

Charter Review Commission

Report of a Meeting of the Legislative and Oversight Committee

Date; Time of Meeting: December 11, 2023; 6:00 pm

Chair: Victor Tervalo

People Present:

Committee Members: Victor Tervalo, Matt Stegman, Emily Levy, Juliane Montes de Oca, Kathy Christian, Dr. Roger Hartley, Dayvon Love

Commission Members: Rev. Kobe Little, Doris Minor Terell, Steven Andrew Ellis.

Staff: Ben Guthorn, Richard Krummerich, Hilary Ruley

Members of the Public: Chennel Cole

Purpose: Outline the City Council Structure and Review Article III of the City Charter

Discussion:

- The Committee Chair lead a discussion of Commissioner Erin O’Keefe’s proposal regarding the format of reports that might be used by each committee of the Charter Review Commission. The purpose of the report is to ensure that all Commission committee discussions are available for review by non-committee members and the general public. The Committee agreed the suggested format in some fashion could be used and provided.
- Ben Guthorn, Acting Director of the City Department of Legislative Reference and staff to the Commission, outlined the general structure and operation of the City Council.
- Discussion ensued over the Council’s budgetary authority. It was pointed out that this topic largely falls under review of the Board of Estimates, Finance, and Procurement Committee.
- Commissioner Hartley proposed that the President of the City Council be elected from the membership of the City Council rather than by City voters at-large, as the office is elected currently. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Little stated that he would not favor any proposal that would dilute the representation of black City voters. Commissioner Hartley stated that neither the intent nor the effect would have this impact.
- Commissioner Hartley proposed amending the City Charter to affect a Council-Manager form of City government to replace the current Strong Mayor form of government. The proposal would have a professional manager appointed by the City Council. The manager would be responsible for managing day-to-day operations under the direction of the City Council. Discussion followed the proposal. It was pointed out that this topic falls largely under the review of the Executive and Administrative Functions Committee.

- Commissioner Andy Ellis proposed adding voter referenda for City ordinances enacted by the Mayor and City Council, as provided by all 12 Charter Counties in Maryland. The proposal would affect only adopted ordinances that have yet to become effective and would require a certain number of signatures on a petition calling for the referendum. Discussion ensued. The Chairman asked the City Law Department to review the proposal for legal sufficiency.
- The Committee began its review of Article III of the City Charter, reading and discussing Sections 1 through 6.
- During the review, the Chair stated that for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness, he preferred a smaller City Council composed of 9 members, 6 elected by districts, 3 at large. But he added that he would not offer this proposal.
- At 7:45, the Chair opened the floor for public comment. No members of the public choose to speak.
- The Committee adjourned at that point.

Next Steps: Continue review of Article III at the next committee meeting in January, date to be determined. New proposals relating to the topic may be entertained as well as existing proposals.