

MINUTES – DRAFT COPY
OWATONNA CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING

The 2020 Annual Meeting of the Owatonna Charter Commission was held Thursday, July 16, 2020 in Council Chambers at City Hall. Chairman Vern Wilker called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Present were Commission Members: Ken Henricksen; Brian Whited; Vern Wilker; Roland Truelson; Nick Lewis; John Havelka; Don Overlie and Brad Bloomenrader. Also present were City Attorney Mark Walbran, City Administrator Kris Busse, City Council Member Okerberg and Administrative Specialist Jeanette Clawson. Commission Members Janice Lewison and Sharon Klein were unable to attend.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Havelka made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented, Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

Minutes of the April 18, 2019 meeting were distributed and reviewed. Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes as prepared, Commissioner Henricksen seconded the motion; all members present voted aye for approval.

Chairman Wilker asked for nominations to serve as the Commission Chairman. Commissioner Henricksen made a motion to reappoint Vern Wilker as the Chairperson, Commissioner Havelka seconded the motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

Chairman Wilker requested nominations for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Lewis nominated Commissioner Lewison for reappointment; Commissioner Whited seconded the motion; all members present voted aye for approval.

During Items of Concern, Commissioner Wilker asked if the City's Charter included information similar to the City of Minneapolis regarding leadership of the Police Department. City Attorney Walbran advised the Owatonna Police Department is a Guardian Department. City Administrator Busse commented the Minneapolis City Charter is unique, under the original Owatonna Charter, the Mayor served as the head of the Police Department, but this changed with the amendment completed in 1990.

Commissioner Lewis questioned if membership on the Charter Commission terminates if a member moved out of the ward they were appointed to represent. Administrative Specialist Clawson provided membership requirements per the City's Charter: "A person shall be eligible for appointment to any city board or commission who is an eligible voter and who has maintained residence in the City for thirty (30) days before appointment." Some appointments do designate ward representation, but ward residency is not a requirement; membership would not end if the members relocation is within city limits.

City Council Member Okerberg asked the commission to consider council members receive per diems when attending meetings and not receive a flat salary as the number of meetings and citizen engagements has increased over recent years. City Administrator Bussed advised Minnesota State Statue does not allow elected officials to increase their current salaries, any changes approved would become effective after the next election when new members are seated. City Attorney Walbran commented Council approved Ordinance 1540 on July 5, 2016 which requires quadrennial review of our city's Elected Official's Salaries. A Salary Review was completed during 2014 to increase salaries effective January 1, 2015 and a Salary Review done during April 2018 increased salaries effective January 1, 2019. Commissioner Overlie asked what has changed. City Administrator Busse explained the council position has changed over the last several years as more citizens have become involved and additional interactions are made such as neighborhood meetings, pop-up meetings, presentations to social groups and other meetings. Commissioner Bloomenrader suggested a 10-year Participation

Comparison be made detailing the number of council activities and responsibilities. Commissioner Whited made a motion Administration complete a survey of surrounding communities similar in size for Council Member Salary Amounts and a list of the meetings their Council Members attend. Commissioner Overlie seconded the motion and all members present approved.

City Attorney Walbran commented many cities of comparable size do provide per diems. Commissioner Lewis suggested this survey also include inquiry of which method each city uses to pay their elected officials. Commissioner Bloomenrader commented the Charter Commission discussed recommending payment by per diem during the 2019 Meeting and there was a unanimous consensus to not consider changing to the per diem pay process. Commissioner Wilker asked when information would need to be submitted to Council for their consideration. City Administrator Busse explained it would have been ideal to have this available during the annual budget planning process. Budget discussions begin late June each year with Department Directors and a Preliminary Budget to Council during September. The Charter Commission usually holds their annual meeting during April allowing recommendations to be made prior to preliminary budget discussions; this year COVID-19 concerns delayed this Charter Commission Meeting several months so any recommendation made, should be made soon. Commissioner Wilker asked if a special meeting could be held in August to review survey results. Commissioner Henricksen asked if Council would recommend use of a per diem method. City Attorney Walbran commented it is role of the Council to establish salaries and the Charter Commission makes recommendation for Council actions. During 2014, the Charter Commission recommended Council consider salary increases as there had not been a raise in the Elected Official salaries for 18 years. Commissioner Bloomenrader made a motion a recommendation be sent to Council that they consider adjustment to their salary amounts, Commissioner Truelson seconded the motion. Commissioner Wilker commented this could be done with no additional commission meeting to review results of a salary survey. Commissioner Whited rescinded his motion requesting a comparable city survey, Commissioner Overlie also rescinded his second for a comparable city survey, with no additional comments, all members present voted aye. City Administrator will share the commission's recommendation that Council review their current salary amounts.

City Attorney Walbran commented the City's Charter serves as the City's Constitution and amendments are carefully considered. The City's founders have authorized staff to do what is needed to operate and only 27 amendments have been made to the Charter. Charter Section 1.4, Powers of the City, allows the City to make and enforce local police, sanitary and other regulations and may do and perform all other things necessary or convenient for maintaining and promoting the peace, good government, and welfare of the City and for the performance of all functions thereof. The City shall have full power to deal with all matters of municipal concern and have complete self-government in harmony with and subject to the Constitution and Laws of the State of Minnesota..

With no additional business, Commissioner Havelka made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Truelson seconded the motion; all members present voted aye and the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

The next commission meeting will be the Annual 2021 Meeting on the third Thursday in April, April 21, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Clawson, Administrative Specialist