



Charter Review Commission (CRC) Regular Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2021

1. Call to Order - 10:04am

2. Roll Call: 2 absent: Bill absent (off-island for medical appointments) & Anne Marie; Kathryn absent.

Members of the Public: Randy Gaylord, Sheriff Ron Krebs, Minor Lile, Michelline Halliday, MikeH

3. Committee Report – Operations:

Maureen presented on recommendation #1: SJs personnel manual should apply to all employees but understands it's a matter of law. Recommended adding a language proposal be made into an amendment to the Charter stating this is why elected officials are exempted from the rules.

Discussion, including:

Option to ask elected county officials to sign an oath as a recommendation to them – not a mandate, but having them sign something saying they're following the same rules as their employees. This has been done before.

Wait to call the question until hearing the Justice & Equity's presentation on 5/20. Maureen agreed – she and Jane have been in touch about the overlapping issues.

Randy Gaylord said this was covered in great detail in 2017, and described the 3 sections of rules and how they're dealt with.

Motion by David D. to vote negatively on the Operations Committee's recommendation now. No second. Motion failed.

Kevin noted that by consensus we basically accomplished the same thing. David D. disagreed.

Tom joined the meeting at 10:35am.

Maureen presented on recommendation #2: Public Records. Suggested an amendment stating that the county has failed to put enough county records online for public view.

Motion by Bob, seconded by Maureen, to approve this recommendation.

Discussion, including:

Would mandate that everything be digitized and put online.

Maureen: This is the language Amy Vira suggested – won't pertain to every department, for example courts, but would apply to Planning Department, County Council. The county has strived to make these records available but they just haven't connected the dots.

Amy Vira: Confirmed what Maureen said – this was to provide guidance and direction as to what we want to see from these departments. The departments can decide what to prioritize putting online. It's striving language.

Kevin: Questioned if it was necessary, and suggested revisiting it if we have time at the end.

Friendly amendment by David D. - Maureen did not accept it, and it failed.

Vote: Motion passed, unanimously.

Paul presented on recommendation #3: Ombudsperson, now referred to as Public Advocate.

Brief Discussion.

Motion by Bob to accept this recommendation, Jane seconded.

Discussion:

Jane asked if other charter counties have this role, and would the office of County Clerk be an appropriate place for it.

Paul: Yes – It's in Snohomish County's Charter – that was the committee's first guide.

Maureen: It wouldn't go to County Clerk, but to Public Records Clerk who receives all the requests for public records. This person would be trying to solve problems. It's an already existing position – they were trying not to create a new position.

Discussion around workload for the Public Records Clerk, is this role of Public Advocate overkill, and would this person need additional communication skills for this new role.

Kevin: This is an important service for the county to provide – to have a go-to person that is the public's advocate if a resident is having a problem with a department. Up to the SJCC how to meet that service. It may in fact be a second person. The CRC doesn't have to get into the weeds on this, but put it in the Charter as a mandate it and then the County Manager will make a recommendation and the SJCC will decide how to staff it.

Jane: From a Justice & Equity perspective, this is an extremely important and valuable role.

Paul proposed a friendly amendment.

Discussion, including:

Maureen not in agreement with the friendly amendment.

Bob: We don't yet actually have an amendment, just a paragraph stating what would be in the amendment.

Tony: Supports the concept but not sure this should be an amendment to the Charter. What are the consequences if this doesn't happen? Suggested we write a recommendation to the SJCC.

Dick: Calls for the question.

Vote: Motion passed: 11 in favor, 5 opposed, 1 abstention.

Janet and Liz believe the position should go to a specific person right now.

Maureen presented on recommendation #4: Language reinforcing anti-discrimination, bullying & harassment. Language was recommended by James Wolf – the committee turned it into a statement which was reviewed by Amy Vira. Should apply to volunteer boards and committees.

Discussion, including:

Consensus to defer the discussion until next after the Justice & Equity Committee's presentation on 5/20.

Jane asked Dave Anderson to send her a note clarifying what he said.

Conclusion of presentation – Paul presented on final items, which are not recommendations:

Items #5 & 6: Employee evaluation and satisfaction processes – no recommendations to the CRC

Item #7: No recommendation to the CRC on review of salary discrepancies. Noted that elected officials' salaries have been raised during this CRC's process.

Kevin noted that James Wolf has been really helpful and is obviously doing an incredible job for the county.

Maureen will write an amendment to submit on the Public Advocate position.

Kevin noted that there will have to be a vote or votes at the end of the CRC's process for the exact language the CRC will propose to the public. **Asked commissioners to let him know if there are other ideas we should be thinking about.**

4. Revisited discussion of Sheriff being appointed vs. elected (sponsored Bob O'Connell 5/6)

Revisited discussion and recommendation for Sheriff position.

Elected v. Appointed Committee recommended it remain an elected office.

Maureen gave a brief summary of the pros and cons to each.

Discussion, including:

Jane: Let's have an educated deliberation.

Sheriff Krebs: “The islands way of life” means a low crime rate, good relationship with the community – that’s what makes us “the islands”. Community expectation and relationship with the community are key. An elected official has a completely different relationship with the public – no day off, never off-duty. He has a very strong relationship with his guys in the community. They always try to exceed expectations. An appointed person will never have that relationship. It took him 5 years here on the job to feel he had a good relationship with the community, and then spent the next 10 years building on that relationship. This county is typically used as a stepping stone or a retirement position for someone, who would then typically last 3-4 years on the job. He doesn’t want to go the way of King or Pierce County or the City of Seattle – Sheriff is a political position there. He doesn’t want to get into the politics. The relationship with the community is a huge thing to consider when contemplating making the Sheriff’s position answerable only to the SJCC rather than to the whole community.

Maureen: Presented the pros of Sheriff being an elected position.

Bob: Presented the cons of Sheriff being an elected position. This has nothing to do with the present Sheriff, but rather with future Sheriffs and how things could come down in the future.

Q&A:

Jane expressed concern about fear that continues in minority populations in SJC. Asked what politics is he concerned about getting into.

Sheriff: Working with minority communities is a priority – he’s been working with Elly Hoag. It’s tough getting people to apply for deputy jobs up here. It’s hard to deal with a problem when the problem doesn’t come to you. Will work on building relationships in those communities. Those people often don’t have a voice out of that fear. He’s always looking for ways to better serve people, to better build those relationships. **Sit down with him if we have suggestions for doing that.**

He’s not talking about partisan politics. Everybody has a different agenda – each of the councilmembers do. You can’t make everybody happy all the time. He doesn’t want to be accountable to the SJCC or the County Manager.

Kevin will delay the vote if we go over time today, which we likely will.

5. New Business

6. Open for Public Comment

Robin Reid (Lopez): Congratulated the CRC on our executive action on Office of Climate & Environment (OCE). Rights of Nature & Bill of Rights – a statement of value of three kinds of justice: Social, Environmental and Earth. Gave definitions of these. Could be put into a Bill of Rights as a statement of value. Maybe separate amendments: Bill of Rights in one and OCE in another on the ballot. Urged the CRC to collaborate across many diverse perspectives and be bold and proactive.

Mike Hairston: Works for Sheriff Krebs now. Worked for chiefs before, in Dallas, TX. This is the first Sheriff he's worked for. Supports what Sheriff said about elected v. appointed.

Michelline Halliday: She attended an Energy, Salmon Agriculture & Community workshop this morning. The guest speaker, Congressman Michael Simpson spoke about how you come together and collaborate to solve problems – he talked a lot about people and climate. His proposal Snake River Dams proposal. Shannon Wheeler said, "Only we can adapt and change." We do this through science and technology. We have to have those candid conversations. Simpson's brave vision for how to solve these problems. We don't have to endorse each other's concepts, but each other's solutions. I know what you're against – what are you for? The 4-hour conference will be online – a unique look at problem-solving in the Tri-Cities area.

Randy Gaylord has worked with 3 sheriffs. Said it's been a pleasure working with the elected sheriffs – highlighted the discretion that an elected Sheriff exercises over his work force every day in dealing with crime. There is more crime in this county than any one Sheriff's department can investigate, so they have to prioritize. Every 4 years there's a very vigorous election process – challengers have brought out important points in directing the way law enforcement is provided here. 2018 emphasis on drugs – remarkable changes by our Sheriff and the state legislature. Elections bring out topics of interest.

Sharon left the meeting at 12:02.

ADJOURNMENT – Adjourned at 12:15pm

Sharon Abreu
CRC Member

Minutes were approved by consensus at the May 19, 2021 Regular Meeting