

**Charter Review Commission  
Pinellas County  
April 22, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The Pinellas County Charter Review Commission (CRC), as created by Chapter 80-950, Laws of Florida, met in regular session at 6:02 PM on this date in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**Present**

Brian Aungst, Jr., Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Appointee (Commissioner Chris Latvala), Chair  
Linsey Grove, Public At-Large Citizen Appointee, Vice-Chair  
Nick DiCeglie, Pinellas County State Legislative Delegation Appointee  
Dave Eggers, County Commissioner, BCC Appointee  
James Millican, Public At-Large Citizen Appointee  
Ashley Overend, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Brian Scott)  
Mark Strickland, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Janet Long) (appeared virtually)  
Alan Swartz, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Kathleen Peters)  
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser, Constitutional Officers Appointee

**Not Present**

Anne-Marie Brooks, Municipal Elected Official Appointee  
Terri Lipsey Scott, BCC Appointee (Commissioner René Flowers)  
Robert Posavec, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Dave Eggers)  
Thomas Steck, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Charlie Justice)

**Others Present**

Nancy McKibben, County Staff Liaison, Assistant to the County Administrator  
Wade C. Vose, Esquire, Vose Law Firm LLP, CRC Legal Counsel  
Doug Thomas, Strategic Government Resources, Inc.  
Tammy Burgess, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk  
Other interested individuals

*All documents provided to the Clerk's Office have been filed and made a part of the record.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Aungst called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and welcomed the members.

## **ROLL CALL**

At the Chair's request, those in attendance introduced themselves.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

In response to the Chair's call for public comment, David Ballard Geddis, Jr., Palm Harbor, appeared and expressed his concerns.

## **REVIEW/APPROVAL OF APRIL 4, 2024, MEETING MINUTES**

Ms. Overend made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Twitty and carried unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Compilation and Comparison of Elected Executive Provisions for Selected Counties and Municipalities

Referring to a memorandum and attached exhibits included in the agenda packet, Attorney Vose provided an overview of the compilation and comparison of provisions related to elected executives in selected charter counties and municipalities throughout Florida, noting that he thought it would help inform discussions if there is interest in pursuing an elected County executive position.

In response to comments by Chair Aungst, Attorney Vose indicated that he will provide information regarding term limits in effect for the offices reflected in the memorandum at the next meeting; and that the latest Florida Supreme Court guidance is that elections for all county offices must be partisan.

Chair Aungst, with input by Mr. Thomas, noted that the hope is to have a presentation at the next meeting regarding the form of government topic; and that the intent for this evening is to rollout the concept of an elected official position; whereupon, Mr. Thomas provided additional information regarding a speaker which has already been arranged related to the traditional council manager form of government and introduced former Florida City and County Management Association President Pam Brangaccio. He indicated that he and Chair Aungst are working on obtaining speakers for the strong mayor or chief executive format.

In response to comments by Attorney Vose, Chair Aungst indicated that he plans to poll the members regarding their interest in pursuing draft language following the presentation

at the next meeting; whereupon, in response to a query by Commissioner Eggers, he provided input regarding the number of votes required to continue moving a topic forward.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### Draft Ballot and Charter Language – Charter Amendment Revising Initiative Petition Process

Referencing the CRC's February 26 meeting during which the members discussed the general direction of potential revisions to the initiative petition process with Supervisor of Elections' (SOE) Julie Marcus, Attorney Vose indicated that the draft ballot language now before them is a result of that discussion and feedback received from SOE staff. He noted that SOE staff clarified that they do not want to take hard positions to endorse any particular Charter amendments, including those that would impact their office.

Referring to a memorandum and attached exhibits included in the agenda packet, Attorney Vose indicated that the suggested revisions and feedback from the SOE's office were utilized to assist with creating the ballot summary; whereupon, he summarized the basic aspects of the amendment, as listed below:

- Establishes a uniform time period for the petition gathering process leading to November general elections
- Requires that the petition sponsor submit signed petitions to the SOE no later than 10 days after the end of each month
- Provides for a rolling 30-day deadline for the SOE to verify signatures on submitted petition forms
- Requires posting running tallies of verified signatures on the SOE website
- Requires the petition sponsor to prepare and submit ballot translations
- Requires registration as a political committee
- Establishes a time period starting August 1 for petition sponsors to have their petition form reviewed and approved by the SOE
- Establishes a deadline of June 15 for the SOE to certify whether the requisite number of signatures have been verified

Attorney Vose related that he also drafted a ballot summary, labeled as Exhibit B, which includes language combining the aforementioned provisions with a provision relating to lowering the threshold for the number of petitions necessary to propose an amendment from 8% to 5%. Responding to a query by Chair Aungst, Attorney Vose indicated that he believes that the timeline provisions and the lowered threshold provision could be combined into one ballot question.

Attorney Vose, with input by Chair Aungst and Mr. Thomas, responded to comments and queries by the members regarding the proposed and current timelines for signature collection, prior discussions related to lowering the signature threshold from 8% to 5%, petition sponsors registering as political committees, and signature verification deadlines; whereupon, in response to the Chair's request, Attorney Vose indicated that he will research the state process to determine whether a citizen initiative petition can be active for two election cycles.

### Compilation of Draft Charter Amendments to Date

Attorney Vose referenced a memorandum and Exhibits A through F, included in the agenda packet, indicating that they reflect information and amendments that the CRC has discussed to date, excluding the initiative petition topic just discussed; that the amendments are not listed in recommended order; and that ballot order will be a topic for discussion at a future meeting; whereupon, he summarized information regarding the following amendments:

- Exhibit A – Provides for Charter cleanup
- Exhibit B – Conforms publication requirements for County Charter amendment referenda to the Florida Election Code
- Exhibit C – Provides that Charter amendments would be held only at General Elections
- Exhibit D – Lowers signature percentage for petition drives from 8% to 5%
- Exhibit E – Revises the thresholds for appointment and removal of the County Attorney
- Exhibit F – Addresses term limits

In response to a comment by Commissioner Eggers regarding the supermajority vote outlined in Exhibit E, Chair Aungst indicated that this can be finalized during the final discussion and vote.

In response to queries by Ms. Overend, Attorney Vose provided insight into the amendment to Charter Section 5.02, *Special laws*, contained within Exhibit A, as well as information related to special districts, and a discussion ensued. Attorney Vose indicated that he will prepare draft language regarding this topic for future review and discussion by the CRC.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### Updates from Facilitator and General Counsel

Mr. Thomas indicated that the next meeting is scheduled for May 2, at which he plans to have speakers arranged for the county executive or commission manager forms of government discussion; whereupon, he provided brief comments regarding moving toward a final draft report.

Chair Aungst, with input by Attorney Vose, suggested that Mr. Thomas send an email to the members requesting that they submit written comments for consideration if they are unable to attend the May 2 meeting; and that members who are interested in an elected county executive position be prepared to provide direction at the meeting, should the CRC decide to move forward with ballot language.

## **UPDATE REGARDING UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

Upcoming meeting dates were addressed earlier in the meeting.

## **CRC COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

This item was not addressed.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Aungst adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.