Charter Review
Legislative Subcommittee Minutes
Tacoma Municipal Building North, 733 Market Street, Room 12
www.cityoftacoma.org/charterreview

March 26, 2014 – 6:00 p.m.

Chair Leighton called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Committee Members Present: 5 – Brackett, Leighton, Merritt, Talton and Van Dyk.

Committee Members Excused Absence: 2 – Farrell (arrived at 6:24 p.m.), and Hahn.

Approval of the March 5 and 12, 2014 Minutes
Committee Member Merritt moved to approve the minutes of the meetings of March 5 and 12, 2014. Seconded by Committee Member Hahn. Voice vote was taken and carried. The minutes were approved.

Work Session – Article II – The Legislative Branch – City Charter
Chair Leighton stated the objective for tonight’s meeting is to get through as many of the remaining discussion topics as possible tonight to reduce the number of meetings needed. Committee Members then reviewed the first remaining discussion topic: the appropriate number of Council Members and districts. Discussion ensued regarding how many Council Members are appropriate for the population of Tacoma, what the appropriate number of Council Members and districts should be if the form of government changes, the pros and cons of a smaller and larger-sized Council, the number of Council members and districts in Spokane, Washington, and the value of codifying Neighborhood Councils into the Charter.

Committee Member Farrell arrived here, at 6:24 p.m.

Discussion continued regarding whether the current composition of Tacoma’s Council is working, codifying the Neighborhood Councils into the Charter, how many Council Members are appropriate for Tacoma’s population, and other ways to strengthen the current Council without reducing or enlarging the number of Council Members. Committee Members chose to table the discussion on the number of Council Members and districts at this part of the meeting and move on to the next topic for discussion.

Chair Leighton stated Committee Member Hahn’s item: residency for office will be skipped at this time due to Mr. Hahn’s current absence, noting he does not see any emergent issue with the topic at this time.
Chair Leighton reviewed the following three alternatives he is suggesting for compensation of Council Members in Article I Section 2.3:

1. To set up a commission on elected officials' salaries to determine the compensation and salary of the Mayor and each Council Member.
2. To use an established commission or board such as the Board of Ethics.
3. Eliminating the section and saying nothing because the section is null and void at this point.

Discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of each alternative. Discussion continued regarding how many members the salary commission suggested in Alternative No. 1 would have, how they would be selected, their terms, and incorporating a deadline of no later than September 1 of the calendar year for recommendations for any changes to the salaries of elected officials. Discussion continued regarding the salary commission having seven members, with five selected by the Pierce County Auditor from among registered voters, with one member selected from each of the City’s councilmanic districts, and having the remaining two of the seven members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, with the notation that the two people appointed by the Mayor shall have experience in human resource management and the legal profession.

Committee Member Brackett moved to recommend to the full Charter Review Committee, Alternative No. 1 with the nuances outlined as follows: to have seven members, with five selected by the Pierce County Auditor from among registered voters, and two appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, with experience in human resource management and the legal profession; with the full time compensation phrase as tentative depending on the direction of the Committee moving forward. Seconded by Committee Member Farrell. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion passed.

The Committee then reviewed the next discussion topic: term limits. Committee Member Van Dyk reviewed the research he conducted on term limits. Discussion ensued regarding keeping Council term limits at 10 years, changing them to 12, eliminating term limits, capping terms, and the pros and cons of term limits. Committee Members did not come to a consensus and therefore recommend no change to the current term limits.

The Committee reviewed the next discussion topic: Council vacancies. Committee Member Van Dyk reviewed his research, noting most cities handle vacancies very similarly to the way Tacoma currently does. Discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of the appointment process, pros and cons of the special election process and the cost; and leaving vacated seats open. Discussion ensued regarding state law and how it applies to Council Members temporarily vacating seats for illness or military service. Committee Members decided this item needs more discussion after Committee Member Van Dyk contacts the Pierce County Auditor and obtains information on state laws and costs of holding a special election.
The Committee then reviewed Section 2.8 Procedure of the Council. Discussion ensued regarding the issue with the word "regular" and the difficulty with defining it with regard to how many times the Council needs to meet during the year. Committee Members agreed to leave the majority of the section as-is, but strike the word "regular".

Committee Member Van Dyk moved to forward the proposal to strike the word "regular" from Section 2.8. Seconded by Committee Member Farrell. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion passed.

Committee Member Farrell moved to include the words, "unless otherwise cancelled" after the words "regular meetings" in Section 2.8. Seconded by Committee Member Talton. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion passed.

Committee Members introduced the next discussion topic: confirmation of City department directors by the Council. Chair Leighton noted this topic is being worked on by the Administrative Committee, however this Committee feels it should be noted that they want the topic in the Charter.

Committee Member Merritt moved that the Charter should reflect the confirmation of department directors or division heads (however defined by the Administrative Committee) by the Council. Seconded by Committee Member Farrell. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion passed.

Committee Members then reviewed the next discussion topic: Charter Section 2.13 regarding the publishing of passed ordinances. Discussion ensued regarding the proposal to strike the words “after publication”. Committee Member Brackett asked if there is any legal requirement beyond the current Charter to provide notification of the passage of ordinances. Committee Members requested the City Attorney’s Office look into Mr.Brackett’s question.

Committee Member Merritt moved to forward the proposal to strike the words “after publication” as a recommendation to the full City Charter Review Committee. Seconded by Committee Member Farrell. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion passed.

The Committee reviewed the next discussion topic: Section 2.19 of the Charter regarding initiative petitions. Discussion ensued regarding various sections within 2.19. It was decided this item needs further discussion at another meeting.

Chair Leighton stated this Committee needs to meet again next week, on April 2, 2014. Discussion ensued regarding having Committee Members Talton and Merritt work together on Neighborhood Council-related recommendations because it is also being worked on in the Human Resources Committee by Committee Member Talton.
Public Comment
None.

Committee Comments
None.

Adjournment
On proper motion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Justin Leighton, Chair

Doris Sorum, City Clerk