



ROCKWALL CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, December 5, 2024 - 4:00 PM

City Hall Council Conference Room (main (2nd floor) behind Council Chambers)
385 S. Goliad St., Rockwall, TX 75087

1) Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by City Attorney Frank Garza. Present were Commissioners Bennie Daniels, John Hohenshelt, Dale Cherry, Stan Jeffus, Nell Welborn, Kevin Fowler, Jim Pruitt, and Derek Deckard (arrived at 4:07 p.m. during introductions). Also present were City Manager Mary Smith, Assistant City Manager Joey Boyd, Director of Administrative Services David Sweet, and City Secretary Kristy Teague. Absent from the meeting were Commissioners Mike Townsend and Todd White.

2) Open Forum / Public Comments

Sol Villasana
809 Village Green Drive
Rockwall, TX 75087

Mr. Villasana addressed the Commission, recommending consideration of what he described as “modernizing” the City Charter to include geographically situated, single-member districts (instead of electing all council members “at large,” as it is right now). He explained that a lot of growth has occurred in the city since the initial adoption of the Charter, and he believes that not having single-member districts at this juncture is “undemocratic.” He expressed, in part, that not having single-member districts dilutes the voting impact of minorities, and he urged the Commission to include this change when it issues recommendations to the City Council for consideration at the end of this review process.

No other members of the public were present, and no one else spoke.

3) Welcome and Introductions

Each Commissioner who was present introduced him/herself and shared brief details about their past involvement in local government as well as civic organizations throughout the years.

4) Overview by City Attorney regarding process to amend the City Charter

City Attorney, Frank Garza, provided a presentation the Commission, generally educating Commissioners about regulations pertaining to the Charter amendment process and associated ‘election,’ if one ends up being called / coming to pass. He indicated that the six month limitation, time wise, prescribed by State law for the Charter Review Commission to complete its work and issue its recommendation the city council begins as of this evening (12/05/24), the Commission’s first official meeting. He shared that if the desire is to hold a May 2025 Charter Amendment Election,

recommendations of the Commission will need to be put forth to city council very soon, as Council would have to call the May 2025 election no later than February 14. Indication was collectively given by all Commissioners present that doing so would be too rushed, and there is not a pressing need or desire to put forth recommendations to Council so soon (in Jan./Feb.).

City Attorney Frank Garza indicated that the Commission should consider selecting a Chairman and Vice Chairman to steer the meetings, and – if they do so this evening – an item will need to be placed on the next meeting agenda so that said selections can be formally ratified in order to stay in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Commissioner Daniels nominated Commissioner Kevin Fowler to serve as “Chair” of the Charter Review Commission. Commissioner Pruitt seconded the motion. Commissioner Fowler gave indication he will accept the nomination.

Commissioner Welborn then nominated Commissioner John Hohenshelt to serve as Chair, but she thereafter modified her motion to name Hohenshelt as “Vice Chairman” of the Charter Review Commission. Commissioner Deckard seconded both the initial and amended motion made by Welborn. Commissioner Hohenshelt agreed to accept this nomination (for “Vice Chair”).

The motions to name Kevin Fowler as the Chairman and John Hohenshelt as the Vice Chairman of the Charter Review Commission passed unanimously of those present (Townsend and White absent).

An agenda item will be placed on the next meeting agenda in order to formally ratify these selections.

5) Discuss and consider recommendations regarding possible amendments to the City’s existing Charter

Chairman Fowler began discussions of the Charter review by pointing Commissioners to areas of the existing Charter that incumbent city council members have asked the Commission to look into and evaluate. City Manager Mary Smith indicated that Council was asked several times to provide feedback on areas of the Charter they hope the Commission will evaluate. Two of seven incumbent council members provided feedback in this regard pertaining to various topics within the existing Charter. Chairman Fowler shared that he believes the Commission should further evaluate and consider as one of its potential recommendations the “single member districts” suggestion made by Mr. Villasana this evening. Brief dialogue took place pertaining to that topic as well as the federal Voting Rights Act, of which many caveats have essentially expired and / or are no longer required to be complied with, per Mr. Garza and Commissioner Pruitt. General discussion ensued pertaining to single-member districts and associated possibilities as well as length of terms for council members and ‘plurality’ versus ‘majority’ voting in order to elect members of Council. The topic of ‘resign to run’ (for mayor) and other related matters were also discussed. “Appointment” of city council members when open/vacated seats occur and the possibility of removing ‘appointments’ altogether in favor of calling special elections was also discussed. It was generally agreed that the city attorney and/or Mr. Villasana will provide more extensive information about this topic and associated possibilities at a future Commission meeting. Commissioners also had dialogue pertaining to attendance and conduct-related expectations (i.e. on social media) relative to elected city council members as well as city board / commission members. They also discussed the existing ‘disaster clause’ and alternatives to the language that calls for the city manager to make council appointments in case catastrophic death among Council members occurs. All Commissioners seemed to agree that the 2015 Charter amendment language and how it is currently reflected in Section 11.16 is acceptable. Pay for city

council members was also briefly discussed but it was agreed that the Council can make adjustments to its pay at any point, via passage of an ordinance, with the understanding that – per existing Charter language – any adjustments in that regard would go into effect at the next, regular city council election. It was agreed that the city attorney will ensure that the Charter complies with all necessary state/federal regulations, and that if any modifications are put forth in future ballot language, all said changes could be handled under one proposition.

The Commission took no formal action as a result of this agenda item and associated discussions this evening.

6) Discuss future meeting dates/times

Indication was given that most Commissioners will prefer to meet every-other-week to discuss and go over the Charter. It was agreed that the next Charter Review Commission meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, December 19 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Conference Room.

7) Adjournment

Chairman Fowler adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF ROCKWALL,
TEXAS ON THIS 23rd DAY OF JANUARY, 2025.



KEVIN FOWLER, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:



KRISTY TEAGUE, CITY SECRETARY

