



City of Portland, Maine
Charter Commission
Governance Committee
MINUTES

December 8, 2021

Committee Members Attending via Zoom: Commissioner Robert O'Brien (Chair), Commissioner [Ryan Lizanecz](#) (Vice Chair), Commissioner Shay Stewart-Bouley (6:00pm). Absent: Commissioner [Nasreen Sheikh-Yousef](#) (Secretary).

1. Call Meeting to Order and Conduct Roll Call

Chair O'Brien called the meeting to order at 5:36 pm and called the roll. Commissioners Lizanecz and Commissioner O'Brien were present. (Commissioner Stewart-Bouley was expected to be tardy and arrived at 5:45pm).

2. Acceptance of Notes from Mayors Interviews on October 13, 2021

The Governance Committee commissioned detailed notes to be taken from the recording of the Mayors Interview on October 13, 2021, but contractor Jesse Denno, by request of the public. Chair O'Brien called for a motion to accept the notes to the record. Moved by Commissioner Lizanecz and seconded by Commissioner O'Brien, the motion carried unanimously (Commissioners Stewart-Bouley and Sheikh-Yousef absent).

3. Governance Committee Work Plan: review and discuss

Chair O'Brien said that without Commissioners Stewart-Bouley and Sheikh-Yousef present, we cannot agree upon future scheduled meetings. O'Brien explained that the current Work Plan called for one more meeting following tonight's workshop to allow for public comment in response to the draft recommendations and to permit the Governance Committee to make any final changes to the recommendations before forwarding them to the Commission as a whole. However, O'Brien also said the Committee may decide that the extra meeting is not needed after tonight.

4. New Business

Chair O'Brien reiterated the intention to post all of the Committee's supporting documents – minutes, agendas, notes, and materials – on one central Google Drive for public and Commission consumption.

5. Public Comment (paraphrased)

Karen Snyder asked why public comment was being taken before the workshop deliberations. Chair O'Brien responded that public comment is built into the business section of every meeting, and that public comment is intended to be much more robust at the following meeting in response to a model that the committee drafts.

The Committee recessed until 6:00pm in keeping with the timing of the published agenda.

6. Workshop to Deliberate on a Leadership Model at City Hall

Chair O'Brien introduced facilitator David Plumb to conduct the workshop on leadership models for the city. Committee members started the meeting by reviewing the results of the visioning exercise they did in September, in particular the principles and elements of a success that they identified.

With those principles in mind, together with reflections on the many interviews that the committee had conducted, committee members began to build alignment around a set of specific proposals.

The committee used two pathways to generate the proposals. First, they identified key functions of city hall leadership and considered how they should be conducted. Second, they looked at key leadership roles, and the attributes they should have.

Key Tasks / Functions of City Hall Leadership

(Who plays what leadership role in these tasks?)

Developing public policy:

- Team effort between councilors and the mayor, a set of conversations, working together.
- There should be new rules around who can initiate the policy process and/or a hearing. The idea is to make the policy process more accessible, with fewer barriers to get ideas on the table and under discussion.
- Mayor can take action (ie, request a hearing) around a goal.
- Individual committee members can also call a hearing.
- Perhaps a mechanism for members of the public to initiate a hearing process as well (via their councilor or some other way).

Budgeting:

- Mayor takes the first stab. This means the mayor must talk to department heads.
- The mayor should “own” this draft budget, have more control than today.
- The mayor must consult with the manager/administrator, to refine the budget.
- Council oversight must exist.
- The public must have input before it’s “baked”.
- Also, is there a space for some participatory budgeting?

Managing Staff:

- This is the role for a dedicated administrator – with appropriate skills and dedication of time to execute city services.
- Should consider an additional position – chief of staff – which would be the council’s and mayor’s access point to city staff, taking the pressure off the manager/administrator to play this role. This position could also be a point person for constituent services. This position would allow the mayor and councilors to have more fluid interaction with staff.
- Probably not a good idea to have the mayor appoint department heads (though the committee considered this option). Better to have professional staff who can provide continuity in delivery of city services.

Key Leadership Roles

(What power / function should they have?)

Mayor:

- Additional functions/power (as compared with current role).
- First draft of the budget and staff access/capacity to do that.
- Ability to initiate policy discussions at the council, form staffed task forces.
- Remain chair of the council.
- Veto authority probably not needed if given these additional powers.
- Codify role as a deal-maker at the table, pushing major economic efforts.

City Manager/Administrator:

- Manages staff and oversees the delivery of city services.
- Assists the mayor to develop a budget.

Chief of Staff (new position):

- Manages access to city staff for councilors and mayor.

- Floats between the policy body (council) and administration.
- Ensures task forces, committees are sufficiently staffed.
- Could be point-person for constituent services, FOIA requests, scheduling & noticing meetings, etc.
- Employed similarly to Corporation Counsel, City Clerk, and City Manager who report to the Council.

Councilors:

- Should feel empowered to play the policy development role with less ambiguity around that role.
- Individual councilors can lift up policy initiatives, call hearings, etc.
- Chief of Staff helps provide predictable and smoother access to staff.
- Simple majority to fire the manager/administrator.

Voters/Public:

- Can we make a process by which residents can raise up policy proposals, get hearing called (via their councilor, or another way)?
- A certain number of referendum signatures can force a public hearing.

7. Next Meeting & Adjournment

Committee members discussed the prospect of a public hearing and workshop in December. After much deliberation, committee members agreed that the public would be well served to respond to the draft model when the full Charter Commission receives it. A public hearing scheduled in the middle of the December holidays may not produce a representative sample of public input.

Chair O'Brien thanked David Plumb for his facilitation of the workshop. He called the meeting to adjournment at approximately 6:00pm.