

CHARTER REVISION BOARD MINUTES
Citizen Outreach Meeting
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 North Andrews Avenue
8th Floor Conference Room
Monday, March 1, 2004 – 6:30 p.m.

	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance	
		Present	Absent
Chair Dan Lewis	P	3	0
James D. Camp	P	3	0
Chris Fertig	A	1	2
John M. Milledge	P	3	0
Ron Gunzburger	P	3	0

City Staff in Attendance

Mayor Jim Naugle
City Commissioner Carlton Moore
Alan Silva, Acting City Manager
Harry Stewart, City Attorney
Terry Sharp, Director of Finance
Jeff Modarelli, Assistant City Clerk
Lisa Edmondson, Recording Clerk

CITIZEN OUTREACH MEETING

Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. He provided an introduction to the Charter, the process of Charter review, the Board, and its purpose. He indicated that although the Board had originally been empanelled with respect to a question regarding park space and whether the sale or transfer of park space should be a matter placed before the citizens by referendum, the Board members recognized that the entire Charter needed updating and policy review. He stressed that the Board has no authority to place any issue on the ballot and would be solely reviewing the Charter and making recommendations to the City Commission. Community outreach will be held during months of March and April, after which the Board, along with City staff, will make their recommendations to the City Commission.

Mr. James Duvall expressed concern regarding the short term limits. He suggested four or six year Commission terms, rotating the seats up for election. He also felt there had been a progression of mediocre to incompetent city managers, proposing a strong mayor form of government. Mr. Duvall felt that the City's elections should coincide with national elections every four years. He also recommended implementing independent contractors within the City. He proposed providing elected officials with a "good, decent" salary.

Dr. Elizabeth Hays, 1691 SW 27th Terrace, asked for further explanation regarding a strong mayor form of government and what that would mean to the City as a whole. She was not

convinced it would be best to change, asking for its benefits over the structure they now have in place. She felt that some of the City's current problems resulted from Commission "control" over the City Manager. Dr. Hays felt that the Commission's purpose is to set policies to be carried out by the City Manager, and that accountability is an extremely important issue.

Mr. Ted Fling, 46 NE 16th Terrace, asked for a definition of the difference between the existing type of mayor and the strong mayor. Mr. Stewart explained a strong mayor is essentially the Chief Executive Officer and administrator of the City and staff would report to the mayor, although there can be different variations, i.e., the mayor is a voting member and a strong mayor, or the mayor is the administrator running the meetings and does not vote, but will break ties and has veto power. The City currently has a mayor who runs the meetings and helps to set policy, but does not have veto power, and staff does not report directly to the mayor.

Mr. Joe Holland, 1919 NE 32nd Avenue, endorsed the strong mayor concept, with the ability of the mayor to hire or fire at any level of city government. The City Commissioners would address the Mayor on issues for handling. Mr. Holland stressed that the separation between staff and the Commission needs reinforcement in the form of a stronger non-interference policy. He deferred to the "experts" regarding implementing a system of checks and balances.

Ms. Gina Ellis, 1801 Marietta Drive, felt that the current system in place could be improved. She indicated that the information the Commissioners receive is "filtered" and there should be another way to disseminate that information independent of the City Manager, allowing the Commission to have a better look into the operations of the City, either via an outside auditor or someone appointed as a liaison. She asked that they move away from assistant city managers to appointment of a single deputy city manager who would be accountable to the city manager. She indicated there are too many levels in the current system with three assistant city managers reporting to one city manager.

Dr. Hays did not see the benefit of having the City Commission ratify or remove department heads.

Mr. Fling stated that, as a result of the City's budget problems, they had been considering reorganization in the form of a CEO and CFO reporting directly to the city manager. He agreed there are too many departments reporting to one person. He also asked why the City needed to have employment contracts with the department heads and chief of police.

[Audiotape discontinued]

Ms. Darlene Pfeiffer encouraged more accountability in the City and felt a strong city manager would assist in that regard. She was against the idea of a strong mayor form of government, cautioning against putting too much control in the hands of one person, which could have the negative effect of "politicizing" the staff.

Ms. Shirley Smith agreed that accountability has been a problem and that a strong mayor might be a good concept.

Ms. Denise Molanson, was against implementing a strong mayor form of government, stating that power should be given across the board. She stated that the Commissioners should be contacting the City Manager, not individual department heads.

Ms. Betty Turner spoke against single member districts, stating that the Commissioners would be better off looking at the City as a whole in lieu of representing the interests of their particular district. She felt the Commission should be elected at-large.

Ms. Ilene Helfer remarked that Commissioners should have the ability to directly deal with department heads on issues brought to their attention.

Ms. Ellis suggested having the City Commission become full time jobs.

Mr. Fling opposed the idea of at-large elections, indicating that it would create problems for residents in deciding which Commissioner to contact regarding questions or problems, and would also dilute individual accountability.

Ms. Vicky Mawry agreed, stating that a Commissioner should represent the area and residents they are most familiar with, although she emphasized that when coming to the table on an issue, the Commissioners should consider the needs of the City as a whole.

Ms. Jan Duvall concurred with retaining single-member districts stating that every area has its own special needs and problems. She recommended that the system of government in the City retain its current format.

Dr. Hays added that individual groups within the City would get lost in at-large voting. However, Ms. Turner felt that overall sensitivity to those groups was a problem which would be enhanced by having at-large elections.

Ms. Kim Warren pointed out that single-member districts provide a "sense of ownership" and it would be asking too much that each Commissioner be educated on the details of each individual aspect of the City, although she agreed that when at the dais and making decisions, the City needed to be viewed in its entirety.

Chair Lewis thanked everyone for their participation and announced the next citizen outreach meeting would be on March 15, 2004 at the Mizell Center.

Thereupon the meeting concluded at 8:00 p.m.