



City of Northfield

City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
northfieldmn.gov

Meeting Minutes - Final Charter Commission

Thursday, July 11, 2024

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:04PM.

Also present: Meetings Associate Edward Malnar

Present: 5 - Commissioner C C Linstroth, Commissioner Jack Hoschouer, Commissioner Scott Oney, Lance Heisler and Commissioner Amy Gernon

Absent: 2 - Commissioner Scott Jensen and Commissioner James Prichard

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. [24-427](#) Approval of July 11, 2024 Meeting Agenda.

No vote was taken on approval of the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. [24-428](#) Approval of May 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes.

Hoschouer noted that the minutes inaccurately stated that the motion to adjourn failed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Linstroth, seconded by Commissioner Gernon, to approve the May 9 meeting minutes as amended by correcting the outcome of the motion to adjourn. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

COMMISSION ABSENCES

3. [24-429](#) Excuse meeting absences.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoschouer, seconded by Commissioner Oney, to approve excusing the absence of Commissioners Jensen and Prichard. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present to comment.

OLD BUSINESS

4. [24-430](#)

Committee Report on Charter Section 3.5.

Commissioner Gernon said that City Administrator Martig has asked for a time when the subcommittee on Section 3.5 can meet with members of the City Council to discuss the matter further. Proposed dates: 23 July or 5 August.

At the initial work session of the subcommittee with Council members, the subcommittee submitted some proposals based on Council comments when Chairman Heisler met with the Council.

The subcommittee will draft proposed language based on Council concerns that were not brought up at previous work sessions. Since that new language must be approved unanimously by the council we are taking all points of view into consideration.

It is anticipated that the proposal will be presented at a regular Council meeting.

Commissioner Linstroth said that dealing with the question of special elections is difficult to grasp and asked whether other charter cities do not have the same problem.

Commissioner Oney commented that special elections aren't really special as the usually take place at the same time as regular scheduled elections.

Linstroth expressed puzzlement that the discussion of possible solutions could go on forever and wondered if looking at how other cities deal(t) with the issue could be useful.

Commissioner Gernon replied that the subcommittee had looked at several charter and statutory cities; it is not feasible to simply take a solution that another city employs. She said that there are ambiguities which could lead to litigation. The subcommittee also looked at the statutes for some guidance.

Gernon continued noting that the City Council has to be unanimous in accepting changes to the charter, so the subcommittee is seeking ways to respond to changing concerns over time.

Commissioner Oney noted that a quorum of the Council is up for reelection in November so we should wait until after the first of the year before finalizing action.

Chairman Heisler said that the issue is very important and it is worth getting as much input as possible. When we submitted the best proposal that we could work out to modify the mayor's authority it was defeated by four to three. Therefore it is worth the time and effort to develop a proposal that will address the Council's concerns. At the end of the day what we propose to the Council will have taken their concerns into account.

Heisler said that when the Commission makes recommendations to the Council, unless there is a serious objection by the Council, it should be approved because it is the Commission's job to recommend improvements. In this case, we will have taken Council concerns into account and so our ultimate recommendation should be approved.

Commissioner Oney noted that it might not be necessary to have a unanimous vote from the Council as it could be put on the ballot for a vote.

Chairman Heisler said the when the issue is brought to the Council it would be important for as many Charter Commission members as possible to be there to emphasize the importance of the issue.

NEW BUSINESS

5. [24-431](#) Review and Approval of 13.01 Charter Commission Administrative Process Policy.

Most changes clarify that references to "group" now specifically refer to "commission."
The last sentence of paragraph 3 is deleted as it refers to commissioners' term limits.
Chairman Heisler said this is because commissioners do not have term limits. The remainder of paragraph 3 is moved to paragraph 2 under Additional Steps.

Hoschouer, seconded by Linstroth moved to correct a typographical error pointed out by commissioner Oney in paragraph 1. Passed unanimously.

Linstroth moved to accept the proposed changes. Gernon seconded.

Commissioner Oney asked if the Northfield News is still the paper of record. He moved to delete KYMN radio and Northfield.org. There was no second.

Commissioner Linstroth questioned why applications are sent to the mayor as the mayor has no role in the appointment process for the Commission. She suggested that the mayor be kept out of the process until after the Chief Judge has made the appointments.

Further discussion of the policy is postponed while a subcommittee develops a suggested amendment.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoschouer, seconded by Commissioner Linstroth, to adjourn the meeting at 6:53PM. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon