

The first meeting of the Dorchester County Charter Review Commission was convened on Monday, May 9 at 6:05 p.m. The Commission chose Phil Reed as Chairman and George Ames as co-chair. Notes will be taken by Susan Dukes.

The six members of the Commission were present. Also present were Alan Nelson and Steve Rideout.

Organizational decisions were discussed for the Commission. Any public input will be at the discretion of the Commission and 3 minutes will be allowed for all speakers. Speakers should identify themselves before speaking and it will be requested that written suggestions should be submitted before oral presentations.

The Commission decided that meetings should go no longer than 90 minutes except in special circumstances.

Mr. Reed will draft a letter for the Commissions approval to be sent to the County Council and the Agency heads asking for their input into what changes they believe should be made to the Charter. It will be noted that submissions will be sent directly to Mr. Reed and the submissions do not require a signature. This is to alleviate the concern that repercussions could be made against anyone submitting their views.

A press release will be written explaining what the Commissions goals are and how the public can become involved in submitting their suggestions.

The Commission opened up the floor to the two members of the public who were present for their opinions.

Alan Nelson said he agreed with the Commission that there needs to be more transparency in the County Council meeting. He suggested that part of the change to the Charter should be the broadcasting of the meetings by internet or other means. It was stated that the Council has voted three times to not broadcast the meetings even though Bay Country Communications has offered to do it for no charge.

Mr. Nelson also suggested that the Council's agenda should include more information of the topics to be discussed. For example when stating the topic is roads, explain what roads are being discussed. Also the minutes should be released in a shorter time frame so people can be informed in a quicker manner.

Mr. Steve Rideout suggested that the County Manager be allowed to fully fulfill their duties and individual Council members should not be overriding the Manager's position. He stated that the requirements for the County Manager position should be more fully explained and that no elected official should be allowed to apply for the position for at least two years after leaving office because of a perceived conflict of interest.

The Commission discussed how to strengthen the ability for their input to be actually considered. There should be a public presentation to the Council on the Commissions decision and a vote by each Council person as to what changes they agree with and which they do not and why.

At the next meeting Mr. Reed asked the members to make any notations on the Charter that they personally believe needs to be addressed.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 18 at 6:30. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dukes
The six members of the Commission were present. Also present were Alan Nelson and Steve Rideout.