

MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
April 22, 2013

The City Commission met this date in a special workshop session in the Commission Chambers. A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, with the following in attendance.

Mayor	:	John B. Arnold, Jr.
Commissioners	:	Heyward H. Strong
	:	Diane Kelley
	:	Kay Hamilton
	:	Joe Morgan
City Clerk	:	Tammy Johnson
Recorder	:	Beth Millsaps

Others in attendance: (Not Inclusive) James Butler (camera), Thomas G. Miller, Diane Miller, Mike Griffith (Bay Beacon)

Charter Review

Charter
Review

Mayor Arnold called workshop to order to discuss a Charter change. He said in 1930, the first recorded census, the City of Valparaiso had 99 people, we were established in 1921. He said this is the same Charter that we operate under today, we have services and departments today that are not even listed in the Charter, communications, the library, legal expenses and so on. Mayor Arnold said there are no provisions for a relationship with the Chamber of Commerce or for a relationship with our biggest neighbor Eglin Air Force Base. Mayor Arnold said we could always do nothing with the Charter but he thinks we at least need to update the Charter to apply to the duties and responsibilities of today. We could establish a central oversight, strengthen the administrator position and still stay within the Commission form of government. He said all the rest of Okaloosa County is city manager, Crestview's Mayor is elected and oversees the fire department and police department, Ft. Walton Beach's Mayor is also elected but is more of an ambassador to the city and conducts the meetings. Mayor Arnold feels we need to do something if we are going to have any type of schedule to meet the March 2014 election for the resident's to vote.

Mayor Arnold is also concerned that at one time we had volunteers with scientific background that volunteered their time to help establish our cable system, now we have had to combine three volunteer boards into one. Comm. Kelley agreed that the spirit of volunteerism is going away. Mayor Arnold said in today's world the people do not have the time they once did with both parents having to work and so much to do. Mayor Arnold suggested we try to look at Commission form of government versus City Council form and get off dead center and move in a positive direction. Comm. Kelley said that with a new form of government we might be able to entice younger generations to get involved.

Mayor Arnold said he feels a responsibility to the city to be the best it can be. Mrs. Diane Miller, 202 Hickory, said they have lived in this community since 1968 and it is a wonderful place to live. She said when you have a certain issue you have one person you go to and ask a questions, she doesn't feel a need for change. Mayor Arnold said the responsibility would still be there just a different form of government and he wasn't trying to be argumentative but not everyone knows who to go to. Mayor Arnold said he felt like we weren't at the stage to ask questions but to look for direction. Mr. Thomas G. Miller, 202 Hickory, said all the comments are about a Charter study but changing to a city manager is not the only thing to study. Mayor Arnold said the whole Charter is what we are looking at. Mr. Miller said he hopes if we go to city manager government that it goes out for applicants to provide the city with the best city manager it can have, but that is a very expensive position, some are paid over \$100,000 a year and he would hate for the city's taxes go up. Mr. Miller said he thinks that we are jumping the gun anticipating problems that aren't there, there have always been people that have volunteered to run for Commission and let things go to the next voting cycle and then if there is a problem go from there.

Comm. Hamilton said she is very much in favor of the City Manager/Council form of government. The nation as a whole has evolved to this type of government, we need to have one person as the central oversight especially now with the Sunshine Laws. If we had a central oversight that person could report back to the council or commission, no matter what name you give it. Comm. Kelley said she feels strongly that we should change the Charter, it will be hard but any change is hard.

Comm. Morgan said he is in favor of the Commission form of government, a lot of the people he has spoken with feel the same. Comm. Morgan said we should look at the Charter at the issues and change the things that need to be changed to bring things up to date. He said some of the problems with the volunteerism is that some committees have submitted good ideas and nothing has happened and people become disillusioned. Comm. Morgan said again two of us

favor the Commission form of government we can agree with changes to the Charter to capture who we are now, but remain a Commission form of government. Mayor Arnold said even if we change our government, it would not change our city, the process would be seamless to the residents, maybe come up with a hybrid system to make things better for all citizens.

Comm. Hamilton said three of us want to be a Council/City Manager form of government, she has also spoken with a lot of people and most people who approach her believe we need a change, appeal to a younger demographic and new residents. She doesn't feel Comm. Morgan is getting a good temperature from the public, there are 3 Commissioners in favor, the demographic is in favor, this is the very definition of democracy at work, we cannot continue to filibuster one another. Comm. Hamilton said three want Council/City Manager and two want to remain almost the same we need to vote to move on. Mrs. Johnson said there could be no votes at this meeting because it is a workshop.

Comm. Strong said that he feels like Comm. Morgan he has talked to some department heads that work for him and everyone said they are satisfied with the way things are, when he asked if they had any ideas on improvements and he said they told him things were fine. Comm. Kelley said the two department heads she talked to are not happy, they want to please everyone. Comm. Strong said if the department heads need something they could always look at outside bids for work within the budget and or come before Commission if there is a problem, that is how the Commission form of government works. Comm. Kelley said the department heads do not want to have to come before the Commission for every little thing. Comm. Strong said that he hadn't had a problem like that in the departments he supervises in 43 years.

Mayor Arnold said management and oversight is how things are done now in government, if we revised the Charter we could have some type of Council/Commission hybrid, things would run smoother if there is one person who can inform all the department heads.

Mrs. Miller said that if the Charter is outdated then update that you don't have to change the form of government. Mayor Arnold said he thought he might ask the attorney to see if we don't need to change the Charter because we operate outside of what is outlined. Comm. Strong said to go ahead and ask.

Mayor Arnold suggested he could do a rewrite of the Charter, define the duties of the Commission that would allow the city the able to do things that we are not doing now, take a look at it and get things moving. He said some of you have the line of thought that he wants to redo the Charter to create a specific job for one person. Mayor Arnold said that if we go to City Manager position, all applicants would be read equally, saying that position is too much money is being short sided. Comm. Hamilton said a City Manager could write grants to bring money into the city. Comm. Strong said to look at things in the Charter, delete what should not be there and add what should be.

Mayor Arnold said the Charter also decides if a city clerk should be elected or appointed, if the city clerk and police chief need to be residents of the city for their positions. The Charter should set up how we operate in the future. Comm. Hamilton said she couldn't think of a better person than the Mayor to look at the Charter, no one could question his love for the city. Comm. Morgan asked to do a draft of the Charter under a Commission form of government, Mayor Arnold said we have failed to find a consensus on a form of government, there are thousands of different forms of government. Comm. Morgan said he didn't have a problem with looking into the Charter as long as it is in the confines of who we are now. Mayor Arnold said he would take a stab at it, not sure of results.

Mayor Arnold said he would have something ready by the regular Commission meeting in May and that in June our budget meetings would begin.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to be brought before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:37 PM.

Adjourn

John B. Arnold, Jr.
Mayor

Heyward H. Strong
Chair, VCA

ATTEST:

Tammy Johnson, CMC
City Clerk

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The DVD labeled April 22, 2013 contains the audio and video of this meeting and will be kept as a permanent part of these minutes.