles. Commissioner Howland said that Commissioner Hagen had previously suggested City CFO Joey Greive to discuss how to finance a strategic planning process. Commissioner Gentry suggested Sam Mousa as a person with a long history of City government experience. Ms. Lisska also suggested Michael Munz.

The committee started discussing where a Strategic Planning Commission might be located in the government (executive branch, legislative branch, or independent entity) and whether the commission would have authority to hire staff to support its work. Commissioner Gentry said it would be necessary that the staff of the agency be independent of the executive and legislative branches so that it would be free from undue influence from either branch. The strategic plan proposed by the Task Force on Consolidation was recommended to be reviewed and revised every 10 years, while the staff would be on-going. Commissioner Lisska said she hoped that an ongoing strategic plan would be an asset to a mayor and not seen as an impediment. Commissioner Howland said that properly done, a strategic plan with broad support in the public could help influence elections. Ms. Lisska noted that the City of Jacksonville’s 200th anniversary is coming up in 2022 and that might be an event that could serve as the focus for a strategic planning process kickoff. Chairwoman Santiago posed the question of whether such a process should be initiated early in mayor’s term or perhaps in the middle of a term. She also wondered whether any changes have taken place in the 5 years since the Task Force on Consolidated Government made its recommendation that would substantively change its recommendation. Another question involves the replacement and removal authority and mechanism for strategic plan commissioners. Would that be a City Council responsibility to amend the group’s charter? Commissioner Gentry recommended that there not be an ability by appointing authorities to remove commissioners without cause to prevent a new mayor from cleaning house and refilling the board with persons beholden to that mayor. Commissioner Howland quoted from the *Blueprint for Improvement II* that proposed a Strategic Planning Commission composed of persons holding specific positions *ex officio*. Mr. Gentry said that the practical problem is that high level officials (Mayor, Sheriff, City Council President, School Board Chair, etc.) are very busy people who will often send a designee and then the commission devolves into staff control rather than the top officials who were intended.

Commissioner Gentry suggested the need to identify the most important perspectives in the community at large that absolutely need to be included in the strategic planning process (i.e. health care, education). The JCCI Jax2025 plan included 8 broad topic areas, the Blueprint for Improvement II had 10 areas, of which there was some overlap with Jax2025. Ms. Lisska suggested sports, tourism and the military as other topics that are very important to Jacksonville’s identity. It will be difficult to keep the commission to a workable size because there are so many perspectives that are all deserving of consideration. The committee members were asked to think about the most important perspectives that need to be represented and to propose questions for future speakers to address.

Ms. Santiago asked if the strategic planning expert suggested earlier should be brought in to address the committee earlier rather than later in the process. Commissioner Howland said that the strategic planning processes with which he has been involved have generally been driven by the vision of an organization’s top management (president or CEO); he thought it might be much more difficult to do in a community-wide setting where there is no single driving force behind the plan and the perspectives are so wide and varying. Ms. Lisska said the topic of the strength of the strong mayor in the consolidated government has been a source of considerable debate and the same questions would apply to having a strong mayor drive the strategic planning process. Mr. Gentry noted the inherent problem of trying to have every relevant organization be involved in the crafting of the strategic plan so that they are all invested in the outcome, which inevitably makes the process too large and cumbersome to be effective. Chairwoman Santiago asked the members to give consideration before the next meeting of who represents the community’s perspectives and interests and should be included at the table. Somehow a wide variety of organizations and interests need to be condensed down to just a handful of representatives that somehow are empowered to represent the viewpoint of their whole sector.

Jeff Clements said that was the problem faced by the 2014 Task Force – there were so many perspectives and organizations that needed to be represented that the proposed body became too unwieldy; therefore they fell back on restricting the membership to governmental representatives as voting members and a whole range of other representatives as advisory members to get the various perspectives. Commissioner Gentry felt it was a mistake to rely purely on government officials to produce the plan. He urged the inclusion of non-governmental representatives to hold the government accountable for how well or poorly its existing programs are operating and developing metrics for measuring success. Chairwoman Santiago noted that the committee needs to make a report to the full commission at the meeting at the end of the month and asked if the full commission should be asked to weigh in on the issues the committee has been discussing or of the committee is merely reporting its discussions to date. There was general consensus on reporting discussions held to date and not soliciting input from the rest of the commission at this point. Ms. Santiago was authorized to summarize the committee’s work to date an make the report to the commission.

Public comment

John Nooney said the Charter Revision Commission has incredible power. He urged a Charter amendment requiring any projects assisted by the DIA or the Community Redevelopment Areas to provide public access to waterways. He cited the Florida Ocean Alliance Strategic Plan for Florida’s Coasts and its importance to Jacksonville’s waterways. The CRC can be a powerful advocate for public access to the waterways. He said a 2017 ordinance regarding trespass in public parks subjects the public to potential seizure of their watercraft.

Commissioner Gentry said that he had extended an invitation to ~~the Jacksonville Waterways Commission and Tree Commission~~ organizations that advocate for the river to propose any items they felt should be included in the Charter; to date he has not gotten any suggestions. Chairwoman Santiago reminded the group that they can have individual meetings with subject matter experts and can report their findings back to the committee.

**Meeting adjourned:** 1:24 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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