

**City of Tacoma Civil Service Board  
Special meeting of the Civil Service Board  
Meeting with the Charter Review Committee**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Date and Time: March 10, 2014  
Location: Tacoma Municipal Building North, Room 16  
Chairperson: Beckie Summers

On March 10, 2014, a special meeting of the Civil Service Board was held, a meeting with the Charter Review Committee. Civil Service Board Chairperson Beckie Summers, Civil Service Board members Eric Hansen, Amy Heller, and Dan Sexton presented testimony to the Charter Review Committee. Assistant City Attorney, Jennifer Taylor and Human Resources Director, Joy St. Germain were also in attendance.

After the Charter Review Committee's Call to Order, Roll Call, and Approval of the minutes of the meeting of March 5, 2014, the Charter Review Committee heard testimony from John Powers, Former Mayor City of Spokane, and then from the Civil Service Board.

Chair Summers provided a brief background of her experience, having served on the City of Tacoma's Human Rights Commission, as a Tacoma Library Board Trustee, as the employee-elected representative of the Civil Service Board, and currently as the Chairperson of the Civil Service Board, as elected by the Civil Service Board members.

Chair Summers stated that the Civil Service Board is about fairness and equity. There is public accountability given that there are three Civil Service Board members that are elected by the citizens of the City of Tacoma, one management representative, and one representative elected by city employees. Both the City Council and the Civil Service Board can recommend changes to the Personnel Rules. The Civil Service Board hears appeals and complaints. The rulings made by the Civil Service Board have never been taken to or overturned by a court.

Civil Service Board member Sexton expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide testimony and thanked the Charter Review Committee members for their service. Board member Sexton reflected on the saying "if it is not broke, don't fix it," in relation to the work of the Civil Service Board. He reflected on City government 60 years ago when City government was "broken," which was when the Civil Service Board was created, to get rid of nepotism and corruption. Since then, the system worked well and he reflected that he doesn't think there have been complaints about the Civil Service Board.

Board member Sexton shared that he was not at the Charter Review Committee meeting when the City's Human Resources Director presented information on the topic of residency, an issue that the Civil Service Board has discussed for a long time. Board member Sexton expressed appreciation for Charter Review Committee member Ferrell's

Board that it was a symbolic action at best. Since the City Charter requires it, HR staff was doing what they had to do for applicants. Once a candidate is hired, the requirement is unenforceable, based on case law.

Charter Review Committee member Baker stated that one of the other recommendations under consideration was to remove anything from the charter about the Civil Service Board and put it in an ordinance (Tacoma Municipal Code), that this recommendation came from both City staff and from the Model City Charter.

Board member Heller stated her bottom line, that the Civil Service Board saves the City money. Committee member Baker stated that she is not suggesting an elimination of the Civil Service Board but placing the reference in an ordinance instead of the City Charter. Chair Baarsma clarified that the biggest difference is that a change to the City Charter must be done by the electorate versus an ordinance that can be changed by the City Council.

Amy stated that she advocates for leaving the reference to the Civil Service Board in the charter, and that she was happy to hear there was not a proposal to do away with the Civil Service Board. Over time, the Civil Service Board provides a great service and saves the City money, as represented employees can go to arbitration, and the Civil Service Board is much cheaper. For the non-represented employees, the only recourse is to go to court. The Civil Service Board is a great cost saving measure, which she values as a tax payer. Board member Heller described the Civil Service Board as very unique – most jurisdictions' Civil Service Boards do not have legislative and quasi-judicial roles. The Civil Service Board hears appeals on significant discipline, or complaints. Most Civil Service Boards are tasked with recruitment and hiring processes. In Pierce County, she stated that their Civil Service Board focuses on the hiring processes and that there is a separate personal appeals board. Tacoma's Civil Service Board is unique in the state; there are three elected and two appointed positions.

Chair Baarsma added that a grievance via arbitration automatically involves lawyers and is costly.

Charter Review Committee member Ferrell stated that there is a reason we have a board. The challenge is that he wants to figure out how to have a residency bonus for people who live in the city. He stated that he looks forward to discussions on that topic at the Human Resources subcommittee meeting, and would appreciate the Civil Service Board's assistance. On the topic of moving the reference from the charter, he stated that they should be careful with those suggestions and that it could be a waste of time. Citizens could see the move as taking away the Civil Service Board, or taking jobs away from Tacoma and favoring people who come from North Dakota or Minnesota, for example.

Civil Service Board member Hansen stated that they have not made a final decision on the residency issue. He suggested using the process that the legislature does, getting input from stakeholders – labor, the HR department, management, the public, and have a

Ms. Baker asked what percentage of cases is being handled by the Civil Service Board, and asked for clarification from the Human Resources Director Ms. St. Germain.

Ms. St. Germain stated that in order to find out why employees don't come to the Civil Service Board would not be able to be done without talking with individuals but that the Human Resources Department could pull data on tort claims/lawsuits, disciplinary action, union grievances, and how many cases have come in front of the Civil Service Board, that this data can be provided.

Mr. Baarsma asked about the workload of the Civil Service Board and what kind of resources are going to the Civil Service Board, is it still televised as it has been in the past? Ms. Summers stated that they are not televised and that they meet once a month. In the last two months they have had two hearings and in those cases they meet twice a month, and that the schedule varies.

Civil Service Chair Summers thanked the Charter Review Committee for their service.

**ATTEST:**



Beckie Summers  
Civil Service Board Chair



Wendy Hobson  
Civil Service Coordinator