

**Charter Review Commission
Pinellas County
May 28, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The Pinellas County Charter Review Commission (CRC), as created by Chapter 80-950, Laws of Florida, held its first public hearing 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
Anne-Marie Brooks, Municipal Elected Official Appointee
Nick DiCeglie, Pinellas County State Legislative Delegation Appointee
Dave Eggers, County Commissioner, BCC Appointee
Ashley Overend, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Brian Scott)
Robert Posavec, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Dave Eggers)
Thomas Steck, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Charlie Justice)
Mark Strickland, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Janet Long)
Alan Swartz, BCC Appointee (Commissioner Kathleen Peters)
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser, Constitutional Officers Appointee

Not Present:

Linsey Grove, Public At-Large Citizen Appointee, Vice-Chair
Terri Lipsey Scott, BCC Appointee (Commissioner René Flowers)
James Millican, Public At-Large Citizen Appointee

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.
Shirley Westfall, 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.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – CRC PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PINELLAS COUNTY CHARTER

Chair Aungst provided information regarding the public hearing process and indicated that this is the first of two public hearings during which the CRC will finalize the ballot referenda language and the proposals that will be on the ballot; whereupon, he expressed his gratitude to everyone who has worked so diligently throughout this process, including Attorney Vose and his law firm, Mr. Thomas, County staff, and Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Ken Burke's staff.

Attorney Vose read the ballot title and summary for the following seven Charter amendments:

Question #1: County Charter Amendment Providing for County Commissioner Term Limits

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to provide for County Commissioner term limits by prohibiting County Commissioners who have held the office for the preceding 12 years from appearing on a ballot for reelection and requiring a minimum of 4 years off the County Commission before serving again, with terms of office beginning on or after November 5, 2024, counting toward the term limits?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

Commissioner Eggers made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Twitty and carried by a vote of 9 to 1, with Mr. Steck dissenting.

Question #2: Revising County Initiative Petition Requirements and Process

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to revise the County initiative petition process by providing for a uniform time period for an initiative petition drive from September through April before a November general election, monthly submission

deadlines for signed petitions, running tallies of verified petitions on the Supervisor of Election's website, preparation of ballot translations, and related procedures?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

In response to queries by Commissioner Eggers, Attorney Vose indicated that he shared the latest version of the proposed language with the Supervisor of Elections' office; and that he received no further feedback regarding the language.

Mr. Posavec made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steck and carried unanimously.

Question #3: Lowering Signature Percentage for Petition Drives to Propose County Charter Amendments

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to lower the number of signed petitions necessary to propose an amendment to the Pinellas County Charter from eight (8) percent of the registered voters in the county to five (5) percent?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

Commissioner Eggers made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steck and carried unanimously.

Question #4: Charter Amendment Revising Thresholds for Appointment and Removal of County Attorney

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to provide that the 12-member County Attorney Oversight Committee shall select and appoint a County Attorney by an 8-vote supermajority, and may remove the County Attorney only by a 7-vote majority at two consecutive meetings, or by an 8-vote supermajority at one meeting?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

In response to comments and a query by Commissioner Eggers, Mr. Twitty indicated that he provided the proposed language to the Constitutional Officers; and that they did not express any concerns.

Ms. Overend made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brooks and carried unanimously.

Question #5: Referenda on County Charter Amendments to Be Held at General Elections Only

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to require that referenda on county charter amendments proposed by initiative petition, or proposed by the Board of County Commissioners, shall be held only at the General Election held in November of even-numbered years?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

Senator DiCeglie made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Posavec and carried unanimously.

Question #6: Conforming Publication Requirements for County Charter Amendment Referenda to the Florida Election Code

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to revise the Charter's publication requirements for county charter amendment referenda to conform to the Florida Election Code?

No one appeared upon the Chair's call for public comment.

Ms. Overend made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steck and carried unanimously.

Question #7: County Charter Cleanup Amendment

Shall the Pinellas County Charter be amended to remove certain one-time provisions that have since occurred or elapsed, remove gender references, update organization names, and remove references to organizations that no longer exist?

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

In response to queries by Mr. Steck, Attorney Vose indicated that, aside from a scrivener's error, future cleanup actions would require a charter amendment.

Ms. Overend made a motion for approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Strickland and carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Chair Aungst indicated that he is not aware of any old business that needs to be discussed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Updates from Facilitator and General Counsel

Mr. Thomas indicated that he and Attorney Vose have reviewed the draft report that memorializes the actions that the CRC has taken and suggested emailing the report to the members for their review; and that they contact him and Attorney Vose with any concerns. He related that if the CRC does not meet on June 6 to review the report, its next meeting would be on June 10 for the public hearing, at which the Board would also have the opportunity to discuss any last minute adjustments; and that there will be a request for approval of the report at the meeting; whereupon, in response to a query by Chair Aungst, Mr. Thomas related that he will provide the report to the members no later than Thursday morning.

Chair Aungst confirmed that the second public hearing will be held on June 10; that the June 6 meeting will be cancelled; and that the members are comfortable with receiving the draft report via email and providing their revisions or comments to Attorney Vose and Mr. Thomas prior to the June 10 meeting.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

This item was addressed under the Other Business agenda item.

CRC COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

No one responded upon the Chair's call for comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Aungst adjourned the meeting at 6:21 PM.