

MINUTES  
CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
April 1, 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, Jr.
	:	Kay Hamilton
	:	Joe Morgan
Deputy City Clerk	:	Della Rhodes
Recorder	:	Beth Millsaps

Others in attendance: Joan Morse (camera), Mike Griffith (Bay Beacon), Thomas Miller, Diane Miller, Lyn Knowles, Terry Griffin

**CHARTER REVIEW**

Mayor Arnold called workshop to order saying that no decision or vote will be made tonight, we are exploring various forms of government for a possible Charter rewrite in the future. He thought that Comm. Kelley would be present to make her presentation. Comm. Hamilton said that she had talked to Comm. Kelley and she would be glad to go over the power point that Comm. Kelley put together.

Charter  
Review

Comm. Hamilton said the presentation is to clarify the different forms of government and the options that are available all of which are very flexible. The dominant ones in Florida are the ones that are more detailed in the presentation. She said Commission form is not dominant but because that is the government we have right now it is also included in the presentation. Comm. Hamilton said four forms of government that are highlighted in the presentation are the Commission form, Council-Weak Mayor, Council-Strong Mayor and Council-Manager, she said that most common form of city government in Florida is the Council-Manager form.

Comm. Hamilton said that in Council-Weak Mayor the city council has collective administration, including appointment and dismissals of employees and appointment to board and commissions, the council decides on policies and creates ordinances in this form. The Council-Strong Mayor is the form used by larger cities around the nation such as Chicago but also used locally with the City of Crestview. The mayor is elected separately from the council, often times he or she is full time and paid with significant administrative and budgetary authority, the mayor has veto power over council legislation, executive power to carry out policies, while the council decides policies, they have no administrative power, the council provides only legislative power, mayor prepares budget, makes appointments, and manages the daily operations. Comm. Hamilton said the mayor would not be able to hire or fire people. Comm. Hamilton said Commission form of government voters elect individual commissioners to a small governing board, each commission is responsible for one specific aspect such as fire, police, public works, health, finance, parks. One commissioner is designated as chairman or mayor whom provides much of the administration over the city offices, and presides over meetings. The commission has both legislative and executive functions. Comm. Hamilton said Council-Manager is like what Niceville has. Commission form of government is now less than 1% . Council-Manager the mayor acts as ceremonial head of government at public functions and presides over meetings, the mayor has little if any role in the day to day municipal administration. The council decides policies and creates ordinances so that council is not without influence or power, the manager is appointed by a majority of the council for an indefinite term and removable by council majority voted manager is responsible for municipal administration, supervises and coordinates departments, makes recommendations to the council, and prepares draft budgets for the council's consideration. She said this form is basically run like a business, it is considered to be more efficient, and the manager is completely responsible to the council. Mayor Arnold said that you can mix any of these forms together, what she presented was just the general format, but you can do anything you want to do. Comm. Morgan said he would like to know what she thinks is some of the pros over and above what we have today.

Comm. Hamilton said now the situation is changing the Mayor has not decided if he is going to run in the next election, Comm. Strong has not declared so there is a possibility that we could lose a lot of our corporate history. Comm. Hamilton said it is time for a change. She said one of her considerations is to look at more efficiency in the government. She doesn't feel she has enough corporate knowledge or experience in the area of garbage service. Just because she has been assigned to be the executive over garbage, that is the weakness that she sees in this form of government that we haven't had in the past but she can see we will in the future. Comm. Hamilton said it is time to take steps to make sure we have the strongest and most protected form of government that we can have that represents the people the best and it is the most efficient, and utilizes the taxes the citizens pay as we go forward. She said that is the weaknesses to her, there is always the "good old boy" system the Commissioners have too much power, too much

influence in Commission form of government. Mrs. Miller asked about weaknesses in the form of the Council City Manager form of government. Comm. Hamilton said you can have similar problems because they always exist, the city manager can favor three council members and get a lot of security that way that can be an issue too, it has not historically created the problems that a commission form of government has. She said the biggest problem she has with commission government is maybe some commissioners are suited and able to make it a full time job to run their enterprises because the commissioners are elected does not mean they are ready to run an enterprise for \$1 a year.

Mr. Miller just to let the Commission know he arrived in Valparaiso in 1965 and retired from the Air Force in 1970, several years later the Commission hired him to design and build the cable system that is still in operation today, he built the system and ran it for 13 years and then was elected Commissioner and served for 16 years, it takes work and there is always someone on the other side against what you might do but he feels this form of government works, he said if you do not have the time to do the work then don't run. He said our form of government works well for us. Comm. Hamilton said he did an exquisite job, and was brilliantly qualified for the job he did and we were so fortunate to have him. Mr. Miller said that wasn't the point the point, with the support anyone could've done the job. He likes our form of government, change to city manager would have to increase the salary possible double it and it would be a large increase and the taxpayers will have to pay for that in his opinion if it works don't change it.

Comm. Morgan said over time he looked at the forms of government that were presented with his experience overseas and dealing with governments and democracies he likes what we have. For many reasons one of the most important things is within the Charter we have we have a lot of room to change things to suit what needs to be done. He said there are not just 5 forms there are thousands of forms of governments. He said we have incorporated several in our current form of government, each department has a paid director that has the day to day authority to execute the duties of the departments as they currently operate, in some cases the directors even have assistant directors both paid and volunteer to further carry out said executive duties. This is the truest form of government, of democracy. Within our current Charter we hired a city administrator, we can assign or take away duties as needed, that position can and does carry out further executive duties as prescribed based on that person's abilities and capabilities, if he is good on grants, then grant writer, good with budgets then work on budgets, whatever that person's capabilities are, tailor as to who is hired. If you look at Council Manager form of government a lot of those duties already preformed by Mr. Scott already assigned or could be assigned to him. We don't have to change the Charter to do that and if Mr. Scott leaves then the duties can be reassigned for the next administrator with the Charter we have.

Comm. Morgan said our government as it is now, it is very democratic and we are responsive, responsible government our residents know who to come to with questions. We have a small town feel, our government enables that. Because we can take the complaints and problems it frees our directors up to do the day to day work that needs to be done for our city. Most complaints are for general knowledge of issues and be the sounding board for the public. Comm. Morgan said he feels that the current form of government retains the flexibility to both give away and retain specific authorities that once given away by Charter, cannot be taken back.

Comm. Hamilton said as for a commission being more historically what America is based on is not true because they have no separation of powers, not to say that anyone here has abused it but you have no separation of powers, there is no balance. Comm. Morgan said there is balance because no one commissioner has the control of all.

Mayor Arnold said he feels we are jumping too far ahead, the idea here was to see what are our deficiencies, our government was established in 1921 when everything was in the rural type of society now we are in an urban type of society. There have been vast amounts of technology changing the way things are being done. Mayor said when he began if the Commission decided to add a water line somewhere the decision was made the Commission contacted public works told them to get their shovels and the water line was laid, he said now there is a whole list of approvals that must be complete before anything is done. Mayor Arnold said we need to have a Charter change to reflect what we want to accomplish, still might be the Commission form but we need to rewrite the Charter to match what we are doing, to evolve to 2013. Comm. Strong said he feels we have evolved with this form of government, the Commission looks at how to modify problems by using our attorney, engineer, department heads. Mayor Arnold said that still operates outside the Charter. Comm. Hamilton said she agrees with the Mayor we do need to bring the Charter in line if nothing else, to run more efficiently. She said our Commissioners can't talk to one another have to work through the administrator but the administrator doesn't have any power or authority. Our form of government needs to run Valparaiso as an efficient business. Comm. Hamilton said that absolute power corrupts. Comm. Morgan said they don't have absolute power, you have the checks and balances of the Commission.

Comm. Hamilton said what is going on within the city at all times needs to be one central person. Mayor Arnold agrees that way there would be one person to go to for an answer. Mayor Arnold said he felt it makes that person look incompetent to say you don't know. Comm. Strong said not in his 43 years he never had a problem telling someone he didn't know and then referring that person to the Commission who would know the answer.

Comm. Morgan said he feels with this form of government there is a more intimate knowledge of what you are responsible for as a Commissioner. Mayor Arnold said he thinks that Council form of government is more professional.

Mayor Arnold said with the Commission involved in the day to day activities no one is looking ahead from a corporate standpoint. Comm. Strong said the department heads, Commissioner, Planning Commission are all working toward the future, the budget is a plan based on the next five years, we are a built out city, what else is for us to do.

Mayor Arnold said we need to chart a course. Comm. Morgan said the day to day tasks should be left to the department heads and the Commission working toward a five year plan.

Mr. Lynwood Knowles, 253 S. Bayshore Drive, said if he understood what was being said is that we need an individual that knows about everything the Commission is doing, he thought that was what Mr. Scott was doing right now. He said he also sees things on a little different side because he worked on the Planning Commission for eight years and while on that board with Mr. Fred Boyer, Mr. Steve Lightfoot, Ms. Annette Brabham, he could remember how many packages were submitted to the Commission for moving the city forward only to see nothing happen. He feels the Commission is being a little short sighted by not looking ahead working only day to day.

Mayor Arnold said there doesn't seem to be any volunteerism anymore, we had three volunteer groups at one time now we had to consolidate to one, it is a lot of hard work and hours behind the scenes that people don't want to do. Mayor Arnold said also that some of the ideas that came from the Planning Commission didn't happen because of lack of funding.

Mr. Knowles said for the volunteer positions give some guidelines for people applying in the future and give them more information. He said by evolving the Charter and the city the basic structure of the government, the Commission, could be modeled into something that really works. He said Mr. Valandingham is a real jewel to this city and to tap into the resources we already have in place. Comm. Hamilton said no one is questioning the dedication of the Commission or the Mayor but with change we can lift the city up, improve things. Comm. Hamilton said she is very worried that there is no central oversight, one person like a CEO to make things run smoother. She feels we have become stagnant. Comm. Hamilton said she had been working with the EDC and they have told her that with the infrastructure that we have they can't really support Valparaiso. We have an aging population, we need to attract younger families, get more business we had a grocery store that use to be the heart of the city and that has been gone along time. Change is difficult but often needs to be done. Mayor Arnold said as people and a city we are always looking for ways to improve.

Comm. Morgan said in our city Charter, show me the benefit of change, he doesn't see the need for an additional meeting if all we are going to do is go in circles. Mayor Arnold said the purpose of the meeting tonight was not for a decision but to look at the benefits of changing government and the Charter.

Mr. Terry Griffin, 253 Grandview Avenue, said that the Commission needs to take the Charter line by line and make the changes that need to be made. He said it doesn't do any good to just argue the form of government when what should be changed is the Charter. Comm. Hamilton said we didn't have to go through that, we don't need to do that. Mr. Griffin said if we are not following the Charter we can't just sit here, he suggested last time to examine the Charter not the form of government, that this was a "Charter Review" workshop not a change in government.

Mayor Arnold said we would hold another workshop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April at 6 PM.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to be brought before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Adjourn

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John B. Arnold, Jr.  
Mayor

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Heyward H. Strong, Jr.  
Chair, VCA

ATTEST:

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Tammy Johnson, CMC  
City Clerk

April 1, 2013

\*\*\*The DVD labeled April 1, 2013 contains the audio and video of this meeting and will be kept as a permanent part of these minutes.\*\*\*