

City of Vancouver Charter Review Committee

Meeting #1, October 24, 2-4pm, Vancouver City Hall, Aspen Room

ATTENDEES

Committee members present

Ronald Zito
Ben Moll
Cherry Mercado
Mike Pond
Lynn Samuels
Russ Beacock
Janet Landesberg
Mark Meckler
Alecia Cummins
Terah Ebie
Janet James
Nelson Holmberg
Josh Egan
Johnathan DeBellis
Lisa Ghormley

Members absent

None.

Community members

None.

Staff

Aaron Lande, Policy and Program Manager
Nena Cook, Deputy City Attorney
Kerry Peck, City Manager's Office Administrative Assistant
Ben Duncan, Facilitation Lead
Gillian Garber-Yonts, Facilitation Support
Maria Verano, Tech Support

MEETING DOCUMENTS

- Meeting agenda
- Presentation
- New Board member Acknowledgement Form
- Committee Roster

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Aaron Lande, City of Vancouver Policy and Program Manager opened the meeting and thanked the committee members for their attendance and interest in serving on the 2024 Vancouver Charter Committee.

Ben Duncan, Facilitation Lead, reviewed the agenda, meeting ground rules, and public comment process. Ben noted that the facilitation team will be present to support a credible process and will act as a neutral third party throughout the duration of the 2024 Vancouver Charter Review process.

- The project team clarified that committee members will be asked to RSVP to future meetings.
- One member requested that the committee discuss future meeting scheduling.

INTRODUCTIONS

Ben introduced the facilitation team:

- Ben Duncan, Facilitation Lead
- Gillian Garber-Yonts, Facilitation Support
- Maria Verano, Tech Support

Aaron introduced the City of Vancouver team:

- Aaron Lande, Policy and Program Manager
- Nena Cook, Deputy City Attorney
- Kerry Peck, City Manager's Office Administrative Assistant

Ben asked the Charter Committee members to introduce themselves and respond to the following question prompts:

- What is your name?
- What neighborhood do you live in?
- What is your motivation for serving on the 2024 Vancouver Charter Committee?

INTRODUCING THE CHARTER

Nena Cook, Deputy City Attorney reviewed the Public Records Act (PRA) and its implications for the Charter Review Committee.

- All public records maintained by the city must be available to the public when requested. Public records are papers, emails, and anything owned, used, or retained by the city which contains information about the work and performance of the Charter Review Committee. This can include photos, text messages, videos, voicemail messages and posts on social media.
- Any responses to project team emails are public.
- Text messages containing content related to the Charter Review Process are public.

Nena reviewed the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and its implications for the Charter Review Committee.

- The committee can only conduct work in an open meeting consisting of a quorum.
- A "gathering" includes in-person meetings, group chats, texts or social media.
- If you are discussing business of the committee, it is considered a gathering.
- Best practices for communicating:
 - Don't "Reply all" in an email chain. Instead, only reply to the person who sent the email.
 - Don't Discuss the committee by exchanging texts with other members.
 - Avoid mini-meetings, or serial meetings. Texts with colleagues could be considered a serial meeting and an OPMA violation.

Nena reminded the Committee Members that they have been asked to take the OPMA Training. Committee members are required to sign the acknowledgement form within 90 days of their appointment. There is a training on Dec 6, 2023.

The committee members shared several comments and clarifying questions:

- One member pointed out that during the last two Charter Review processes the committee made multiple recommendations not approved by the City Council for the ballot.
- A couple members asked whether the group could be assigned committee email addresses. The project team explained that email addresses are usually only given for boards and commissions serving for over 12 months. It was clarified that in the event of a public records request, the project team would redact any personally identifying information.
 - **ACTION:** Gilly will send future committee emails with members included as a blind copy (bcc).
 - **ACTION:** City staff will look into the feasibility of providing email addresses for interested committee members.
- City staff told the committee that the OPMA training needs to be taken every four years.
- A committee member requested to see what has been recommended and accepted during previous Charter Review processes. City staff informed the members that the committee would be shown previous recommendations and whether they were accepted or rejected by the City Council.
- A committee member asked who will be making the final recommendation to the City Council? City staff shared that Aaron Lande will be sharing the recommendation, but that committee members are invited to join, particularly if there is a minority opinion to share.
- City staff clarified that any informal conversations between committee members before the official start of Charter Committee meetings should not include committee business in order to comply with OPMA.
- City staff clarified that charter committee members can and are encouraged to discuss committee topics with their community, so long as they are not including other committee members in that discussion.
- City staff defined “quorum” as half of full attendance plus one. Eight committee members will be required for any discussion or voting.

CHARTER REVIEW PROCESS

Aaron shared that the goal will be to hold one meeting a month for nine months. Public input will be ongoing throughout the process. The Vancouver City Council will deliberate on the charter committee’s recommendations in late spring/early summer 2024. The project team is aiming to put amendments on the ballot for the 2024 election.

Aaron reviewed the 2024 Vancouver Charter Review process and timeline graphics (Slide #10-11 on the [Charter Committee Meeting #1 Presentation](#)). The Charter is the City’s constitution. It was approved by voters in 1952 and serves as a guide for the cities' structure and operations.

There are three ways amendments can be made:

Community Members: Anyone in Vancouver can initiate an amendment to get it on the ballot.

City Council: Amendments can be passed by the City Council and put on the ballot for the voters.

Charter Committee: Recommendations from the Charter Committee go to the City Council. The City Council then approves recommendations for the ballot.

- A committee member informed the group that there are many public examples of city charters that can serve as helpful resources for the group.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Ben Duncan shared that the committee would be asked to strive for consensus on decisions during future Charter Committee meetings. He shared the mechanism the group will use in order to share their alignment on decisions. Thumbs up means “I agree”, thumb sideways means “I can live with it”, and thumbs down means “the topic requires additional discussion.

- One member shared that they would like to have the opportunity to share that they are not supportive, but willing to move forward. City staff clarified that it will be important for members to share when they are not supporting of a direction so that the group can make space for further discussion.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Ben Duncan shared that the team is working to schedule the next three (November, December, and January) Charter Review Committee meetings. He asked the committee members to weigh in on whether the current time works for future meetings.

The committee members shared mixed availability for meeting times on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 2:00-8:00pm.

- **ACTION:** Charter Committee members to respond to the scheduling survey and share availability for the upcoming November, December, and January Charter Committee meetings.
- One committee member suggested that at least one of the public comment opportunities be held earlier on the agenda, and one later to make space for different stakeholders.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ben opened the floor for public comment. There were no members of the public in attendance and no public comments were shared.

- A committee member asked to revisit the timing for public comment.
- **DECISION:** Ben took a straw poll and the majority of the committee members opted to keep the public comment opportunity at the end of the agenda.

Ben noted that the project team could revisit public comment scheduling if they hear requests from members of the public. Any public comments received in advance of future Charter Committee meetings will be shared with the committee members in the meeting materials packet.

CLOSING REMARKS

Aaron requested that the Charter Committee members share their availability for future meetings as soon as possible. He thanked the group for their time and the meeting was adjourned.