

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JERSEY VILLAGE, TEXAS, HELD ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE CIVIC CENTER AUDITORIUM, 16327 LAKEVIEW DRIVE, JERSEY VILLAGE, TEXAS.

The Jersey Village City Council met with the 2020 Charter Review Commission for the purpose of discussing with the Commission how well the City is operating under the existing Charter and offering recommendations for amendments to the existing Charter.

Council Members attending this meeting were as follows:

Mayor, Andrew Mitcham  
Council Member, Drew Wasson  
Council Member, Greg Holden  
Council Member, Bobby Warren  
Council Member, James Singleton  
Council Member, Gary Wubbenhorst

The 2020 Charter Review Commission of the City of Jersey Village, Texas, convened on September 28, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. in the Civic Center Auditorium, 16327 Lakeview, Jersey Village, Texas. The following members were present

Ashley Brown	Annabelle Silva
Karie Lawrence	Denise Reaneau
Sheri Sheppard	Rick Faircloth – Alternate 1
V. Kay Vaccaro	
Erik Robertson	

Commissioners John Kenna – Alternate 2 and Sonja Tijerina – Alternate 3 were not present at this meeting.

City Staff attending the meeting were as follows:

City Attorney, Scott Bounds  
City Manager, Austin Bleess  
City Secretary, Lorri Coody  
Finance Director, Isabel Kato  
IT Director, Bob Blevins

**B. Citizens' Comments** - Any person who desires to address the 2020 Charter Review Commission regarding an item on the agenda will be heard at this time. In compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, unless the subject matter of the comment is on the agenda, the City staff and Charter Review Commissioners are not allowed to discuss the subject. Each person is limited to five (5) minutes for comments to the Commission.

There were no Citizens' Comments.

**C. Consider approval of the minutes for the meeting held on September 14, 2020.**

Commissioner Kay moved to approve the minutes for the meeting held on September 14, 2020. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The vote follows:

Ayes: Commissioners Brown, Lawrence, Robertson, Vaccaro, Silva, Reaneau, Sheppard

Nays: None

The motion carried.

**D. Receive input from the Mayor and Members of the City Council on how well the City is operating under the existing Charter and consider any recommendations the Mayor and the Council Members may have for amendments to the existing Charter.**

Chairperson Sheppard introduced the item. She first recognized that a quorum of the City Council was present. She then gave a short overview of the activities conducted thus far by the Commission, including the following areas for amendment:

- Section 2.12 – Publication of Ordinances
- Gender Neutral
- Section 1.08 and 1.09 – Remove if there is an election or include an Editor’s Note if no election.

In completing the overview, she called upon each City Council Member for any recommendations for amendments to the Charter. What follows is a summary of each Council Member’s comments:

**Council Member Wubbenhorst** – Council Member Wubbenhorst appreciates the Commission’s consideration to remove the requirement to publish Ordinance captions in the Houston Chronicle. He gave input about City Council terms of office. He feels we are in a constant election cycle and would like to propose three (3) year terms with all terms coming due at the same time, with term limits set at six (6) years or nine (9) years, and a term limit of six (6) years for the Mayor. The down side would be if all members are replaced during one election. He had comments about terms. When reviewing terms, he wants to make sure that the Commission examines this in detail to make sure that candidates are not discouraged by any new requirements.

**Council Member Singleton** – Council Member Singleton does not have a problem with the way the Charter reads currently. He believes that the Commission has brought up some good points. He supports a four (4) year term, but wants to keep the current term limits. In reviewing the history of past Council term limits, for the most part in Jersey Village, Members tend to serve until their term limit. He wants to have the terms continue to be staggered. He believes that it is City Council’s job to guide the City Manager so he is not in favor of all terms coming due at the same time. He is concerned with replacing the entire Council at once and staggering eliminates this outcome.

**Mayor Mitcham** – Mayor Mitcham thanked the Commission for their service. The Commission has found good items for amendment, especially eliminating the need to publish Ordinance captions in the Houston Chronicle. He also agrees with eliminating the sections concerning red light cameras and with adding gender neutral language. In connection with

term limits, he is in favor of four (4) year terms with limits at four (4) years. He gave background information about term limits and how they work. He also stated that it might be a good idea to look at concurrent terms when a member is appointed to fill out an unexpired term. If someone is on City Council and wants to serve as Mayor, he recommends looking at the concurrent council/mayor terms. He also has a suggestion to encourage more participation in running for office. He mentioned that it takes a lot of time and energy, and in this day and age, we need people to step up more than ever. However with busy schedules, public service is not top priority. He would like to look at incentives to have people run. Stipends for meetings might be nice or some other type of compensation. This might help people step up and run for office.

**Council Member Wasson** – Council Member Wasson thanked the Commission for their service. Your service is helpful. He agrees with looking at the terms and extending them. He also agrees that they should be staggered. He favors four (4) year terms over three (3) year terms. He also talked about the City’s Official newspaper. He is not sure if Section 9.03 is still necessary.

**Council Member Holden** – Council Member Holden had a question about the review process. He wondered if they looked back at prior Commissions. Commissioner Rick Faircloth told Council that he served on many of the prior Commissions and gave input of his history with the Commission. There was nothing from past reviews that needed to be addressed. He believes that the housekeeping items already being consider by the Commission should be addressed. He is an advocate of the current system’s approach to terms and term limits. A change can be great if you have the right people serving. If not, it could be a problem. Running for office is quite demanding. Our current group of Council has worked very hard. They engage the public and work with them. So currently, the Council is a great group, but if you do not have an engaged Council, many projects will not move forward. That being said, the current term system is working well. We must have staggered terms, because the learning curve is tremendous for new Council Members. He disagrees with any stipend or compensation. Serving on City Council is a public service.

**Council Member Warren** – Council Member Warren thanked the Commission for their service. The Charter Review Commission process provides an opportunity to get unique feedback. It is a good process. The issue regarding the structure of Council has come up many times. In the past, the Commission looked at changing the terms, but made no recommendations to make any changes. We need to keep staggered terms in order to ensure that there is experience and stability on the Council at all times for experience can address issues without delay. He believes that the two (2) year term makes City Council more accountable to the electorate.

At this point, City Attorney Bounds gave information about terms, term limits and filling vacancies.

Council Member Warren continued, stating that a two (2) year term is good. Serving on City Council is a volunteer job, so a two year commitment is more reasonable. Term limits have presented issues in the past due to the way the Charter is worded. Problems could be addressed if this section were tweaked so it is more flexible. Currently, if you serve any portion of a term

that is considered to be a full term. The other issue is the contiguous issue that affected the appointment of former Council Member Sheppard. That being said, Council Member Warren supports preserving the eight (8) year term limit, but would like to tweak the language to accommodate these other issues.

He is not in favor of compensation or a stipend for City Council Members. Most members do not want to run because of the repercussion from other residents about decisions made by City Council. For the most part, the Charter does work well. There has rarely been a problem with the Charter that has prevented us from doing our work. He brought up referendums and initiatives.

City Attorney Bounds gave information about non-binding elections. There may be some additional provisions that he will look at and bring back to the Commission.

In completing input from the Council Members, there was discussion about elections and the purpose for same in terms of having different items available for election by the public. This was discussed in detail by the Commission and the Council. Campaigning and voting were also discussed.

There was discussion about turn over on City Council. It was mentioned that currently there are two members on Council that have unseated someone. So turnover is occurring.

There was discussion among the Council about the pros and cons of two (2) year and four (4) year terms.

Some members of Council wanted to know if any of the Commission was contacted by residents concerning amendments to the Charter. Some Commissioners stated that they were and that they told the residents to come to the Public Hearing which will be held for public input.

There was discussion about the public voting on capital projects and if a certain dollar amount should be set that requires an election for approval by the residents. City Attorney Bounds explained that uniform election dates (May and November), stating that many items will not translate well for an election. In response, Council agreed and explained that the budget process is very transparent and provides for public input. It is at this time that residents can have input concerning capital expenditures.

There was also discussion about terms. Currently the Charter is written to retain staggered terms. However, the Commission may want to address the unique situations addressed by Council Member Warren. A solution may be that when you are appointed to an unexpired term, it does not count toward term limits.

Some Council members told the Commission to be careful to address needed changes and not preferences.

**E. Consider any other possible amendments to the City's current City Charter.**

This item was not called for discussion. It will be added to the October 5, 2020 agenda for further discussion on the input received from City Council and how that may translate into recommendations for amendments to the Charter.

**F. Review the dates, times and/or agenda topics for future meetings and make any necessary changes.**

City Secretary Coody reminded the Commission of the upcoming dates chosen at the last meeting as follows:

**10-05-2020** - Conduct Public Hearing to receive input and recommendations from Jersey Village residents for amendments to the City’s current Charter; receive input from the City Manager on how well the City is operating under the existing Charter and consider any recommendations for amendments to the existing Charter, and consider proposal to council for amendments to the Charter.

**10-26-2020** - Consider submission of Final Recommendations of the 2020 Charter Review Commission to Council at the City Council Meeting to be held on November 16, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

**G. Adjourn**

There being no further business on the Agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.



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Lorri Coody, City Secretary