

The meeting of the Charter Review Committee was called to order by Chairman Phil Reed at 6:32 on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. All members of the Committee were present.

The minutes were approved as written with a motion by Rev. Ames and a second by Ms. Henry. It was announced the meeting was being taped.

An anonymous letter was read by Mr. Reed asking who on the Committee signed the petition for changes to the Charter that is being circulated in the County. It also asked which Council members signed the petition. As to the latter we have no way of knowing which Council members may have signed the petition. Some members of the Committee felt it was not relevant to what we were doing and was a private matter especially as the letter was unsigned. Other members felt it was a conflict of interest and felt they should not sign while on the Committee. There was no action taken on the letter.

There was a discussion on the different Charters each member was assigned. Each member had been asked to review specific County Charters and pull items from them they felt could be comparable to the Dorchester Charter. Some of the issues pulled were redistricting which spelled out dates and times, private use of public employees, who fills in for the County Manager, written statement of reasons for dismissals, the length of time before a County Manager is hired and other numerous issues. There was a majority consensus that the non interference section (216) in the Harford Charter was particularly well written.

Attorney Chip McCloud was present at the meeting and gave us some insight into timelines and criteria we need to meet. We need to have our suggestions to the County Council by July 14 and the Council needs to have a public hearing on those suggestions by Monday, July 18. Any changes that will go on the ballot must be ready by August 5. We do not have to have the suggestions written in legal terms, as the County attorney will write those changes the Council accepts in the proper format.

Chairman Reed asked the Committee to go back over and read again the petition to see what if anything in it we would like to use in our suggestions to the Council. He also asked that we review the information we discussed during the meeting. We need to make a list of the items we want to add or change and find the wording that best explains our suggestions.

We opened the meeting to the public. Glen Payne stated he believes the County Manager should be a resident of Dorchester County in order to hold that position. He also felt that the position should be filled within six months.

Steve Rideout believes 90% of our discussions fit with the petition he and others are circulating and that transparency is one of the more necessary items needed in the Charter.

Since we are on a tight timeline, it was decided we would meet the next three Wednesdays at 6:30 pending the availability of the room. Those dates are June 22 and 29 and July 6.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dukes