

VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND HILLS, OHIO
CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING
December 18, 2024
6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Tracee Oglesby at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room No. 14 of Village Hall. It was also broadcast via Zoom Video Communications.

ROLL CALL: Present were Tracee Oglesby, Damon Love, Verlaine Anderson, Diane Griggs, Jacqueline Lark, Walter Smith and Kenneth Troutman. Also present: Law Director Thomas O'Donnell, Mayor Michael L. Booker, Councilman Robert L. Wright, II and Councilman James McManus.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: It was moved by Ms. Griggs and seconded by Ms. Anderson to accept the minutes of December 4, 2024. All voted aye and the minutes were **approved**.

INTRODUCTION: Law Director Thomas O'Donnell introduced himself and said he has been with the community since before 1990. The Village was created in 1991 and the Charter was approved in the fall of 1991. He gave a brief history of how the Charter came about with the assistance of the Cleveland Foundation, several members of the community and a professor at the Cleveland Law School. The Village Charter was approved at the November election and went into effect in January of 1992. It has been amended a number of times throughout the years, sometimes through the Charter Review Commission and sometimes through Council action.

Mr. O'Donnell explained that the Commission's work is very important; they come up with recommendations for Charter changes, and it is his job to put the language in place. Once the change is approved by the Commission, it is sent to Council, who must adopt and send it to the Board of Elections to be placed on the November ballot.

There are some sections of the Charter which the administration has talked about changing, including the bidding process. Mr. O'Donnell also mentioned updating Ordinance No. 2024-11, which outlines a stipend for board members and recommended it be updated to include the Charter Review Commission. Mayor Booker agreed and said payment should be retroactive to the December 4, 2024 meeting. Board members will need to complete a W-9, and he suggested a one-time payment when their meetings conclude.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review of Village Charter

The following articles and sections were read and discussed:

Article I. Name, Boundaries, and Powers

Article II. Council

Section 1. Powers, Number and Term

Law Director O'Donnell explained that there were originally six members of Council. In 2015, it was downsized to five members, eliminating the Mayor's ability to vote as a tie-breaker. Members then discussed the challenges of different numbers and asked Mayor Booker for his opinion. The Mayor said he believes four is a good number and it would still take three votes to pass anything. He also suggested that certain Council members be responsible for certain areas of the Village.

The Law Director recalled that there have only been a handful of times when the Mayor was called upon to break a tie vote. Also, that reducing the number of Council members will have a ripple effect in various sections of the Charter. He recommended that if the Commission decides to reduce the number, to do it in a year when three members are up for election; which would be in 2027.

Section 2. Organization

Section 3. Removal of Members – Law Director O'Donnell indicated this section would have to be amended if Council is downsized to four.

Section 4. Vacancy – Discussion ensued as to whether an appointed Council member should fill the entire unexpired term, or continue to stand for election if the unexpired term is for more than one year. Different scenarios were considered, and the Commission decided to leave the language as it presently states.

Section 5. Procedure

Section 6. When Ordinances and Resolutions Take Effect.

Article III. The Mayor

Section 1. Executive and Administrative Powers

Section 2. Term and Nature of Office

Section 3. Vacancy and Removal – Discussion was had as to whether the language should be the same as Council members. Mayor Booker said he favors changing the wording to, "If the unexpired term is for more than one year or if the next municipal election will occur more than

one year after the vacancy, such office shall be filled by a vote of the people at an election for that purpose.”

Section 4. General Powers and Duties

Section 5. Mayor's Veto

Article IV. Village Clerk/Treasurer (Repealed)

Article V. Nominations, Election, and Qualifications


After review of the first five Articles had concluded, Law Director O'Donnell summarized the two issues the Commission would like to discuss further:


- a. Article II, Section 1 – Number of Council members; and
- b. Article III, Section 3 – If the unexpired term is for more than one year, the new Mayor would have to run for election

MISCELLANEOUS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Booker congratulated Verlaine Adnderson on being honored as Volunteer of the Year. All offered applause.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, it was moved by Ms. Lark and seconded by Mr. Smith to adjourn the meeting. All voted aye and the meeting concluded at 7:51 p.m.


Tracee Oglesby, Chair


Margaret Sikon, Secretary