

SPECIAL REVIEW & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

APRIL 4, 2023

A Special Review & Oversight Committee meeting was held on April 4, 2023, at North Royalton City Hall, 14600 State Road. The meeting was called to order at 6:44 p.m.

PRESENT: Committee Members: Chair Jeremy Dietrich, Paul Marnecheck, John Nickell; Council: Linda Barath, Joanne Krejci, Mike Wos, Heidi Webber; Administration: Mayor Larry Antoskiewicz; Other: Joel Spatz, Vincent Weimer.

Mr. Marnecheck moved to excuse Mr. Dietrich from voting on the September 6, 2022 Review and Oversight Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Nickell. Yeas: 2; Nays:0. **Motion Carried.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the September 6, 2022 Committee minutes and October 4, 2022 Special Review and Oversight minutes. Moved by Mr. Marnecheck, seconded by Mr. Nickell. Yeas: 2 Nays: 0. **Motion Carried.**

NEW BUSINESS

1. Article III; The Council; Terms; Wards
 - Council Term Limits

Ms. Krejci shared something that had raised question in her mind, as to whether two years is the right term. She felt this was something worth discussing. She had a previous conversation with a resident who inquired when she was up for election again, in which she responded, “this year.” The resident conveyed that it seemed as though she was just elected last year. She expressed that time and money goes into every election. She went on to say she likes the School Board’s practice, whereas they have four-year terms every two years, and it is staggered. She felt there would at least be some continuity and new people, rather than everyone being new at the same time. She realized this is something that has to go to the voters. She believed that the voters in the City may not like change. However, this was something she wanted to bring up; whether we are content with the two years.

Mr. Dietrich asked if this subject has come up before. Mr. Nickell indicated that it has. He mentioned that the Charter Review did not want to change it in the past. Mayor Antoskiewicz agreed that there have been discussions. He felt that when you start to stagger them, no one should be able to run from the safe seat. Mr. Dietrich agreed. The Mayor commented that when staggering them, you are going to have a two-year spot; the Mayor and President of Council are up because they have four-year terms. He reiterated that you should not be allowed to run from the safe seat. Mayor Antoskiewicz felt that if you stagger it, there should be something in place that states you cannot keep the spot that you are running; that you currently hold. Mr. Dietrich questioned if the Mayor liked the idea of staggering it with that exception. Mayor Antoskiewicz was unsure if he prefers staggering, however he understands the point of it.

Ms. Krejci felt that was a good point. Mayor Antoskiewicz noted that he has seen it in other cities. He spoke of one scenario, whereas if a regular Council person ran for an At-large seat, and they lose the At-large, then they are still on Council. He personally did agree with running it that way. He expressed that if you are going to run for something, you run for it; that should be your intent. His opinion was that if you stagger, something needs to be included to where you cannot run from a safe seat; or you just run them all four years consecutively. He wanted to caution that if we attempt to do it, people may view it as, you’re doing it for yourself, verses if you do it after the November election. If you address it and act on it, then it is for whomever runs in the future, which seems to go over better.

Mr. Dietrich wanted to know if it were to be put on the ballot this fall and it were to pass, whether it would be for the people that were elected this fall; or in going forward. Mr. Kelly explained that it would be prospective

only. Mr. Dietrich felt that it would not benefit us now. He went on to say that if we are going to entertain this, and there is overwhelming support, then we should go ahead. Mr. Kelly agreed. He pointed out that the effective date can be fixed in the amendment itself, otherwise it would be effective, because it becomes effective upon the approval of the Board of Elections. He noted that the certification, which would be in advance of the term for which you were running, starts on January 1st.

Mr. Nickell agreed that this has been talked about a lot. He continued that most Council seats do not even have opposition; some have a couple. He felt that we should go for it. Mr. Dietrich agreed. Mr. Nickell stated that we are not deciding; we are giving the question to the people. Mr. Kelly explained that because we have term limits now of two years/six terms, we would end up having to amend the Charter in two different ways. As discussion ensued, Mr. Kelly mentioned that we may possibly have to repeal the entire section and adopt a brand-new section.

Mr. Marnecheck made suggestion of leaving it to the Charter Review Board. Mr. Dietrich disagreed, as well as Mr. Vos. Mr. Nickell also disagreed, stating that the last two times, the Charter Review would not act on it. Mr. Vos has also had many conversations with residents, whereas the majority were surprised by the current terms. He continued that many people do not realize it is two years and they express that it is silly. He spoke of our past experience, whereas everyone was coming in brand new, and the whole slate was basically wiped. Then we had a lot of things thrown at us; those of us that were here in that first term. Four years and staggering it would be a great solution. He pointed out that you would have the experience and time of some people, and then they could help the brand-new people and provide some insight. He was in agreement that this is what should be done. He agreed with the Mayor's point, stating that if you are on a cycle where you do not have to run for your position but the At-large positions are open, then you should have to resign in order to run for those; that is fair. He agreed 100%. Mr. Dietrich raised concern as to when you would resign and also petitions. Mr. Vos clarified, when you submit them in August; that is when you make your judgement call. As discussion continued, Mr. Kelly asked if there was any support for eliminating term limits all together, in which there was none.

Resident, Vincent Weimer of 19190 Tanglewood Drive, stated this was something he had talked about as well. He stated it is really difficult to get consistency of government when one of the big parts of your government is turning over every two years. He felt that this is not about trying to get a power grab, but about trying to make sure we are getting consistency for our community and moving it forward. He felt there would be a large majority of residents that would be interested in hearing that conversation. He agreed that if we go to four-years, and staggered, then the President of Council and the Mayor should be staggered as well. He felt those are two of the highest authorities within the government system, so you are staggering that authority as well; he felt that is important. He agreed that our Charter Review did not want to pick this up. If this is ever going to happen, it would have to entail Council putting it out to the residents; that is in the best interest of the City. He reiterated that it is not a power grab, but a true desire to want to move that conversation that we have all been having with residents, and we want consistency.

Ms. Webber commented that she was surprised to have discovered that everybody had ran at the same time. To her, continuity of government services is extremely important and also, that causes headache for the Department Heads. She went on to say if you turn over your whole Council, then they are just starting at ground zero; you are trying to get people up to speed. Whereas, if you are running half of your Council, you have people that know what is going on. She was thankful that was the case for her recently. To have everyone new, is difficult and not fair to the citizens. Mr. Dietrich raised concern as to how the process would get started. Ms. Webber suggested that three people could draw straws. Ms. Krejci noted three people have a two-year term, and three people have a four-year term. Ms. Webber agreed, stating that in going forward, you are going to the two-year term, which your residents will know you have the two-year term; they will be aware of what is happening. She expressed the importance of doing it early if you put it out to the residents.

Mr. Dietrich asked about the status of the Mayor and the Council President then, in which Mr. Marnecheck did not believe that could be changed; they have already started the petitions. Mayor Antoskiewicz did not want people to be confused if you try and write all of that up. He was unsure what would be the easiest way. Ms.

Krejci stated that if it were decided as every four years, it should probably be on the 'off' two years for the Mayor and President of Council. Mr. Marnecheck spoke on the topic, explaining that three people run in 2023, a different three people run in 2025, and the ones that ran in 2023 would run in 2027. Mr. Dietrich agreed; that made sense. Ms. Webber concurred.

Mayor Antoskiewicz felt that the simplest way would be to put it on the ballot; four years for Council. Mr. Nickell agreed. Ms. Krejci pointed out that we would have one two-year timeframe where people would not be bombarded with signs in their yards, etc. Mr. Nickell shared that he has also had similar conversations with residents about the term. Mr. Dietrich brought up that petitions were already pulled this year and he wanted to clarify whether it would be too late to add it to this year. Mr. Kelly was uncertain. Mr. Dietrich offered to make a call to the Board to see if additional signatures are needed. Mr. Marnecheck felt that we are changing what the position is. Mayor Antoskiewicz disagreed, stating only the term and not the job. Mr. Dietrich agreed. Mr. Marnecheck reiterated that part of the job is the amount of time you are signing up to commit to it. Mayor Antoskiewicz commented that he has never known a person to refuse the job because of the term. Mr. Marnecheck just wanted to point that out; he was not saying that they would.

As many great points were discussed, Mr. Kelly stated that all of this would be dependent upon the electorate anyhow. He went over the potential process, with the commencing on January 1. Secondly, the electorate approves it at the November election at the same time that you, presumably, are re-elected to your positions; that could be done. Trying to fit staggering into that equation creates another level of difficulty; not that it is not a good idea. He stated that it is done in many communities all over the state. The amendment itself would have to craft specific wards that would get two-year terms to allow for the staggering roll forward on that kind of a basis. Mr. Dietrich believed that Strongsville has it staggered as well, as many of them do. He went on to say that we are the group that would have to bear the confusion or the lesser term; it would depend. We would have to come up with a scenario to decide. Mr. Marnecheck noted that Strongsville is somewhat different, with four wards and three At-large. Mayor Antoskiewicz was not aware of any Council that has staggered terms. Mr. Kelly knew of other cities that have them. As discussion continued, Mr. Dietrich liked Mr. Weimer's idea of staggering the positions of Mayor and President of Council as well. Mr. Marnecheck mentioned the system that is closest to ours is Parma, whereas they have nine wards and one At-large. He believed that they do it the same way; two years for the wards, four years for the At-large. Mr. Kelly noted that Parma is a statutory city, as opposed to a charter. Mr. Vos pointed out that they appoint certain positions as well. Mayor Antoskiewicz spoke of different ways that he has seen it voted in other cities.

Mr. Dietrich believed that most were in favor of a four-year term for Council. Mr. Nickell stated that he was in support of the four years, as well as Ms. Barath, Ms. Krejci, Mr. Dietrich, Ms. Webber, and Mr. Vos. Mr. Marnecheck was in support of two; not four. Mr. Dietrich pointed out the majority of Council supported the four years. Everyone agreed that we could do more research. Mr. Dietrich mentioned calling another Special R & O Meeting. Mayor Antoskiewicz questioned the deadline, in which Ms. Schroeder clarified that it was September. Mr. Dietrich felt that there is plenty of time.

Mr. Vos commented on concern of the number of signatures needed. He would imagine the reason that the ward is 25 versus 50, is because you are running in a smaller population; it has nothing to do with the length of service. Mr. Dietrich felt that was a good point. He reiterated he would check with the Board of Elections. He would work with Ms. Schroeder. Ms. Krejci preferred to call a special meeting sooner rather than later, if we are thinking of doing something. If this is something we want to do, we need to start sooner. Mr. Dietrich mentioned having a meeting in May. Ms. Krejci agreed that would be a great idea.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Dietrich, seconded by Mr. Nickell to **adjourn the April 4, 2023 Special Review and Oversight Committee meeting**. Yeas: 3; Nays:0. **Motion Carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

