



City of Portland, Maine Charter Commission Governance Committee MINUTES

December 29, 2021

Committee Members Attending via Zoom: Commissioner Robert O'Brien (Chair), Commissioner [Ryan Lizanecz](#) (Vice Chair), Commissioner [Nasreen Sheikh-Yousef](#) (Secretary), Commissioner Shay Stewart-Bouley. Staff member Jesse Denno taking minutes.

1. **Call Meeting to Order and Conduct Roll Call**

Chair O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and called the roll. Commissioners Lizanecz, Sheikh-Yousef, Stewart-Bouley, and O'Brien were present.

2. **Review and Approval of Minutes**

Chair O'Brien called for motions to approve the Minutes of prior meetings.

Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef moved to approve the minutes of November 10, 2021, and Commission Lizanecz seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Lizanecz moved to approve the minutes of November 29, 2021, and Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stewart-Bouley moved to approve the minutes of December 8, 2021. Commissioner Lizanecz seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Governance Committee Work Plan: review and discuss**

Chair O'Brien reviewed the Committee Work Plan with members. Commissioner O'Brien recommended that the committee's work focus solely on issues and priorities already identified and city's leadership model. O'Brien recommended that collective meetings with other committees be scheduled to discuss overlapping issues. O'Brien stated that he had spoken to the chairs of other committees and found them amenable to holding joint meetings. Commissioner Stewart-Bouley supported the recommendation. Commissioner Lizanecz stated that the Departments Committee, of which he is chair, was considering overlapping issues, and he supported O'Brien's recommendation. Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef concurred that collaboration with other committees was sensible.

4. **New Business**

Chair O'Brien opened the floor to new business and heard none.

5. **Public Comment (paraphrased)**

Chair O'Brien prefaced Public Comment by stating that there had been substantial interest and passion from the public regarding proposed government models from the committee and Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef, and the committee was considering the best means of moving forward, procedurally. O'Brien's recommendation, at this point, was that Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal be forwarded to the full Commission for consideration and comment without modification by the committee.

Eric Wefalo spoke in support of Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal, which he said was in line with the voters' intent in convening a Charter Commission. Sweeping changes are needed to Portland's government, particularly the office of City Manager, which was established to marginalize citizens.

Sampson Spadafore spoke in support of Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal.

Leo Hilton supported the presentation of Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal, unmodified, to the full Commission. Hilton stated that Portland's current system is undemocratic, and favors the business class over working people.

Winston Harris expressed confusion about the nature of the plans compiled by the committee and Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef, and criticized the committee for his difficulty in finding the meeting's Zoom link. Harris encouraged the committee to draft a plan that included the thoughts of all committee members, or to support Sheikh-Yousef's proposal. Harris further opined that creation of a Public Advocate was a good idea, and that the Mayor should not be president of Council, but the Council should select its own Chair.

Valerie Kelly spoke in support of Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal, and asked the committee to work to synthesize their ideas with Sheikh-Yousef's and further refine the proposal's language.

Wes Pelletier spoke in support of Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal. Pelletier said the committee's proposal was too inaccessible to the public. Pelletier said Sheikh-Yousef had been excluded from the committee's previous meeting, and any committee proposal was therefore unacceptable.

6. **Committee Workshop on Leadership Model at City Hall**

Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef stated that she welcomed input from committee members, and would prefer that the proposal be advanced as the committee's proposal rather than as an individual commissioner's proposal. While she had spoken with facilitator David Plumb for 30 minutes before the December 8 meeting, it was not equivalent to a two-hour committee meeting. She had shared her proposal in advance with committee members and had invited comment from commissioners on the proposal.

Commissioner Stewart-Bouley lamented that there were now two proposals before the public, being procedurally unfortunate and creating the perception of a

committee schism. Stewart-Bouley asked about the research and sources that went into Sheikh-Yousef's proposal, and how the committee's ideas were incorporated.

Commissioner Lizancz said he was pleased to see Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal go to the full Commission for comment and consideration. Lizancz noted that the Departments Committee was also considering proposing the creation of a Public Advocate-type position, and it might be confusing if two separate proposals for such an office were presented to the Commission.

Chair O'Brien said that as a matter of timing and of committee and Commission resources, he believed the best way of proceeding was to forward Sheikh-Yousef's proposal to the full Commission, where its merits and any modifications would be best considered and discussed. Commissioner Stewart-Bouley concurred. O'Brien further stated that the full Commission would be better equipped to determine how to proceed procedurally, and avoid two separate proposals competing on social media, possibly by creating a working group to reconcile the two proposals in the interim.

Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef reiterated her welcoming of committee input, but said that if committee members were uncomfortable working off her plan, it was acceptable to her that it go to the full Commission. She said she was willing to make compromises in her proposal if that were the will of the group but would not support any proposal that did not include an executive Mayor.

Commissioner Stewart-Bouley questioned the utility of the committee proceeding with the proposal they had begun, as the committee had only established bullet points for a proposal at the previous meeting, and it was now before the public before it had been fleshed out. Stewart-Bouley supported the presentation of Sheikh-Yousef's presentation to the Commission without modification.

Chair O'Brien stated that he would discuss next steps with Commission Chair Michael Kebede, and whether the committee should continue to flesh out the proposal it had started. Commissioner Sheikh-Yousef's proposal would be forwarded to the full Commission, where it could be subject to discussion and recommendations to create the best possible model for Portland.

7. Adjournment

Chair O'Brien called for adjournment. The motion was made by Commissioner Stewart-Bouley and seconded by Commissioner Lizancz. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:03pm.