



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

MINUTES

January 27, 2022, 5PM

Members present: Zoe Iacovino, Ona Ferguson, Emily Monea, Laura Pitone, Beverly (Bev) Schwartz, Kat Rutkin, Jessica Lieberman, Meagan Benetti, Matthew McLaughlin

Members not present: Ben Echevarria, Lucas Schaber, Crystal Turner

Staff attending: Anna Corning, Hope Williams, Collins Center - Elizabeth Corbo, Collins Center - Steve McGoldrick

Other attending: Barry Rafkind, Carol, Klaus Schultz, Tori Antonio, Crystal H, Stephen Mackey, Bill Valletta

Meeting started at 5:05PM

Decisions:

1. Committee approved minutes from 1/13.
 - a. Nine 5s
2. Committee approved the community engagement survey with context edits.
 - a. Nine 5s
3. Committee approved the Collins Center interviewing Mayor Ballantyne.
 - a. Nine 5a
4. Committee approved including the creation of a Ranked Choice Voting Commission to explore ranked-choice voting in the transition provisions, specifically the hybrid language with some edits.
 - a. Five 4s
 - b. Three 5s
 - c. One abstain
5. Committee approved keeping the current Mayor-Council system of governance.
 - a. Eight 5s
6. Committee approved keeping the current practice of the Mayor *not* sitting on City Council.
 - a. Eight 5s
 - b. One 4
7. Committee approved recommending a Chief Administrative Officer in general.
 - a. Four 5s
 - b. Three 4s
 - c. Two 3s

The committee uses the Fist to Five method of voting, a technique for gauging consensus. Voting ranges from 0 to 5. The scale is: 0 - no way, 1 - major issues to be resolved now, 2 - minor issues to be resolved now, 3 - minor issues to be resolved later, 4 - comfortable with this as it is, 5 - love this and will champion it. 0-2 is considered a lack of consensus, while 3-5 is considered consensus.

NOTES

1. Welcome 5:03
 - a. Anna welcomed the committee and community members.
 - b. Anna led an icebreaker, where committee members went around and shared quarantine hobbies.

2. Approve 1/13 Minutes 5:09
 - a. **Meeting minutes from 1/13 were approved.**

3. Public Comment 5:10
 - a. Committee heard a public comment from Barry Rafkind (approval voting).

4. Community Engagement Survey Feedback 5:15
 - a. Anna asked the committee for feedback on the community survey. There was discussion on the amount of context given, specifically about the amount of context given in the City Council questions. Laura Pitone brought up the importance of keeping the language as simple as possible, and that the committee should make sure the language is as accessible as possible.
 - i. **Committee approved the community engagement survey with context edits.**
 - b. Anna mentioned that a few committee members have brought up the importance of interviewing Mayor Ballantyne as one of the committee's expert interviewees. The committee felt positively about this addition.
 - i. **Committee approved the Collins Center interviewing Mayor Ballantyne.**

5. Deliberation Topic 1: Cont. Alternative Voting Systems - RCV 5:25
 - a. Committee discussed the different RCV language options, specifically the new hybrid language written by the project managers and technical consultants. There were some logistic questions about how a ballot question could affect the timeline of the charter, and therefore affect the implementation of this language. Matt McLaughlin said he likes the flexibility of this option. Meagan brought up the importance of having the Commission do an analysis of other voting systems alongside RCV, and Emily brought up the importance of ensuring the Commission focuses on equity concerns.
 - i. **Committee approved including the creation of a Ranked Choice Voting Commission to explore ranked-choice voting in the transition provisions, specifically the hybrid language with some edits.**

6. Deliberation Topic 2: Office Term Lengths 5:38

- a. Committee deliberated changing office term lengths for the Mayor, City Council, and School Committee offices from 2 to 4 year terms. Committee discussed the pros and cons of both 2 and 4 year terms, and Libby Corbo from the Collins Center explained that MA is trending toward mayors having 4 year terms while keeping city councilors at 2 year terms. Some committee members expressed preference to keep offices all with the same term length, while others expressed pros with the mayor and city council having different term lengths. Many on the committee are interested in staggering terms, which is only possible with 4 year terms for city council and school committee. The importance of recall if terms are 4 years was expressed.
 - i. **Committee voted to table the office terms decision to the next meeting.**
 1. **Nine 5s**
7. Revisit Balance of Power 6:00
 - a. Committee member Bev Schwartz revisited her overview of Balance of Power and levers the committee can explore, and asked for feedback regarding topics committee members are interested in discussing. The committee emphasized the budget process, advisory counsel for city council, and hirings/appointments.
8. Deliberation Topic 3: Mayor-Council vs. Council-Manager 6:20
 - a. Anna introduced the topic of keeping the Mayor-Council system or shifting to Council-Manager, highlighting the lack of support for any change from both the community and elected officials.
 - i. **Committee approved keeping the Mayor-Council system of governance.**
9. Deliberation Topic 4: Mayor on City Council 6:30
 - a. Anna introduced the practice of the mayor *not* serving on the council, and the committee voted to keep current practice.
 - i. **Committee approved keeping the current practice of the Mayor *not* sitting on City Council.**
10. Deliberation Topic 5: Chief Administrative Officer 6:35
 - a. Committee deliberating the role of Chief Administrative Officer and whether it should be included in the charter. The committee considered that if it does go in the charter, it's important to lay out the way to appoint and approve this role. Emily Monea pointed out the importance of this role as a former Chief of Staff, explaining that this role would greatly help the Chief of Staff focus on the mayor's policy while this role could focus on the day to day city administration.
 - i. **Committee approved recommending a Chief Administrative Officer in general.**
 - b. Anna suggested that project managers lay out example language before a vote on whether to include it in the charter or not, and the committee agreed.
11. Closing:
 - a. Anna thanked everyone and reminded them the next meeting is February 10th at 5pm.