

City of Portland Charter Commission Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2022

Call to Order. Chair Kebede called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present were: Chair Kebede; Commissioners Barowitz, Buxton (left meeting approximately 7:00), Chann, Eglinton, Houston, Lizanecz, O'Brien, Sheikh-Yousef, Stewart-Bouley (arrived approximately 7:20), Washburn, Waxman.

Review and Approval of Minutes. On motion by Commissioner Washburn, seconded by Commissioner Waxman, the Commission voted to approve the draft meeting minutes of **April 27, 2022** by unanimous roll call vote of 11 to 0 (Commissioner Stewart-Bouley absent).

Discussion about Schedule and Process to Complete Commission Work

Commissioner Waxman hopes the public hearing can just be dedicated to public speaking on all of their thoughts. Chair Kebede responded that he does not intend for the public hearing on the Preliminary Report to be restricted.

Commissioner O'Brien stated that work sessions have been scheduled. These work sessions will be done in public but without public comment. They are scheduled for **Thursday May 19th from 6:00-8:00; May 24 6:00-8:00; and May 31 6:00-8:00.**

Commissioner Buxton stated she would like to expand how the public is notified of the public hearings. She asked if there was appetite beyond public hearings to do any sort of engagement around proposals found in the preliminary report such as going to farmers markets. Chair Kebede responded that expanding notification as much as possible should happen and supports anyone who wants to publicize further. Chair Kebede has requested a summary of what is left in the budget to determine if there is money in the budget to expand communications. Commissioners Buxton, Waxman, Washburn and Sheikh Yousef volunteered to help coordinate expanded communications.

Commissioner Lizanecz asked Commissioner O'Brien if the work sessions are intended to be a place to raise potential amendments. Commissioner O'Brien's intent was for the work sessions to be more expansive than just amendments but for no votes to be taken rather just for discussion purposes.

Commissioner Sheikh Yousef requested to move public hearing on the Preliminary Report to May 18th. Chair Kebede responded that given the need to provide 10 days' notice, the meeting cannot be moved to the 18th.

Further Discussion about Work Session Process and Topics

Chair Kebede stated that amendments can and have been made between preliminary and final reports but that not all commissioners have patience or desire to dig into all governance proposals. Chair Kebede proposed that the work sessions serve as source of all governance amendments. The work sessions will be open to all Commissioners to attend but not required for those who do not desire to attend. The goal is to avoid amendments to governance proposal coming to full Commission unless approved at the work sessions. Commissioner Washburn questioned what the process for approval would be since no votes were intended to be taken. Commissioner O'Brien responded that his intent was to keep it conversational so no votes were to be taken. Chair Kebede recommended that the amendment must be discussed at a work session before it can come before the full Commission at a public meeting. Commissioner Buxton was comfortable with Chair Kebede's recommendation. Commissioner Eglinton also stated that he liked this approach as an alternative from hearing an amendment for the first time especially what might be a last meeting before final report. This would give Commissioners time to digest and ask questions ahead of vote and would be helpful. Commissioner Barowitz also liked the idea and suggested that any item that comes before workshop should also be 2 days' notice of things for consideration. Such notice does not need to be detailed but enough to give Commissioners an idea whether to attend the work session.

Commissioner O'Brien did not object to formal amendments being brought up at the work sessions, but suggested specific theme discussions at each workshop to include (1) the mayor powers philosophically, (2) the mayor's role in budget, and (3) work session focused on Commissioner Chann's prior amendments.

Commissioner Sheikh Yousef would like the opportunity to discuss reasons why Commissioners supported or did not support certain proposals at the work sessions.

Commissioner Lizanecz raised a procedural question that since no voting was to take place in the work session and they are meant for open discussion could that mean a Commissioner could propose 10 amendments as long as work session has been informed? Chair Kebede responded that if a Commissioner wanted to be ambitious and bring that many amendments a Commissioner could do so.

Commissioner O'Brien stated the work sessions were to be limited to 2 hours and if there are topics on a deeper hearing there are 3 additional weeks that could have additional work sessions, if needed.

Commissioner Chann asked if public meeting notice had been provided for work sessions, if Roberts rules will be followed, and if Commission needs to agree how things will be voted on in workshop sessions. Commissioner O'Brien stated that the work session dates had been provided to the City for public notice and still intends no voting will take place. Rather, the work sessions are to give Commissioners an opportunity for discussion and then would allow a Commissioner to bring forward an amendment to the full Commission. Commissioner Chann is concerned it is a bit too fluid and there should be some sort of formal consensus from work sessions. Chair

Kebede stated that it just serves as notice to other Commissioners that a possible amendment might be brought forward with no votes.

Commissioner Waxman inquired what the intended outcome of the work sessions are in order for the public to know and understand what will be produced at the end of each session.

Commissioner O'Brien compared the work sessions to "whiteboarding" the issues and to have the work take place in public on some of the ideas that have previously garnered some support. Commissioner O'Brien's hope is that the work sessions can wordsmith the proposals enough that they are in near final form for full Commission review. Commissioner O'Brien will work on agendas with Commissioner Chann via GoogleDocs for each session and send to executive committee. **Chair Kebede found general agreement that no governance amendments will be discussed by full commission unless discussed first at a workshop.**

Discussion about Amendment Process for Non-Governance Proposals

Chair Kebede requested that the Commission go proposal by proposal at the end of the next meeting to review any potential amendments Commissioners may have on non-governance proposals. Commissioner Barowitz recommended that notice be given of amendments in order to give Commissioners time to familiarize themselves with the concept behind each amendment. Commissioner Eglinton encouraged Commissioners to have amendments that they plan to bring forward in final format rather than wordsmith each in the moment. Chair Kebede stated that all amendments be in final form and could utilize counsel to get each amendment in charter language. Attorney Mazer cautioned the commission on the capacity of counsel to assist in drafting large numbers of amendments. **General agreement amongst commissioners that submitted amendments must be in final language form.**

Discussion about how to Group the Proposals

Commissioner Washburn stated she believed the Commission should refrain from grouping proposals that were not worked on together. She believes it should be left to the voters to vote items up or down.

Commissioner O'Brien stated that clean elections, school budget and universal voting should stand alone. He suggested that the other proposals stand together as a package after these other elements are taken separately.

Attorney Mazer stated to the commission that at a minimum the universal voting and school budget proposals need to be separate questions given some of the legal concerns. He also suggested having the clean elections stand on its own given that was one of the reasons the council asked for the commission to be created.

Chair Kebede also believes combining the proposals as much as possible will reduce confusion and is in favor of grouping governance, redistricting, communications, and smaller "one liner" type proposals like proportional ranked choice voting and participatory budgeting into clean election. Chair Kebede's initial thought is to have 5 ballot questions total.

Commissioner Houston thought it might make sense to have school board and city council vacancies as part of the smaller governance matters.

Commissioner Barowitz had 4 possible questions—universal voting, school budget, redistricting and mayor powers, and then everything else.

Commissioner Houston suggested that the school budget question be split into two separate questions—joint budget committee that did not seem to have any legal issues and general support versus the budget issue that had some legality questions surrounding it.

Commissioner Sheikh Yousef raised general concern about grouping and wanting to make sure public fully understands all of the proposals.

Commissioner Waxman does not want to underestimate the voter being able to know how to vote on many questions. She still needs time to think about how to group the proposals.

Other Discussion

Commissioner Lizanecz stated he would not bring forward a motion for reconsideration and will discuss amendments at workshop.

Commissioner Barowitz inquired if the Commission was going to discuss the summaries for ballot language. Commissioner Eglinton stated that the items on the agenda were just a list of things that need to be completed before final report.

Motion to Adjourn made by Commissioner Sheikh Yousef, 2nd by Commissioner Washburn Unanimous 11-0 (Buxton absent) Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.