



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425  
4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, CITY HALL  
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202  
904-255-5157

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

**February 21, 2020  
2:30 p.m.**

**In attendance:** Jessica Baker (Acting Chair), Hon. Matt Schellenberg, Nelson McCoy, Heidi Jameson

**Excused:** Judge Ronald Swanson (Chair)

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

**Guest Speaker:** Jeff Clements, Chief of Research, City Council Research Division

**Meeting Convened:** 2:33 p.m.

Call to Order / Remarks from Chair – Commissioner Baker called the meeting to order at 2:33 PM and noted that Judge Swanson would not be in attendance at the meeting.

Approval of Minutes – Ms. Baker called for a motion to approve the minutes from the 2/14/2020 subcommittee meeting. It was noted by staff that the minutes from that meeting have not been posted yet and will be reviewed/approved and the next subcommittee meeting.

Presentation – Jeff Clements, Chief of Research, City Council Research Division – Mr. Clements gave a presentation discussing multiple topics pertinent to the subcommittee’s work. He started by discussing the rationale for and against having At-Large City Councilmembers. The rationale for At-Large Councilmembers includes having multiple representatives for constituents to reach out to, increased minority representation, and more free time for focus on larger scale issues. The rationale against At-Large Councilmembers includes having more community focus with only district Councilmembers, it takes more resources to run an At-Large campaign, and that there isn’t typically a notable difference in perspective from the district Councilmembers. Mr. Clements provided a breakdown of At-Large Councilmember votes on closely divided issues noting that there isn’t a noticeable variance between district and At-Large Councilmember voting habits. Mr. Clements provided information about the rationale for and against term limits for City Councilmembers. The rationale for term limits includes the

idea that citizens are better served with regular turnover of elected officials, the tremendous power of incumbency, a mechanism for removing troublesome elected officials, and the potential for improving the chances of minority representation on the Council. The rationale against term limits includes the idea that voters can simply vote out an elected official for a better option, term limits violates the voter's right to choose who they want to represent them, the loss of institutional knowledge, and that term limits are irrelevant due to the historically consistent turnover of Councilmembers. Mr. Clements provided a breakdown of City Council turnover by terms noting that there has been a relatively steady turnover rate dating back to 1967. Mr. Clements talked about Councilmembers that served more than eight consecutive years, including Jim Overton, Ginger Soud, Richard Clark, Reggie Brown, and John Crescimbeni. The last area that Mr. Clements focused on was the cost of consolidated City Council staffs from other similar cities, including Denver, Louisville, Nashville, and Indianapolis. Following Mr. Clements' presentation, Commissioner Baker opened the floor to questions.

The subcommittee had a back and forth discussion with Mr. Clements about different situations where elected officials have served more than eight years in office in multiple capacities. Ms. Jameson and Ms. Baker wanted to know more about elected officials serving more than eight years in any capacity and not necessarily consecutively. Mr. Schellenberg brought up the late Hon. Jake Godbold. Mr. Clements noted that he had won five or six consecutive elections in multiple positions including City Councilmember and Mayor.

Term Limits Proposal – Commissioner McCoy reviewed his current draft of the recommendation regarding term limits. Mr. McCoy said that the rollout of term limits wouldn't start until 2031 so that the current Councilmembers that will potentially vote on the issue would not benefit from extended term limits. Mr. Schellenberg made the point that the current councilmembers could theoretically be able to run again in 2031 since they will be out of office in 2027 and could potentially run again for office. Ms. Baker said that she would like to postpone any public participation on this issue until the next subcommittee meeting since Chair Swanson is not present at this meeting. Ms. Baker also noted the two articles that were circulated (Politico and Jacksonville.com) and asked Mr. McCoy to include those articles as attachments to the term limits recommendation.

Mr. Schellenberg briefly opined on his previous attempt as a Councilmember to introduce legislation to extend term limits from eight years to twelve years. He noted that he wanted to give the citizens the chance to vote and decide if they wanted to extend term limits, but the legislation did not get the proper momentum to be approved. Mr. Schellenberg said that he is supportive of the proposed recommendation. Ms. Jameson also is supportive of the draft.

Size and Composition of City Council Proposal – Commissioner Baker started the discussion on the recommendation regarding the size of the City Council. Ms. Baker said that she is not sure if the current draft needs any changes. There was a discussion regarding changes to the size of the City Council. Ms. Jameson noted that with a smaller City Council, each Councilmember would have more constituents to represent than each seat currently represents. They talked about the idea of removing the At-Large seats and just having nineteen (19) district seats. Ms. Jameson said that she has no problem with nineteen (19) Council seats and asked if At-Large members only represent constituents from the area where they reside. Mr. Clements provided a brief history of At-Large members and noted that the current makeup is to ensure representation across the entire city.

Ms. Baker asked if the At-Large Councilmembers should be assigned specific duties. Mr. Schellenberg said that he doesn't think assigning At-Large Councilmembers is a good idea noting that Councilmembers are most effective when they are working on issues that they are passionate about. Mr. Schellenberg opined on the issue providing examples of Councilmembers working on projects that they are passionate about. He made the point that unanticipated issues consistently arise over the course of a

Councilmember's term and it would be troublesome if At-Large Councilmembers were locked into a specifically designated issue that they aren't passionate about while they feel strongly about the surprise issue that may come up. Mr. McCoy said that a compromise could work where the At-Large Councilmembers are assigned a specific issue or duty, but they are able to choose the project for themselves. Ms. Baker agreed with Mr. McCoy and felt that the At-Large Councilmembers could work with the Council President to identify long-term policy issues to focus on.

Following the discussion on the size of the City Council, Commissioner Baker called for a five-minute recess from 3:25 PM to 3:30 PM.

Commissioner Baker called the meeting back from recess. Ms. Baker said that she feels that there should be no change to the size and makeup of the City Council. The rest of the subcommittee came to a consensus in agreement. Paige Johnston, Office of General Counsel, advised the subcommittee to include public participation at the next meeting regarding the size and composition of the City Council.

Mr. Schellenberg asked the subcommittee about their thoughts on the idea of implementing staggered terms for elected officials, particularly the City Council. Mr. Clements provided some potential pros and cons regarding staggered terms. The biggest pro of staggered terms is not having too many Councilmembers' terms turning over at the same time. The biggest con of staggered terms is having half the Council going into "reelection mode" every other year that potentially impacts councilmembers' voting habits. Mr. McCoy feels that this Jacksonville City Council is not large enough to necessitate staggered terms. Ms. Baker agrees overall noting that the cons outweigh the potential pros.

Following the discussion, Commissioner Baker opened the floor to public comments.

Public Comment – No speaker cards were presented for public comment.

Commissioner Baker adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 3:42 PM

Minutes: Anthony James Baltiero, Council Research Division  
abaltiero@coj.net (904) 255-5157  
2.25.2020 Posted 11:00 AM