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**Charter Review Committee
Meeting minutes**

**Wednesday, March 20, 2024
Zoom & Community Auditorium**

Minutes approved by the CRC on April 3, 2024.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Elysha Johnson at 6:03pm.

Present: Elysha Johnson, Chair; Bryan Dennis; Wolanda Groombridge; LaAna Littlefield; Kate MacDonald; Tammi McLaughlin; Dale Thaler; Adolph “Val” Valfre; Tacy Steele, Ashley Driscoll, City Attorney; Mariah Woods, City Recorder.

Absent: Isaac Echeverria; Joyce Phillips.

2. Public Comment: The chair noted that one written public comment was received and included in the packet, and it would be discussed later during the listening session portion of the meeting.

3. Consent Agenda: Items under the Consent Agenda are considered routine and will be adopted with a single motion, without separate discussion. Committee members who wish to remove an item from the Consent Agenda may do so prior to the motion to approve the item(s). Any item(s) removed from the Consent Agenda will be discussed and acted upon following the approval of the remaining Consent Agenda item(s).

1. Approve/review meeting minutes from the March 13, 2024, Listening Session.

Dale Thaler moved to approve the consent agenda, and Wolanda Groombridge seconded. Passed: 9-0.

4. Additions/Deletions: None.

5. Discussion Items –

- a) Committee Chair Johnson presented and reviewed meeting decorum.
- b) City Attorney Ashley Driscoll presented the staff report, recapping the current status of the CRC’s recommended amendments.

- c) The listening sessions opened at 6:03
- a. Richard Kidd, Forest Grove resident. He submitted a written comment but wanted to speak on it as well. He was in support of the council president position being limited to two terms. He was previously against allowing the city manager to live outside of FG, but he no longer has objections. In the past, the city manager had to be able to make it to the city in the case of an emergency, but that is less of an issue today.
He is concerned about no longer requiring wards but does acknowledge that the standard is to not have wards in cities with populations similar to Forest Grove. He said that the three living mayors not being contacted by the committee, even though the report said that past mayors had been consulted.
 - b. Kristey Kottkey, Forest Grove Resident. She noted that “nothing changes if nothing changes,” and expressed her desire for the Committee to use the charter update as an opportunity to get more people involved. She noted that the same people have been serving the council for years, with few new people running. She believes that without unexpected appointments to the council, the average years of service data that the committee has presented would look different. Similarly, Boards and Commissions are primarily comprised of the same community members cycling through, with few new faces, and the city has been unable to make changes to bring more involvement from the community.
- d) Discussion:
- a. Chair Johnson expressed her appreciation for the committee members and their work. The committee discussed the public comments and decided which recommendations to reopen for consideration. The committee considered the points about increasing community engagement, and the concern of past mayors about removing the mayor’s vote. Chair Johnson clarified regarding the comment that past mayors were not consulted about the charter change, stating that the committee did speak to Mayor Wenzl and Pater Truax, and an effort was made to reach out to Richard Kidd. Consensus was reached to re-open the term limits discussion, mayoral vote, and “civic leader” to “political head” title change.
 - b. Mayoral vote:
 - i. The committee re-considered the recommendation to only allow the mayor to vote in the case of tie breakers. The discussion weighed the value of allowing the mayor to focus on building consensus versus the public’s ability to have a record of the mayor’s votes. Some committee

members were strongly in favor of being able to know the mayor's political leanings, while others made the point that because the mayor would vote in ties their leanings would still be known. While the former mayors who gave comments were against removing the mayor's vote, the current mayor was in favor of it. The question of transparency was brought up, and City Attorney Driscoll clarified that discussions about votes between councilors outside of a public meeting are not permitted under the law. McLaughlin moved to amend recommendations to allow the mayor to vote. The motion was passed 8-1, Steele voting no. Chair Johnson summarized the reasons for the recommendation change, stating that removing the mayor's vote was not guaranteed to change anything and that the transparency of the mayor's vote outweighed the considerations.

c. Political Head vs Civic leader:

- i. The committee members briefly discussed this change, acknowledging that political head could be considered a more charged term, but that it might also be more accurate. Consensus was reached that with the change of the mayoral vote recommendation, changing the title no longer seemed necessary or accurate. Littlefield moved to amend the initial recommendation to keep the term political head. The motion passed 9-0.

d. Term limits:

- i. City Attorney Driscoll read the staff report on term limits and added some additional summaries of previous discussions. Forest Grove's turnover is similar to other jurisdictions, and the majority of comparable jurisdictions do not have term limits. The committee acknowledged that there has been a lack of diversity in both the council and in boards and committees, but there was general agreement that term limits are not necessarily the best way to address those issues. The committee considered the value of longevity and institutional knowledge, as well as the size of Forest Grove and whether it is ready for term limits yet.
- ii. Thaler moved to keep the recommendation as is, with no recommendation for term limits and McLaughlin seconded. The vote passed 8-1.

- e) Driscoll noted that the purpose of the next meeting will be to finalize everything. The committee also has the option to choose how they recommend that the changes be

placed on the ballot, e.g. as one ballot item with all of the changes or separated into separate topics. A consensus was reached to recommend having multiple separate ballot measures.

- f) The next meeting is on April 3rd. The final report will be available for review at that time.

6. Adjournment and Announcement of Next Meeting: Thaler moved to adjourn, McLaughlin seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 pm.