



CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES

**THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.
PIERSON TOWN CENTER**

6
7 **1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Town Attorney Scott Simpson**
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9 Town Attorney Scott Simpson called the meeting to order and gave a brief introduction to the
10 Charter Review Committee.
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12 **2. ROLL CALL**
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14 There was no formal roll call, but the following Committee Members were present:
15

16 PRESENT:

17 Chairman Paul George
18 Vice Chairman Rick Davis
19 Committeewoman Sue Elliott
20 Committeeman Jeremy Steadman
21 Committeewoman Deanna Bennett
22

23 Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock, Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith, and Town Attorney Scott Simpson
24 were also in attendance.
25

26 **3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
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28 The Committee skipped this item and went directly into discussion.
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30 **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
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32 None.
33

34 **5. NEW BUSINESS**
35

36 a. Introduction by Town Attorney Scott Simpson
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38 Mr. Simpson introduced himself to the Committee members and said the Committee would
39 need to select a Chair and Vice Chair.
40

41 b. Nomination of Chair and Vice Chair
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43 Jeremy Steadman made the motion to nominate Paul George as Chairman and Rick Davis as
44 Vice Chairman; seconded by Sue Elliott. All agreed; motion carries.
45

46 c. Discussion – questions and answers

Mr. Simpson informed the Committee that they would be reviewing the Town Charter and making recommendations to the Council. Mr. Simpson said the trend was for most municipalities to review a charter every ten years.

Mr. Simpson told the Committee that as an appointed government body, members were subject to the Sunshine Law, disallowing the members to discuss anything related to the Town outside of a public meeting.

Mr. Simpson discussed the Home Rule Powers Act of 1973 which was originally proposed in 1968. Prior to the passage of the Act, a charter contained all powers and authorities delegated by a municipality, creating lengthy charters. The Home Rule Powers Act gave municipalities the power to conduct municipal government, perform municipal functions, render services, and exercise power for municipal purposes except as otherwise provided by law. The charter used to be a document that granted municipalities power, but it became a limiting document after the passage of the Home Rule Powers Act. Mr. Simpson noted the core areas of the Charter that were not changed by Home Rule.

Mr. Simpson said anything put into the Charter today is a limitation on the authority granted by Home Rule Power. Anything not specifically addressed in the Charter is decided by the Council. Items placed in the Charter take discretion away from the Council.

Mr. Simpson said the Charter is amended in two ways: the Town via the Council can propose amendments to the voters, or citizens can propose amendments through initiatives.

Committeewoman Sue Elliott noted that the old Charter was very long and said the current version is much more cut-and-dry. Mr. Simpson said a small Charter was not necessarily a bad thing.

Mr. Simpson discussed different forms of government. He said Pierson was not a form that he recognized. Mr. Simpson said there three main types of government:

- A City Manager form of government is probably the most prevalent form in the country. The electorate votes in a Council or Commission, which then hires a City Manager responsible for carrying out the daily running of the municipality. The City Manager then becomes accountable for decisions made.
- A Strong Mayor form of government is more common in larger cities such as Orlando. The Mayor serves in an administrative role and is also on the governing body. Mr. Simpson said this was probably the closest thing to Pierson's current government but it is not usually seen in small cities.
- A Commission form of government is when individuals are put in charge of the various departments as department heads.

The Committee discussed Council members being appointed as heads of departments. Mr. Simpson noted that there were references in the Charter that were outdated, such as the

94 language about a Town judge.

95

96 Mr. Simpson said the Committee needed to decide on the changes it wanted to propose.
97 Each question must be presented to the public. Mr. Simpson said if there were a lot of
98 changes, the Committee might want to submit an entirely new Charter. Mr. Simpson said
99 the risk is that some voters might only agree with a portion of the changes in the new
100 Charter and decide not to vote for it.

101

102 The Committee discussed unnecessary language in the existing Charter. Mr. Simpson said
103 he would try to find examples of simple Charters for the Committee to review.

104

105 Mr. Simpson said the only two authorities he sees in the Charter are the Mayor, who has
106 general supervisory authorities, and the Town Clerk, who carries out the duties that the
107 Council delegates.

108

109 Committeeman Jeremy Steadman asked which form of government Lake Helen used. Mr.
110 Simpson said he felt it was debatable. Lake Helen states that it is a Commission form of
111 government, but they have a City Administrator who runs the daily operations of the city.

112

113 The Committee discussed the Mayor's powers to instruct employees, including Public
114 Works, on day-to-day tasks. Mr. Simpson said it could conflict with the powers of the
115 Public Works Director. Discussion ensued about settling disagreements regarding the
116 managing of employees at Council meetings. Vice Chair Rick Davis said he felt that
117 strengthening the Mayor's position would be the direction he would go.

118

119 Mr. Simpson said it is always good to have a clear delineation of the chain of command.

120

121 Mr. Simpson noted that in a City Manager form of government, Council Members and the
122 Mayor have no real authority individually. Only the Council as a whole has authority.

123

124 Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith asked if the Town's boundaries needed to be listed in the Charter
125 because he had seen examples of it in other municipalities' charters. Mr. Simpson said it
126 could be added, but he did not think it was necessary.

127

128 Mr. Simpson said the process for the Charter review would be for the Committee to decide
129 what it wanted to change, then come up with the language. Mr. Simpson said the Committee
130 might want to blend different aspects of the City Manager and Strong Mayor forms of
131 government.

132

133 Committeewoman Bennett asked the Committee's thoughts on multiple changes through
134 amendments versus writing a new Charter. Vice Chair Davis said he was hesitant to
135 introduce a new Charter. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith asked how a new Charter would be
136 presented to residents prior to a vote. Mr. Simpson said a copy would be provided at the
137 voting location but could also be posted by the Town for review. Mr. Simpson the Town had
138 the ability to educate but not advocate.

139

140 Mr. Simpson said Lake Helen had attempted two new charters, but both had failed. Lake

141 Helen is currently looking to make incremental changes at each election instead.
142
143 Vice Chair Rick Davis said another option that hadn't been discussed was making no
144 changes at all to the Charter. Mr. Simpson said that was a possibility.
145
146 Mr. Simpson said the Committee would deliberate and come up with a consensus on
147 proposed changes, then inform Town staff who would work with him to rewrite the
148 language. The Committee would then vote on the changes.
149
150 Max Elliott asked if removing a section of the Charter had to be a ballot question. Mr.
151 Simpson said if the language being removed was not legal then it could probably be
152 removed without going on the ballot, otherwise it would go to the voters.
153
154 Committeewoman Elliott said the section of the Charter regarding the merger of Mayor and
155 Council Chairman was a statement of history and asked if it needed to be included. Mr.
156 Simpson said it explained what happened historically and he did not think it needed to be
157 changed.
158
159 Chair Paul George asked if the Mayor would be in the office full time as a paid position in a
160 Strong Mayor form of government. Mr. Simpson said he had never worked with that form
161 of government but typically that would be true.

162
163 d. Set date and time for next meeting
164

165 Vice Chair Rick Davis suggested setting a date for the next meeting after Mr. Simpson was
166 able to provide examples of charters from various forms of government.
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168 **6. ADJOURNED**
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170 **Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 6:29 P.M.**
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172 Minutes prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

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175 _____
176 Ryan Smith, Deputy Clerk

Paul George, Chairman