



City of Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission

Questions for Members of Council, City Manager, Department Directors and Chairs of Boards and Commissions

The Commission has been specifically directed by City Council to look at some critical parts of the City Charter, such as the form of government. However, as part of that effort, the Commission wants to be sure to deal with any provision that needs attention. To help ascertain views of the form of government as well as what provisions need attention, the Commission is sending out this brief survey. The questions are open ended, so you can fully express your views. You may also suggest specific changes to any provision.

In addition, the Commission may invite some respondents to attend a meeting of the Commission to further explain their views.

If you have any questions on the survey, you can contact Dr. Larry Keller, Commission Facilitator, at 216-496-4184. Please return completed surveys either by E-Mail to Dr. Larry Keller at lkeller@clvhhs.com, or by envelope to Susanna O'Neil, Assistant City Manager, snoneil@clvhhs.com. If desired, department heads and chairs of boards and commissions can return surveys without any identity.

Please return completed surveys by Monday, 15 January.

First, I am somewhat disappointed to get a survey given that Section 1, second paragraph of the enacted ordinance says “Before making any recommendations, the Commission shall conduct due diligence including, but not limited to, interviewing current and former staff, current and former elected officials.....”.

Second, I personally have not had enough time to review thus my submission may well be supplemented or I may speak in the public portion of a Commission meeting in the future.

Third, I respectfully disagree with the first sentence of this document - “The Commission has been specifically directed by the City Council to look at some critical parts of the City Charter, such as the form of government.” The memo, dated March 15, 2017 quotes the Charter itself “ Article XV, Charter Review: Council shall, at least once during a ten-year period, by ordinance or resolution determine whether to appoint a Charter Review Commission to review the entire Charter.” The enacted resolution 43-2017 says in Section 1 “There is hereby established a Charter Review Commission to review the Charter of the City of Cleveland Heights.” The March 15 memo lists form of government as one of several examples.

1. What parts of the Charter should be considered by the Commission, without necessarily implying that you believe a change should or should not be made.

The three (3) most important elements for consideration, not necessarily in order of importance to you.

Any remaining elements, preferably in order of importance to you.

As noted in the March 15 memo, form of government is one listed in addition to gender neutrality language, clean up other obsolete language, anti-discrimination language, emergency actions, term limits. (I personally vacillate about the issue of term limits.)

I would suggest also a review of several other sections to determine if the current reality is reflected, Some examples include Article V, Section 1, Departments and Section II Directors. Additionally, there should be discussion about the Police and Fire Chiefs having to be approved by majority of Council.

Any other changes related to changing the form of government should be evaluated by addressing:

What is the problem we are trying to solve?

How will a changed form of government affect the balance we seek on issues of representation, policy leadership, and administrative efficiency?

What are the consequences of the change?

There is some interest in “ward representation.” It is my understanding that the 5 current wards constituted as boundaries for electoral purposes are not necessarily census based. Perhaps a mixture of both ward (or some kind of geographic representation) and at large representation should be considered. In my opinion, we should consider our neighboring cities with total ward representation in the evaluation.

There is some interest in changing from a City Manager to a “Strong Mayor.” I have concerns about the impact of such a change on the Departments heads of the city. The potential of having a new boss every 2 years would be disruptive and impact long term planning. Not sure what the problem is we would be solving. I understand East Cleveland had a City Manager form of government.

A mayor could be directly elected without changing the basic form of government. The office of mayor could be separated from other Council offices and one could run just for mayor.

2. For each part identified in Question 1, explain briefly,
- (a) why the item should be considered and if you think a change may be warranted, then
 - (b) what the change should be and why.

Previously addressed.

3. Identify any change or changes you have observed in the facts and circumstances of the city (other than personnel changes in the City Council or City Administration) in the five (5) years since the on-cycle determination by Council in 2012 that no charter review was warranted. Note the changes that warrant this off-cycle review, and how any such changes relate to what you noted in Questions 1 and 2 above.

In 2016, my initial thoughts about a Charter Review Commission were it was not necessary given the other priorities identified by Council. My thinking changed when I became aware that discussions were taking place about the issue with a specific agenda pre-determined regarding potential changes. I believed a more robust review with enhanced transparency and inclusiveness was warranted.

4. What parts of the current structure of the City government are: (a) serving the City well; (b) not serving the City well?

I am not convinced the structure should change. We have processes that need to be examined and evaluated. One has to do with the accountability of the Council for the evaluation of the City Manager. Citizens need to have assurances that Council is providing appropriate oversight of the City Manager and by extension the City.

Other examples of processes that need examination have to do with communication about how decisions are made, identification of reasonable metrics by which achievement of goals (as well as delivery of services) can be measured, evaluation of unexpected events for root causes and process improvement changes, integration and implementation of the Master Plan. We also have numerous Boards, Commissions, and Council Committees that should be evaluated to be if they are relevant in addressing our current needs.

Enhanced collaboration with the school board should be a major priority. Some examples include disconnects with local realtors as well as the voucher issues.