

Government Study Commission
October 14, 2014
Borough Hall
Meeting Minutes

Commission Members in Attendance: Ken Womack, Bill Berwick, Dave Sheridan, John Sacrison, Bert Lennon, Blake Wilson, Bob Winston

1. Call to order

Ken Womack called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. Approval of minutes

Minutes from September 23, 2014 were approved.

3. Public comment

No public comment

4. Old Business

No old business

5. New Business

Review of “final” draft charter (version 3.2.1, dated October 8, 2014)

The Commission discussed the transition section (Section VIII). 805: to be developed within one year. Confirmed language of section 211. 802: items of the Borough Code not amended by the Charter remain in effect.

The Commission discussed elements of the Charter that were criticized in a letter to the editor of *The Sentinel*. The Commission is satisfied that the draft actually responds to the questions raised in the letter.

101: add definition of the Borough Code. 802B: add reference to the Borough Code. The goal of these changes is to make clear that the Borough Code remains in effect for all items not explicitly changed in the Charter.

The Commission decided to put the September 29, 2014 version of the Charter (version 3.2) on the website for the Open Hearing to be held on October 22, 2014.

Ken Womack will incorporate editorial changes like those suggested to him by Bob Broyles (version 3.2.1).

The Commission discussed possible changes in the law regarding elected tax collectors. The changes would require training, certification, and a background check for tax collectors. The Commission decided that these changes do not necessitate a rethinking of the Charter's section on tax collection. The goal remains to leave the appointment of a tax collector to Borough Council to give them the chance to pick a cost-effective option and increase accountability.

The Commission returned to a discussion of the open hearing to be held October 22, 2014. The report and cover Letter will be combined into a single document and posted with the Charter on October 15, 2014. All these documents will clearly be labeled "DRAFT." Bert Lennon suggested some editorial changes to the cover letter that were accepted. Bob Winston is to bring an interim financial report to the open hearing.

The Commission discussed and approved a format for the public hearing:

- Printed copies of the report and cover letter will be available at the hearing for the public.
- The Charter will be available electronically.
- A PowerPoint presentation will present the origins of the Commission's work, taken from the previous open hearing
- A timeline of the Commission's work (past, present, future) will be shown.
- This will be followed by a slide of the Charter's section heads to structure public comment.
- Ken Womack will ask how many in the audience have not attended a previous meeting or hearing.
- A slide will be shown with the key changes incorporated in the Charter (provided by Bert Lennon). Printed copies will also be available at the hearing.
- The Commission decided it will be important to mention our education outreach in early spring, prior to the May vote.
- Ken will remind representatives of neighborhood groups about the hearing.

Discussion of recent letter to the editor in *The Sentinel*

- Bert and Blake both offered draft response letters
- Ken urged not responding to the letter since we have public meetings and hearings to inform the public.
- Blake countered that it is important to respond because the letter writer (Bill Sloane) presents himself as an expert and thus is a "special case."
- Dave Sheridan urged not responding.
- The Commission voted to respond to the letter to the editor using Blake's letter with some modest editorial changes; Blake agreed to submit his letter.

- News Release
Commission members agreed to language for a news release about the upcoming public hearing.

6. Public Comment

- Roger Spitz said that he is glad the Commission is pushing ahead. He said he was happy to challenge misinformation when it appeared and had already addressed Mr. Sloane's claims.
- Roger Spitz reported that the East Side Neighbors group would like to host a Q&A session on the Charter prior to the May election; he will urge people to go to the upcoming open hearing.
- Roger concluded by saying that he remains an enthusiastic supporter of the Charter.

7. The meeting adjourned at 8:21.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Winston, Commission Treasurer