



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

MINUTES

February 10, 2022, 5PM

Members present: Zoe Iacovino, Ona Ferguson, George Proakis, Laura Pitone, Beverly (Bev) Schwartz, Kat Rutkin, Jessica Lieberman, Meagan Benetti, Matthew McLaughlin, Crystal Turner

Members not present: Ben Echevarria, Lucas Schaber

Staff attending: Anna Corning, Hope Williams, Collins Center - Elizabeth Corbo, Collins Center - Steve McGoldrick

Other attending: Jack Perenick, Kimberly Wells, Klaus Schultz, Crystal H, Stephen Mackey

Meeting started at 5:05PM

Decisions:

1. Committee approved minutes from 1/27.
 - a. Ten 5s
2. Committee approved a 4 year term length for the mayor.
 - a. One 5
 - b. Six 4s
 - c. Three 3s
3. Committee approved a 2 year term length for city councilors.
 - a. Four 5s
 - b. Five 4s
 - c. One 3
4. Committee approved a 2 year term length for school committee members.
 - a. Four 5s
 - b. Six 4s
5. Committee approved CAO language, which was more in depth language with a note to simplify the language as much as possible and address equity concerns.
 - a. Four 5s
 - b. One 4
 - c. Four 3s
6. Committee approved keeping the current ordinance process.
 - a. Ten 5s
7. Committee approved moving the independent auditor appointment to the City Council and mandated the appointment.
 - a. Ten 5s

8. Committee approved keeping the current City Council composition of 7 ward and 4 at-large seats.
 - a. Ten 5s

The committee uses the Fist to Five method of voting, a technique for gauging consensus. Voting ranges from 0 to 5. The scale is: 0 - no way, 1 - major issues to be resolved now, 2 - minor issues to be resolved now, 3 - minor issues to be resolved later, 4 - comfortable with this as it is, 5 - love this and will champion it. 0-2 is considered a lack of consensus, while 3-5 is considered consensus.

NOTES

1. Welcome 5:03
 - a. Hope welcomed the committee and community members. She also welcomed and introduced George Proakis as the new Mayoral designee.
 - b. Hope led an icebreaker, where committee members went around and shared their favorite movie or TV show.
2. Approve 1/27 Minutes 5:09
 - a. **Meeting minutes from 1/27 were approved.**
3. Public Comment 5:10
 - a. Committee heard a public comment from Jack Perenick (City Council Composition - Ward representation, 4 year mayoral term length, independent auditor).
4. Draft Feedback 5:15
 - a. Hope asked the committee for feedback on the drafted language from previous committee decisions. There was one comment to simplify the lot drawing language regarding ballot position.
5. Deliberation Topic 1: Office Term Lengths 5:19
 - a. Committee discussed options for term lengths of mayor, city council, and school committee. A committee member brought up the instability of working for a mayor who is running for reelection every two years. Libby shared a consideration that the role of mayor is a full time role, and shorter terms creates job insecurity for both the mayor and mayoral staff. A committee member mentioned the positives of a 4 year staggered term for SC. Committee members brought up that although the process is working okay for now, they don't know if there are groups of people who might run except for the risk associated with giving up a job for a two year term. Balance of power is important to the committee, and some committee members are not sure about further strengthening mayoral power.
 - i. Straw poll:
 1. Six votes for 4 year term mayor, Three votes for 2 year term mayor, one no vote

2. Zero votes for 4 year term City Council , Seven votes for 2 year term City Council, Three no votes
 3. Zero votes for 4 year School Committee, Seven votes for 2 year term City Council, Three no votes
 - ii. **Committee approved a 4 year term length for the Mayor**
 1. **Three 3s, Six 4s, One 5**
 - iii. Committee members brought up staggered terms for the City Council and School Committee. Committee members mentioned the off year elections from Mayoral election concerns, and turn out concerns.
 - iv. **Committee approved a 2 year term length for city councilors.**
 1. **One 3, Five 4s, Four 5s**
 - v. **Committee approved a 2 year term length for school committee members.**
 1. **Six 4s, Four 5s**
6. Deliberation Topic 2: Chief Administrative Officer Cont. 5:53
- a. Hope presented three language options for a potential CAO position. Committee discussed pros of including this in the charter to ensure it is an appointed position, and to create the terms in the charter so they carry over from when a mayoral term ends. The Mayor's office is very comfortable including this role in the Charter, it could be a critical managerial role in an administration, and it would allow for stability in critical day to day operations of a city. Committee members brought up concerns regarding the accountability of a CAO role and about creating more bureaucracy. Some committee members brought up the importance of qualifications not including education, to ensure equity in hiring.
 - i. **Committee approved CAO language, which was more in depth language with a note to simplify the language as much as possible and address equity concerns.**
 1. **Four 3s, One 4, Four 5s**
7. Deliberation Topic 3: Ordinances and Measures
- a. Hope presented the current status of how ordinances are drafted, passed, vetoed, overridden. There was no community/interview indication that this should change. Committee discussed this process, and brought up some issues regarding enforcement. Libby brought up the City Council ability to investigate and publish reports, but ultimately the Mayor is accountable to voters.
 - i. **Committee approved current ordinance process**
 1. **Ten 5s**
 - ii. Emergency measures tabled until 2/24 meeting.
8. Deliberation Topic 4: Independent Auditor 6:30
- a. Hope presented the current process for independent auditor, which is a voluntary mayoral appointment. It is a current best practice to have this role as a required City Council appointment. This provides a City Council check on the city finances.

- i. Committee approved moving the independent auditor appointment to the City Council and mandated the appointment.**

- 1. Ten 5s**

9. Deliberation Topic 5: City Council Composition 6:35

- a. Committee discussed the composition of City Council composition, and the pros and cons of ward and at-large councilors representation. Committee members brought up the positives of the current system.

- i. Committee approved keeping the current City Council composition: 7 ward and 4 at large seats.**

- 1. Ten 5s**

10. Closing:

- a. Hope thanked everyone and reminded them the next meeting is February 24th at 5pm.