

**Whatcom County
Charter Review Commission**

Meeting Minutes

September 6, 1995

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. at the County Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, by Chairperson Kathy Sutter.

II. Roll Call

Present:

Keith Ahrens
Joe Elenbaas (arrived late)
Karen Frederick
Georgia Gardner (arrived late)
Yvonne Goldsmith
Don Hansey
Darlene McLeod
Ron Polinder (arrived late)
Ray Radke
Orphalee Smith
Mary Stender
Kathy Sutter
Terry Unger

Absent, but excused:

Dana Beech
Mary Scrimsher

III. Approval of the Agenda

{Clerk's note: Polinder and Elenbaas arrived at this point in the meeting.}

Goldsmith moved to approve the agenda.

Ahrens seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Reading and Approval of Minutes from the July 6, 1995 Meeting

Smith moved to approve the minutes.

Ahrens seconded the motion.

Goldsmith noted that not everyone signed the letter of transmittal and that the items need to be numbered appropriately.

Motion to approve the minutes, as amended, carried unanimously.

V. Open Session - Public Comments

The Chair opened the floor for open session.

Speakers:

Lyle Merk, P.O. Box 207, Sumas

David Gagnon, 6213 Whatcom Street #23, Bellingham

Matthew Blackwood, 2717 Yew Street, Bellingham

The Chair closed open session.

{Clerk's note: Gardner arrived during open session.}

VI. Discussion of Tabled Motion to Make the Executive Position Appointed

{Clerk's note: the tabled motion is the changes outlines in the document entitled, "Changing the County Executive to an Appointed Position".}

Polinder moved to table this amendment indefinitely.

Gardner seconded the motion.

Motion failed, 5 - 6, with Gardner, Unger, Frederick, Elenbaas, and Polinder in favor.

Smith moved to divide the question by separating out the first paragraph of Section 3.21 from the rest of the motion.

{Clerk's note: the following is the paragraph to be separated out:

Section 3.21 - Election, Term of Office and Compensation

~~The County Executive shall be nominated and elected by the voters of the county, and the term of office shall be four years and until the successor is elected and qualified appointed by a majority vote of the entire County Council, and shall serve at the will of the County Council. The County Executive shall receive compensation as determined by the County Council.~~

Goldsmith seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 12 - 1, with Elenbaas opposed.

The first part of the motion, the first paragraph of Section 3.21, failed 5 - 8, with Ahrens, Goldsmith, Hansey, Smith, and Sutter in favor.

{Clerk's note: the second part of the motion is automatically withdrawn with the failure of the first part.}

Hansey moved to adjourn sine die.

Polinder seconded the motion.

Hansey withdrew his motion.

VII. Other Business

Smith inquired about publication of information regarding amendments forwarded to the voters of Whatcom County.

Stender noted that the Whatcom Watch asked that Commissioners give brief pro/con statements with the titles for each of the amendments going to the voters of Whatcom County. She will call Commissioners to request the information.

Gardner and McLeod noted corrections to the summary of votes on Charter Amendments.

Elenbaas moved, subject to this body deciding on a number, that we reproduce that specific number of copies to have available for Commission Members as they go out and speak relative to our actions.

Elenbaas withdrew his motion.

Goldsmith moved to bring this forward to the group tonight to have it reviewed tonight, to see what people's feedback is on it, and then to have the Commission go forward and ask for the ordinance.

{Clerk's note: "this" refers to the "Summary of Charter Amendments" prepared by the Commissioners.}

Unger seconded the motion.

Motion failed, 12 - 1, with Goldsmith in favor.

McLeod noted that if, after adjourning sine die, Commissioners speak about Charter Amendments, they speak as an individual, not a Commissioner.

VIII. Adjourn

Hansey moved to adjourn sine die.

Radke seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned sine die at 8:20 p.m.. This concludes this year's session of the Charter Review Commission.

Respectfully submitted,


Kerstin M. Bailey
Recording Secretary

WHATCOM COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Yvonne Goldsmith, Secretary

Kathy Sutter, Commission Chair

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
SPEAKERS AT THE
September 6, 1995 MEETING

1. Lyle Merk, P.O. Box 207, Sumas

988-6173

-I would like to see the County Executive position elected, because I don't like to see us set up a monarchy, which is happening over and over. The elected positions are going out with appointees. I don't believe we should do that. You're taking away the rights of the people. We're losing our rights fast enough; there's no use losing them any faster.

2. David Gagnon, 6213 Whatcom Street #23, Bellingham

-Good evening. I was hoping that I would speak after I could hear what you folks are going to discuss, because I have plenty of questions regarding an appointed County Executive. The only thing I have to go by is what I have experienced before. I have family that are on the east coast. We lived in a town in northeastern Massachusetts back in 1988. We were a smaller version of a county - a town government with a set of selectmen. They decided to change their Charter to create a Town Manager position, which was appointed. That's similar to what we're creating here by creating an appointed County Executive. But this is what happened. People weren't happy and didn't have very much participation in the selection process. I'm not sure how the selection process takes place here; that's why I'm still reading this {the additional implementation language}. They chose someone outside of our town to be the town manager. I imagine that the County Council would be going outside the County to find someone who would fill this position. What happened in our town was that they've gone through three town managers in the last five years. They've gotten people from outside of our town who have made decisions about what happens in our town. They don't have to live with it. I think that's probably the most important feature in an appointed position. In our town, there were problems in trying to overturn or steer this person in a different direction. But the main problem was that they didn't have to live with it. I think that it's important that the County Executive, having made a decision, has to live with their decision.

-Like I said, I wish I was able to speak last, because I still have plenty of questions. Thank you.

3. Matthew Blackwood, 2717 Yew Street, Bellingham

-I think the County Executive should be elected, because that way the people have a choice about what goes on in the County. I think that the County Executive should run the day-to-day business of the County. The Council should just be the policy-makers of what goes on and the Executive should run the County as the policy is set up by the legislature. If the County Council appoints the Executive, then they will have too much control. I think it should be separate powers, not linked together. The people should have a say about what goes on. I think it should be a four year term, because if it's a two year term, then they're busy every two years running for reelection. They won't have as much time to run the business of the County.