

Aug 9 (2 days ago)

Teri Knight <tknight@kymnradio.net>

to Lance

Hi Lance,

This morning Mayor Pownell mentioned something about giving the Charter direction and also something about "normally" there's a work session for these things before it goes for a vote.

I have 2 questions. DOES the City Council tell the Charter what to do OR is the Charter a separate and unique Commission of it's own?

Have you made attempts to discuss your proposed amendment with the Mayor? If so, did you include council members?

Thank you

Teri Knight

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Lance R. Heisler

to Teri

Hi Teri,

I am relatively new to the charter commission (I was appointed in the spring of 2016), and this is the first time I have been involved with a charter amendment. I suggested the proposed amendment to the charter commission. We discussed the amendment in commission meetings, and ultimately passed a resolution to be forwarded to the city council. When we first began discussing the amendment, I invited Mayor Pownell (who I think at the time was just the mayor elect) to attend a charter commission meeting to get her input on this amendment. She did not offer an opinion on the amendment, but strongly recommended that we get as much background information on the existing language as possible. I did that, and examined old charter commission minutes as far back as I could find. I believe Mayor Pownell is now referring to an unwritten process or protocol whereby any proposed charter amendments would be discussed with the council at a council work session, before being formally presented to the council as a proposed amendment. Since the first step in the amendment process is to try to get the consent of the council, this makes perfect sense, and in the future that is how I will proceed. However, I was unaware of this protocol, or that it was even an option, and Mayor Pownell did not mention this protocol in either of the two charter commission meetings she attended where this proposed amendment was discussed. I note that Brad Ness also attended one of the charter commission meetings where the amendment was discussed, and Greg Colby participated in at least two charter commission meetings where the amendment was discussed prior to it being adopted by the commission, so we did have at least some input – or the availability of input- from the council before the charter commission adopted the resolution and amendment.

Since my first presentation to the council on the proposed amendment, which I made on July 11 (at which the reception was chilly at best) I made it a point to reach out to every council member to discuss their opinions and concerns with the amendment. Every council member except Ms. Nakasian responded, and I met individually with Colby, Zwifel, Delong, and Ness, and had a good email exchange with Peterson-White. I also met with former Mayor Keith Covey, since it appears the original language was inserted into the charter during his term in about 2002. Mayor Pownell has not yet shared her opinion with me as to how she feels about the proposed amendment, or what changes she might like to see.

I have become acutely aware of the tension between the council and the charter commission, and my view is that serves no one well. My goal is to change that culture to the extent possible, while preserving the independence of the charter commission. And, to answer your question (sorry it took so long to get here) I believe it is critical that the charter commission be and remain independent of the council. We as charter commission members are the watch dogs of the charter, and sometimes that will mean confronting the council and the mayor on potential violations of the charter. I believe it is important to keep open lines of communication with the mayor and counsel, to invite their input, and to work together to the extent possible, but the council does NOT tell the charter commission what to do. We are a separate and distinct commission not appointed by nor approved by the mayor, the council, nor the city administrator.

I appreciate your interest in this issue, and the chance to respond to your questions. Lance