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RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE / PRESERVING INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE  
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - Amended  
Don Davis Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall**

**January 16, 2020  
9:00 a.m.**

**In attendance:** Judge Ronald Swanson (Chair), Hon. Matt Schellenberg, Jessica Baker, Heidi Jameson, Nelson McCoy (arr. 9:15),

**Also:** Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Anthony Baltiero – Council Research Division; Jessica Matthews and Juliette Williams – Legislative Services Division

**Guest Speakers:** Hon. Rory Diamond – Current City Councilmember

**Meeting Convened:** 9:01 a.m.

Call to Order / Remarks from Chair – Chairman Swanson called the meeting to order stating that he is going to bump up Councilmember Diamond’s presentation to the beginning of the meeting in consideration of his time and his previous planned commitments.

Presentation by Hon. Rory Diamond – Current City Councilmember – Councilmember Diamond gave a brief presentation focusing on areas of government structure as they relate to the subcommittee’s task. Mr. Diamond stated that Jacksonville is very unique in its government structure noting that consolidation has left Jacksonville’s government resembling a state or federal model of governance. Councilmember Diamond offered two suggestions for the subcommittee to consider. The first recommendation is to change the timing of the local elections by moving them to an off-cycle year. Mr. Diamond’s second suggestion is to give the City Council the authority and power to remove people in appointed positions from office with a supermajority vote of the Council. He also noted that he has about a dozen bills relating to government structure and Charter revision issues that are coming down the pipeline. Councilmember Diamond concluded by noting that he is a supporter of consolidation and that many of the problems surrounding consolidation are political.

Ms. Jameson asked about possibly changing the timing of the annual budget cycle. Mr. Diamond said that the budget process could be changed to October to allow for more time for Councilmembers to work on the budget. Ms. Jameson followed up by asking if there was a change in the election timing would there still be a need to change the date of the budget process. Mr. Diamond noted that you would only have to

change one or the other referring to the election dates or the budget process dates. Ms. Jameson asked about the idea of going to nonpartisan elections. Mr. Diamond stated that there are both pros and cons to nonpartisan elections noting that there would be better debates, but voters may have a harder time finding information about the candidates.

Ms. Baker asked Mr. Diamond to readdress his suggestion to authorize the City Council to remove appointed officials, particularly which officials or what type of officials. Mr. Diamond mentioned that he has not yet fully developed who can or can't be removed, but noted that it is simply a good idea to give the City Council another method of checks and balances.

Mr. Schellenberg asked if the beaches {Atlantic Beach, Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach} and Baldwin should be their own independent cities. Mr. Diamond stated that despite finding the idea of the Beaches having their independence very enticing, having the Beaches and Baldwin be totally independent from the rest of Jacksonville makes government functions much less efficient. Mr. Schellenberg asked if any of the future bills that were referenced in the presentation are pertinent to the work of the CRC and this subcommittee. Mr. Diamond referenced one of the bills that would require independent authorities to report to the City Council Auditor within 48 hours of any type of sale or major restructuring. Mr. Schellenberg shifted gears and asked about issues regarding the Office of General Counsel (OGC), particularly asking if the General Counsel should be distant from all of the other agencies so that they can act as an arbiter and not be seen as being too close to any particular entity. Mr. Diamond made it clear that he does not think it is beneficial to focus on current office holders or the current political climate. He stated that the OGC has been working relatively well since 1968 and that if there is an issue with a General Counsel, the voters have the ability to vote for a different Mayor, who appoints the General Counsel, and the City Council has the ability to deny a General Counsel appointment. Mr. Schellenberg asked if the City Council should have the ability to make appointments. Mr. Diamond stated that he feels that there isn't a need to change the appointment process because it is a part of the checks and balances process. Mr. Schellenberg closed his questions by asking about the current JEA situation. Mr. Diamond noted that the JEA situation is a political mess and not a structural issue. He continued by saying that it is now important to try and regain the public's trust following the current JEA issues.

Judge Swanson said that he was going to ask Mr. Diamond a series of "rapid fire" questions. He noted that Mr. Diamond only had to give a quick answer to each topic:

- Judge: 19 Councilmembers?
- Diamond: Too many.
- Judge: City Councilmembers, full-time or part-time?
- Diamond: Part-time.
- Judge: Sunshine Laws?
- Diamond: Love them.
- Judge: At-Large Councilmembers?
- Diamond: {mixed opinion} Too many Councilmembers, but likes the overarching representation.
- Judge: If king, what three Charter changes would you make?
- Diamond: As of right now, just one. Change timing of elections to off-cycle year.
- Judge: City Council power to remove appointed official?
- Diamond: Just an idea to think about. No specific ideas of who or how.
- Judge: City Manager form of local government?
- Diamond: I prefer Strong Mayor form of government, for better or worse.
- Judge: Council President term?
- Diamond: Should be longer. Not a Charter change, but a change in the Council Rules.
- Judge: Term limits?
- Diamond: Love term limits. They should be extended to all elected positions.
- Judge: Should varies police agencies consolidate under a single municipal police force?

- Diamond: No opinion either way.
- Judge: Is the School Board issue a Charter issue?
- Diamond: It is too soon to tell.

Ms. Jameson asked about term limits and the term of the Council President. Mr. Diamond noted that a Council President could be reelected. Ms. Baker added to the conversation talking about the terms of elected officials. Mr. Diamond noted that he is in favor of having new people come into office to give their new ideas and perspectives. Mr. Schellenberg asked about what the number of City Councilmembers should be. Mr. Diamond said that maybe thirteen is the right way to go, but nineteen is too many. Mr. McCoy asked if redistricting would be necessary as Jacksonville grows. Mr. Diamond agreed that redistricting will certainly become an issue as the population grows.

Public Comment – Chairman Swanson said that representatives from the Ranked Choice Voting Jax group will be able to present during the Public Comment section. He noted that he would give the group fifteen minutes to present their information and an opportunity for subcommittee members to ask questions. Jacalyn Crecelius gave a brief overview of the group’s work and introduced Drew Aiken to complete the presentation. Mr. Aiken gave an overview of the Ranked Choice Voting Jax group stating that they are a non-profit entity promoting ranked choice voting (RCV) in Jacksonville. He listed four major benefits of switching to an RCV system:

- Eliminate the need for runoff elections
- Saving \$1.2M each election
- Help with voter fatigue
- Ensure maximum voter turnout

Mr. Aiken provided information to back up the benefit claims. He noted that their group is in support of an election date change and that they are opposed to nonpartisan elections.

Following the presentation, a discussion was had with the subcommittee members regarding the specifics and technicalities of RCV. Ms. Jameson shared concerns about the mechanics of the ballot particularly asking questions about different scenarios regarding what a voter does with the RCV ballot and the possible ramifications of each scenario. Ms. Jameson also had concerns about the legality of RCV. Mr. Aiken noted that there would be some hurdles to overcome, but it would be possible to legally implement RCV in Jacksonville.

Approval of Minutes – The minutes from the 12/16/2019 meeting were approved as distributed.

Subcommittee Discussion – Chairman Swanson started a discussion regarding each commissioner’s updates on their individual subcommittee tasks. Ms. Baker was the first to provide her update. She prepared a draft of a proposal to change the timing of local elections to the fall of odd-numbered years between the gubernatorial and presidential elections. Ms. Baker provided a copy of the draft and read through the sections of the documents. Following the synopsis, a discussion was had within the subcommittee about the specifics within the draft. Three major talking points were discussed:

- The date of implementation: 2031
- The timing between first and second elections: 8 or 11 weeks
- Specific month in which the first election will take place

After a discussion and input from the subcommittee members, Chairman Swanson decided to table a vote on the specifics of the draft until the next subcommittee meeting. Ms. Jameson gave her update noting that from her research on nonpartisan elections she believes that pursuing nonpartisan elections is not the way to go. She mentioned that changing to the unitary election system solved a lot of the issues that made nonpartisan elections initially enticing. Ms. Jameson stated that a change to nonpartisan elections would only really have an impact on the City Council elections.

Following Ms. Jameson's update, the subcommittee had a discussion with staff and decided on upcoming meeting dates. All meeting dates and times are tentative until an official meeting notice has been posted.

Chairman Swanson adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:03 AM

Minutes: Anthony James Baltiero, Council Research Division  
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