

BLUE RIBBON ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 21, 2018
5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Drozdowski, Schwarz, Hanner, Champlin, McIlroy, Antaya, Helmboldt, Burleson, Burton, Whitfield, Weaver, Tomak, Johnson, Moreno, Squires, Godfrey and Fukuyama (arrived at 5:36 p.m.)

Committee Members Absent: Settles

Others Present: Jill Steele, City Attorney: Rebecca Fleury, City Manager: Michelle Coats, City Clerk's Office

Call to Order: Dr. Schwarz called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Drozdowski, supported by Mr. Burleson, made a motion to approve the March 7, 2018 meeting minutes. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Prior Meeting Business

A. **Survey Update:** Ms. Fleury reported the next time an insert can be placed in water bills is May 4, and then it will take the full month of May to distribute based on the billing cycles. Results would be available in June. The survey can be made available online prior to May. The committee consensus is to make it available online right away and distribute with the bills in May.

Ms. Fleury followed up on potential live streaming of BRC meetings. AccessVision can live stream; however, the meeting would need to be held in City Hall Commission Chambers where their equipment is located. Comm. Gray's "Keeping You Informed" segment would be affected as it takes place in the same timeframe.

Ms. Fleury provided an update on how social media is being utilized. The Blue Ribbon logo is included on all social media, all meetings are on the calendar, announcement blasts done 10-days prior to meeting, press releases are issued, and information is on the web.

Abi Fukuyama arrived at 5:36 p.m. Mr. Helmboldt and Dr. Schwarz welcomed Abi Fukuyama to the committee.

New Business

A. Consideration of Charter Amendments

1. Selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor

Dr. Schwarz summarized the options: directly elected by voters or election by the commission. The size of the commission is also impacted, especially if the voters directly elect the Mayor/Vice Mayor.

The committee discussed feedback they have received from people in the community expressing a desire to vote for these positions. Discussed the manner of election, whether based on highest number of votes received by an at-large candidate or specifically running for the position of Mayor/Vice Mayor. Consensus was for candidates to run for these specific offices.

When discussing duties and responsibilities of the Mayor, Attorney Steele referenced information provided by the Clerk's office and noted some responsibilities are unique to the mayoral position in the City's charter and ordinances. Attorney Steele stated other responsibilities are established under

state and federal law, such as receiving federal WARN act notifications, serving on the Planning Commission, and is the chief executive officer of the city under Michigan's Home Rule City Act..

Mr. Burleson read the core of Shanay Settles' email message expressing her comments and support of voter elected Mayor and Vice Mayor for the benefit of the public. Copies of the full message were distributed to committee members.

Mr. McIlroy stated voters essentially decide upon the Mayor/Vice Mayor since they vote upon whom is elected to commission. If moving to direct election, the Committee needed to consider adjusting the number of at-large commissioners.

Further discussion on the merits of direct election in comparison to election from among commissioners. Committee members reviewed the history of mayoral selections, how many were selected from ward versus at large, and the occasional dissention that has occurred during that process.

Dr. Schwarz stated, based upon the discussion so far, there appears to be a leaning towards directly elected Mayor and Vice Mayor.

2. Changing the size of the Commission

Committee members began consideration of the size and nature of the commission. Members support continuation of ward representation, indicating the importance of representing particular ward needs. Discussion of increasing the number of ward commissioners with a suggestion by Mr. Champlin to add two more wards, having seven wards and two direct elected commissioners.

Attorney Steele informed the committee that the State statute is very specific on how ward boundaries are determined and that they must be based on population. Wards may not be representative only of neighborhood boundaries.

Dr. Schwarz surveyed committee members on the following conceptual ideas:

- Commission size: 9 members
- 2 directly elected as Mayor and Vice Mayor
- 7 Ward commissioners

A majority of members seem to be in favor of this conceptually.

3. Staggering Commission Terms

4. Length of Commission Terms

Committee members expressed community feedback has been in favor of 2-year terms. Discussion of advantages/disadvantages of non-staggered versus staggered terms: the ability of voters to effect change if dissatisfied with representation, fact that an entire commission could be unseated, increased expense associated with annual election under staggered terms, and lower voter turnout during odd-year elections.

Mr. Helmboldt left at 6:48 p.m.

Dr. Schwarz recapped where the committee is conceptually so far and charged committee members to further reflection until the next meeting. If rejecting these concepts, come back to the next meeting with alternatives.

- Directly elect Mayor and Vice Mayor
- 9 member commission – with 7 from Wards

- Length of Term: 2 years, non-staggered terms (all positions up every 2 years)

Attorney Steele reported data requested by the committee. Of 161 cities, 121 are the council-manager form of government. In 86 cities, the people vote for the mayor. In some of those mayoral elections, the person is determined based on number of votes, but more are candidates running directly for the office of mayor. In 35 cities, the city council elects who the mayor is. In reference to wards, the Home Rule Cities Act says that wards have to be “as nearly of equal population as is practicable and contiguous and compact.”

5. Other Relevant Charter Amendments – Not discussed

Public Comment:

Kristin Blood expressed her excitement with the committee’s progress, looks forward to the survey, and expressed her appreciate for the committee’s work.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at DPW Multi-purpose Room, at 5:30 pm.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.