

# City of Vancouver Charter Review Committee

Meeting #2, November 28, 4-6pm, Vancouver City Hall, Aspen Room

## ATTENDEES

### Committee members present

Ronald Zito  
Ben Moll  
Cherry Mercado  
Mike Pond  
Russ Beacock  
Janet Landesberg  
Mark Meckler  
Nelson Holmberg  
Josh Egan  
Johnathan DeBellis  
Lisa Ghormley

### Members absent

Alecia Cummins  
Lynn Samuels  
Terah Ebie  
Janet James

### Community members

*1 Community Member in Attendance*

### Staff

Mayor Anne McEnery Ogle, Mayor  
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, Tech Support  
Maria Verano, Notetaker

## MEETING DOCUMENTS

- Meeting agenda
- Presentation
- Charter Committee Worksheet
- Committee Roster

## WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Ben Duncan, Facilitation Lead opened the meeting.

Mayor Anne McEnery Ogle, City of Vancouver Mayor thanked the Charter Review Committee for their time and participation in the Charter Review process.

## INTRODUCTIONS

Ben Duncan introduced the City of Vancouver Project Team and the Facilitation Team. Ben then asked the Charter Committee members to introduce themselves. He reviewed the topics discussed during the 10/24 Charter Committee Meeting #1.

- Project team and committee introductions
- Overview of the Public Records Act (PRA) and Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)

- Charter review process
- Consensus approach
- Future meeting scheduling

Ben Duncan reviewed the agenda ([linked here](#) on the City of Vancouver website) and shared the following Meeting #2 objectives.

- Recap and reflection on Charter Review Committee Meeting #1
- Introduction of Proposed Amendments
- Discussion and deliberation of amendments
- Identification of any edits, concerns, and agreement

**Decision:** The Charter Review Committee members unanimously approved the Meeting #1 minutes.

### **INTRODUCING THE CITY PROPOSED AMMENDMENTS**

Ben Duncan introduced the Charter Recommendation Review Process and shared that the group will be asked to focus on the “why” and requests for additional information.

- One member asked where the proposed amendments are sourced from. The Project Team shared that proposals can come from City Staff, the Charter Review Committee members, Community Members, and the City Council.
- One member asked whether the current Vancouver City Council Members could share any issues for the Charter Review Committee to address. The Project Team shared that the City Council members were invited to come to the meeting, and that one would be attending the December meeting on December 14.
  - **Action:** Project Team to ask City Council members to share any issues the city is struggling with and how the charter might be amended to support solving those issues.
- One member asked for clarification around what laws govern the charter. They asked whether there are reference guides for the community to understand which laws are being referred to in a given section of the Charter. The Project Team shared that the Charter is governed by state law and statutes, the Constitution, Washington municipal code, and Vancouver municipal code. Nena Cook, Deputy City Attorney shared that she will be reviewing any proposed amendments to ensure that any changes are legal. Nena will serve as the reference guide for the Committee members.
- Ben Duncan asked whether there is a process to capture any priorities put forth by the Charter Committee that are not in compliance with the law. The Project Team shared that the City of Vancouver has a lobbyist who can lobby for updates to the law.

Ben Duncan shared that the Charter Review Committee members would now be shown the submitted City proposed amendments and that the group would be asked to respond to the following questions for each proposed amendment.

- Are there any clarifying questions?
- Does the proposed recommendation align with the problem? Do we collectively understand the “why”?

**Proposed Amendment: Section 3.03 Powers and Duties (Amendment shown on slide 12 of the Charter Review Meeting #2 [Slide Deck](#))**

The following summarizes the Charter Review Committee’s discussion on the proposed amendment.

- A couple Committee members asked whether the Charter should reference the article and section when referring to other language in the Charter. The section being discussed would be 4.01. The Project Team shared that the question would need to go back to the City of Vancouver Chief Financial Officer (CFO).
- A few Committee members offered suggestions for clarifying the proposed amendment language to support readability.
- The Project Team noted that the Governor signed an Executive Order mandating the use of “plain language” which will need to be considered for any proposed amendments.
  - **Action:** Charter Committee members to document any suggested language updates on their worksheets and submit any ideas to the Project Team after the Meeting.
- One Charter Committee member asked who would do the reporting on the administrative activities once that language was struck from Section 3.03.
  - **Action:** Project Team to coordinate with the City Manager’s office for clarity around who would do the reporting on the administrative activities.
- One Committee member asked for clarification around the budget and how it is referred to in Section 3 and Section 4. The project team shared that the City of Vancouver does a quarterly finance report and an annual finance report. Aside from the bi-annual budget there is a Spring and Fall supplemental budget. There will be future discussion on who would be responsible for giving the finance report.
  - **Action:** Project Team to coordinate with the City of Vancouver Finance Department to understand who would be responsible for giving the finance report.

**Proposed Amendment: Section 7.04 Relief and Pensions (Amendment shown on slide 14 of the Charter Review Meeting #2 [Slide Deck](#))**

The following summarizes the Charter Review Committee’s discussion on the proposed amendment.

- One Committee member asked if “firemen” could be changed to “firefighters”.
- One Committee member asked if there are any unintended consequences with changing the title from policemen to police officers. The Project Team shared that the title of “officer” does not exclude any positions.
- One committee member asked about changing the term to “law enforcement officers”.

**Decision:** Ben Duncan asked for a sense of agreement for looking at the entire charter for gender neutral language. All present committee members shared their agreement.

**Proposed Amendment: Section 11.11 Oaths (Amendment shown on slide 16 of the Charter Review Meeting #2 [Slide Deck](#))**

The following summarizes the Charter Review Committee’s discussion on the proposed amendment.

- One Committee member asked whether this edit could allow the Police Chief to deputize officers without outside approval. The Project Team shared that this should be taken back to the Police Chief for clarification.
  - **Action:** Project Team to clarify the intent behind the Police Chief’s proposed amendment under Section 11.11.
- One Committee member asked whether the same power could be given to the Fire Chief.
- One Committee member asked if swearing in needs to be done by a public representative. The Project Team acknowledged the ceremonial importance of swearing in new officers and noted that the power should be assigned with care.
- The Project Team shared that the Charter Committee is allowed to reject proposed amendments.
- One Committee member shared that there could be merit to allowing more people to administer the oath to reduce bottlenecks.
- One Committee member shared that this amendment would authorize the Police Chief to administer oaths to all offices in the city. The Project Team shared that the Police Chief only wants to administer oaths to police, and that sentiment should be incorporated into any amendments sent to City Council.

#### **ADDITIONAL Q&A AND DISCUSSION**

Following the review of the city proposed amendments, Ben Duncan opened the floor for any additional questions.

- One Committee member reminded the group of the importance of thinking about unintended consequences.
- One Committee member asked for feedback on how best to notify their community of the opportunity to provide input on the Charter.
  - One Committee member shared that social media could be a powerful tool for notifying the community and for collecting proposed amendments.
  - The Project Team shared that the City of Vancouver shared an article on the 2024 Charter Review process in the November Newsletter. They shared the Committee members are welcome to write a letter to the editor, or otherwise publicly share the opportunity to get involved.
  - **Action:** Project Team to share the worksheet results with the City Council members.
  - **Action:** Project Team to ask the City Council members to share back any requested areas of focus for Charter Committee discussion.
- One Committee member mentioned the City of Portland’s charter review process and shared interest in hearing priorities from Mayor McEnerny-Ogle.
- One Committee member shared that there are lots of opportunities to talk with the community at existing City of Vancouver community engagement events.
- One Committee member shared context around the governance structure update made during the City of Portland charter review process.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ben opened the floor for public comment. There was one member of the public in attendance. No public comments were shared.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Ben Duncan shared that the next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 6-8pm and reminded the Committee members to fill out the Proposed Amendment form that will be sent around after the meeting.

Aaron Lande shared that the Project Team supported the idea of sending a worksheet to the City Council and will include the City Manager in the request.

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Aaron thanked the Committee members for their time. The meeting was adjourned.