

The President called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. after the Invocation, given by Blake Harris, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk, McKenzie Spriggs, called the roll and the following Commissioners responded: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer and Dave Waddington. Commissioners Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Naomi Twine and Mike Meinzer were in attendance via teleconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Wes Poole was excused from the meeting with a motion by Dave Waddington and a second by Naomi Twine

City staff present: Stuart Hamilton – IT Manager

City staff via teleconference: Justin Harris – Interim Law Director, Michelle Reeder – Finance Director, Eric Wobser – City Manager, Matt Lasko – Chief Development Officer, Josh Snyder – Assistant City Engineer, Rick Wilcox – Fire Chief, McKenzie Spriggs – Commission Clerk

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Sharon Johnson, via email: rolliejohnson@buckeye-express.com, said even though the City Manager will be able to spend up to \$25,000 without the commission approval, if passed, she would like to know if the city manager can write contracts, such as service contracts for consultants, or any other contracts that need to be written for the expenditure without the commission's legislation approval?

She does not think the commission should be passing any of these Charter amendments without the actual legal ballot language inserted into the legislation that is presented tonight. The full description is missing, but for the fact the commission is up against a deadline and missing an attorney to write out the description, the amendment language is being haphazardly put together. (Item #4)

REGULAR AGENDA

ITEM #1 – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 4 OF THE CITY CHARTER: RESIDENCY QUALIFICATIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 20-109: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for the submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 4 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by reducing the minimum residency requirement for city commission candidates from three (3) years to eighteen (18) months, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Naomi Twine and second of Dave Waddington, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Nays: 0. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance passed under suspension of the rules and in accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

ITEM #2 – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 6 OF THE CITY CHARTER: SALARY OF CITY COMMISSIONERS

ORDINANCE NO. 20-110: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for the submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 6 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by establishing the salary of the city commissioners to meet the minimum salary required to qualify as full service credit with the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Dave Waddington and second of Dennis Murray, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Discussion: Dennis Murray said to address the question from Ms. Johnson, the language as it will be presented on the ballot is contained in the legislation. He said he realizes it is not contained in the summary description of the legislation that is on the agenda, but if one takes a look at the details in the legislation itself, it contains the precise language that will appear on the ballot.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Nays: 0. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance passed under suspension of the rules and in accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

ITEM #3 – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 16 OF THE CITY CHARTER: PRICE AND MODE OF PUBLICATION

FAILED: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for the submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 16 of the charter of the of city of Sandusky by requiring additional publications, of certain legislative action taken by the city commission, by means of online notification and postings in public places designated by the city commission, and when publishing in a newspaper, by title only, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Naomi Twine and second of Dave Waddington, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Discussion: Dennis Murray said upon further reflection he doesn't believe he supports this proposed charter change. He thinks it takes us in the wrong direction with transparency and he will be opposing that.

Dick Brady said this change has come up in the past and has not been successful with our electorate for a variety of reasons. One of those reasons is not just the transparency issue but the other issue is not all residents have the benefit of an internet access. Few of our residents will take the time, or make the effort, to come down to city hall to pick up a copy of legislation, even if they are keenly interested. That is asking them to make quite an effort, to do that. He thinks this is probably the wrong time to narrow transparency, and if anything we should be expanding our transparency. This review does the opposite so he is opposed also.

Dave Waddington said he read it over a couple times and bounced it off of a few people. He does not know if by title only in the newspaper is enough. For the older citizens and seniors, they may want to read it, in the hard copy. It will be available other places as well, for example online. But he thinks it is critical to keep it in the Register. He agrees with Dennis Murray that we should be as transparent as possible.

Mike Meinzer said he appreciates the charter review committee who thought about this. It comes up every time the charter review committees meet as a way to save money, but right now with the economy, internet costs high, and folks losing their jobs, he thinks it would be the wrong time to eliminate this.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: 0. Nays: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: 0. Nays: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance failed.

ITEM #4 – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 25 OF THE CITY CHARTER: EXPENDITURES

ORDINANCE NO. 20-111: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for the submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 25 of the city charter of the city of Sandusky adjusting the expenditure thresholds requiring competitive bidding and city commission approval, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Dennis Murray and second of Naomi Twine, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Discussion: Dave Waddington asked if the ordinance sets the limit at \$25,000. Dick Brady clarified we're moving from a threshold of \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Dennis Murray said there's no mention of the threshold number in the title of the legislation but if you go to the actual legislation in our material, you will see it is the \$25,000 that we discussed at the last meeting. He wanted to point out, this legislation is a bit counter intuitive. It sounds as though we would be getting less competitive bidding and inferior pricing, but exactly the opposite is true when digging into it. What we have heard and seen is that we have bidders that say it is too complicated to go through this entire process. We don't get the same number of bids we would get. By moving to \$25,000 it is important to note, we are still half the threshold of every single government around us. This is a timely move and I will support it.

Dick Brady said it is true we are going from \$10,000 to \$25,000 on the expenditures, but we are going from \$10,000 to \$50,000 on the competitive bidding side.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Nays: 0. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance passed under suspension of the rules and in accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

ITEM #5 – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 27 OF THE CITY CHARTER: CIVIL SERVICE CHIEF MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Discussion: Prior to reading the ordinance, Dick Brady said Item #5 is a multiple choice and asked interim law director Justin Harris to explain. Justin Harris said also in hopes to answer Ms. Johnson's question, his predecessor Trevor Hayberger worked on this in conjunction with outside council at Squire Patton Boggs, and all three of them have reviewed the legislation. Item #5 is an amendment to Section 27 of the city charter with respect to the Chief qualifications for both Fire and Police. The commission is presented with two options: an ordinance that addresses both Police and Fire within the same ordinance or an option that splits police and fire into two separate ordinances, outlining different qualifications for both departments. Prior to the motion, a simple majority is needed as to which ordinance someone would like to move.

Dick Brady asked if his instruction to the commission clerk should be to read the ordinance that combines police and fire and then ask for a motion to proceed with the discussion of that item.

Justin Harris said yes and then explained that if the motion or ordinance fails, the assumption is that the commission desires to move onto separate ordinances for police and fire.

FAILED: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 27 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by amending the minimum qualifications to be considered for appointment to the Chief of the Department or Division of Police and for the Chief of the Department or Division of Fire, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Naomi Twine and second of Dave Waddington, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Discussion: Mike Meinzer said he is going to vote no as he would like to see the options split.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, 4. Nays: Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 2. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, 4. Nays: Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 2. The President declared the ordinance failed as there was not a super majority as is needed to propose changes to the city charter.

ITEM #5A – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 27 OF THE CITY CHARTER: CIVIL SERVICE FIRE CHIEF MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 20-112: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 27 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by amending the minimum qualifications to be considered for appointment to the Chief of the Department or Division of Fire, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Naomi Twine and second of Dennis Murray, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Discussion: Dennis Murray said he favors expanding the pool of applicants for both the Chief of Police and the Chief of Fire. The ordinance was written in a different time and era, when we had a much more stratified leadership structure in both organizations. Since then, it has been significantly flattened, and today we see qualified candidates with decades of experience who are ineligible because of antiquated provision in our charter. Some say we could have a sergeant rank become the Police Chief, and that is not always inappropriate. There are some fantastic sergeants in other departments or outside the city. I'm specifically thinking at the Erie County Sheriff's Office who have those qualifications. He trusts two things, the search committee to search through and decide who is qualified and who is not, who has sufficient experience and who does not; second, he trusts the city manager to decide the same thing. For those reasons, he supports this legislation.

Naomi Twine said as mentioned at the last commission meeting, she agrees that expanding the hiring pool to include those cities and communities who may have a different structure than what we have at the city of Sandusky. She is always supportive of hiring and promoting from within but looks at it from a standpoint of increasing our diversity pool and the outreach to other areas that will allow us to get the best possible candidate. She supports this legislation and supports separating Fire and Police, and letting the public determine the final outcome.

Mike Meinzer said he will vote no based on Chief Wilcox's recommendation to vote no. He thinks they went too broad on the applicants and these qualifications could include half the fire fighters in the state of Ohio. He doesn't mind expanding the pool, but thinks they went too broad.

Dick Brady said he and Mike Meinzer have had discussions around this. He wonders if Mike Meinzer has an objection to any specific rank, and thinks any specific rank does not belong in the description. For instance is he okay with lieutenants or captains being qualified for Chief, but perhaps not a fire marshal?

Mike Meinzer said the fire marshal is a 40 hour class, and that is a criteria met by many entry level fire fighters. Lieutenants, he's not so sure about but he's not against lieutenants being included. He feels a fire marshal doesn't have the qualifications, unless they have experience on the ground and with emergency medical services. That person then would also carry a rank of lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, battalion chief, deputy chief, or chief. That is like saying an engineer is training criteria to run an engine. It is not technical rank in the structure that could handle a disaster or take charge. He reiterated what Chief Wilcox said last week, we get tied up in technical jargon. He used the word "command" and recommends people who are in command, or being in charge, meaning someone should be in charge of something in their career before eligible to become chief.

Dick Brady clarified, is Mike Meinzer stuck on “Fire Marshal” being included in the language? Would he consider amending the language to remove the qualification of fire marshal for chief, and then support it?

Mike Meinzer said yes, he would like to do that if allowed.

Justin Harris explained amending the language is possible. They would need a motion to amend the legislation, then a super majority to pass.

Upon motion of Mike Meinzer, to remove the title of “Fire Marshal” from the legislation, and second of Dave Waddington.

Additional discussion: Dave Waddington said he was going to be a no vote. Sandusky is a small composite of a larger community and with us cutting manpower and no crystal ball moving forward, it would be difficult to make choices about additional cuts. It is about the safety of the community. He had several conversations with Mike Meinzer and will support the amendment going forward.

Naomi Twine said she understands Mike Meinzer’s position and what Chief Wilcox expressed at the last meeting when she requested clarification on his position. She does not want us to get stuck looking at this right now, at one moment in time. She believes the Fire Chief Search committee will do their due justice and diligence in vetting people that apply for the position. She is leaning toward opening up the pool of applicants, knowing it does not mean everyone who applies is going to get an interview or chosen to be part of the interview process. This will be legislation that if passed, will be in effect for at least the next ten years. Things will change and adjust, and she has enough confidence in an interview team to properly assess the experience of the applicants. Those that rise to the top, will rise based on their years of experience. A lot of this goes into diverse communities, their education level, how they interact with others. She does not want this commission to get stuck on terminology either, and will support the amendment he is requesting, but wants to emphasize the fact that she would prefer to have a larger pool of applicants that can be vetted and meet a number of qualifications.

Roll call on the amended motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the motion to amend the legislation, to delete the rank of “fire marshal,” passed.

McKenzie Spriggs reread the ordinance description, with the commission understanding the new legislation will remove the rank of “Fire Marshal” from the formal ordinance language.

Ordinance No. 20-112: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 27 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by amending the minimum qualifications to be considered for appointment to the Chief of the Department or Division of Fire, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Mike Meinzer and second of Dennis Murray, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Nays: 0. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance passed under suspension of the rules and in accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

ITEM #5B – Ordered in 7.27.20

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 27 OF THE CITY CHARTER: CIVIL SERVICE FIRE CHIEF MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 20-113: It is requested an ordinance be passed providing for submission to the electors of the city of Sandusky of a proposed amendment to Section 27 of the charter of the city of Sandusky by amending the minimum qualifications to be considered for appointment to the Chief of the Department or Division of Police, and declaring an emergency.

Upon motion of Dave Waddington and second of Blake Harris, the commission voted to pass this ordinance under suspension of the rules and in full accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

Roll call on the motion: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. Nays: 0. Roll call on the ordinance: Yeas: Blake Harris, Dennis Murray, Dick Brady, Naomi Twine, Mike Meinzer, Dave Waddington, 6. The President declared the ordinance passed under suspension of the rules and in accordance with Section 14 of the city charter.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Dave Waddington and second of Naomi Twine, the commission voted to adjourn at 5:37 p.m. The President declared the motion passed.



McKenzie Spriggs
Commission Clerk



Richard Brady
President of the City Commission