



# RAVENNA CITY COUNCIL

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## RAVENNA CHARTER COMMISSION MINUTES

Ravenna City Council Chambers  
Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at 6:00pm

**The Charter Review Commission Meeting was held in person and was called to order at 6:01pm.**

### Roll Call

The following Commission Members were present: Chairperson Dirk Remley, Vice Chair Mark E. Smith, Antoinette Austin, Denna Tannert, Gail Jones-Nemeth, Jonathan P. Jennings, Mike Bogo, Octavia Jones, Rory R. Becker, Sharon Spencer, Steven Farhat, Michael Smith II.

Also in attendance: Mayor Frank Seman; Law Director, Frank Cimino, Clerk of Council, Chelsea Gregor; Councilperson Paul Moskun, Kali Roberts, Betsy Brown

Absent: Carmen Laudato

### Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the February 16, 2022, meeting minutes by Mark E. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Michael Smith II- **All Ayes**

### Approval of the Agenda

- Motion to approve the March 2, 2022, meeting minutes by Mark E. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dirk Remley- **All Ayes**

### Charter Reading

Dirk Remley reiterated a few points from the previous meeting. He stated that the Mayor said that a Mayor is better than a City Manager for the City of Ravenna, and that for the salary, it will be hard to find a qualified person to take the position. The pros and cons were addressed.

- Steven Farhat stated that the position of City Manager was discussed at length in 2017 and made a motion to state that the Commission is satisfied with Article 2 as is.
  - Motion to be satisfied with Article 2 as is by Steven Farhat, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dirk Remley- **All Ayes**
- Deena Tannert inquired about qualifications for Mayor. Mark E. Smith stated that he is okay as it is set up and stated that the Mayor is the CEO of the city. Gail Jones-Nemeth stated that it is up to the voters to decide if the qualification for the candidates is sufficient. Dirk Remley stated that the voters can decide at election time.
- Mike Bogo addressed the discussion of qualifications for the Finance Director and stated that it is important to look at the position since they oversee a 30-50 million dollar enterprise.
- Deena Tannert requested to continue through the subsections to talk about powers.

- Gail Jones-Nemeth addressed the section IV-2- Removal and part (e) which addresses the process. Section 4.2 was addressed due to its stated redundancy with Article 24. Cliff Soudil addressed the Commission and asked about public comment. He was given permission to address the Commission and stated his concern for the procedure for an elected official who is convicted of a crime while in office and was concerned for the language since a criminal scenario had occurred in the past. The topic of a felony while in office was addressed to differentiate a person having an existing felony which Deena Tannert stated could be held by a changed person.
- The discussion of public comment was addressed again, and Gail Jones-Nemeth stated that the Mayor and the Law Director have been waiting. Steven Farhat suggested that the Commission open the meeting halfway through to allow for public comment.
  - Motion to open public comment halfway through the meeting by Steven Farhat, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Antoinette Austin- Steven Farhat, Antoinette Austin, Dirk Remley, Vice Chair Mark E. Smith, Denna Tannert, Jonathan P. Jennings, Mike Bogo, Octavia Jones, Rory R. Becker, Sharon Spencer, Michael Smith II.- **All Ayes**, Gail Jones-Nemeth- **No**
- Commission members expressed concern and frustration for time spent discussing public comment. Mayor Seman stated that he was impressed with the way the Commission is managing differences of opinion, adding that the Commission is the public comment that was appointed to give feedback on the Charter Review. He said by that by focusing on public comment it subjugates what the Commission is there to accomplish. It was agreed that the Commission represents a wide demographic and that they were the public chosen to give input.
- It was suggested to move forward with Articles 5 & 6, and then finish Article 4 when interviewing Mayor Seman.
- It was stated that 5.1 could be reorganized by putting it under the Mayor. Denna Tannert referred to the organization flow chart of City Administration and it was stated that Department Heads are appointed by the Mayor with Council approval, with the exception of the Service Director.
- Gail Jones-Nemeth inquired about the Economic Development Director and the Human Resources Director and their status as a contractor versus a city employee. Mayor Seman explained that they have special contracts, especially the Economic Development Director who has a share contract amongst three entities. The Mayor also added that IT services are contracted out. In response to Jonathan P. Jennings question, contracts are approved through Council.
- Gail Jones- Nemeth addressed the Finance Director and stated “May be fixed by ordinance” is sufficient. Mayor Seman explained that the elected position is until March 2024 and the current Finance Director sets his own hours. After March 2024, the Mayor will be able to appoint the position but there has been no ordinance passed yet to address the new status of the position. Gail asked how many people are in the department and responded that it is thin for what the department entails.
- Mike Bogo inquired if the City had a Board of Control and Mayor Seman stated that the City does and that they must be present when opening bids. They are set up to accept the lowest and best bid.
- Dirk Remley addressed the usual meeting end time of 7:00pm and inquired if the Commission would want to and be able to stay until 7:30pm. The Commission unanimously agreed to hold the meeting until 7:30pm but Antoinette Austin was unable to stay.
  - Motion to stay until 7:30pm by Gail Jones-Nemeth, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mark E. Smith- **All Ayes**
- Article 8 will be discussed with the Law Director.
- The Charter will be renumbered by the Council Clerk
- The qualifications of the Finance Director need to be addressed since it will be an appointed position. Council will be addressing the qualifications, but recommendations can be given to Council.

- Gail Jones-Nemeth asked why the Law Director is an elected position. The Law Director addressed the Commission and explained his experiences with Mayors that were upset with his execution as a Law Director and stated that had he not been elected, his job may have been in jeopardy. Having a Law Director who is elected allows that position to not be influenced by fear of retaliation.
- Jonathan P. Jennings asked who the Law Director serves, and Mr. Cimino stated that he serves the City as a whole and everyone is benefit of his counsel.
- It was addressed to word Article 10.2 differently
- Dirk Remley asked about an elected position vacancy and Mr. Cimino stated that if more that two years were left in a term it would go to an election if it were at least 180 days until an election. If there is less than two years remaining, then the vacancy would be appointed.
- Mr. Cimino stated that he on occasion reaches out for specialty services or help with legal issues that are not his specialty.
- In response to concern over filling the elected Law Director position, Mr. Cimino stated that he believes that there are community members who are qualified and interested in serving as the City's Law Director. He also stated that he would remain in office until his position could be appointed in the case where he did not run again, and no one ran for the position.
- Mayor Seman explained the change in the Finance Director position from elected to appointed. The elected Finance Director qualifications were removed from the Charter because it had been voted to become an appointed position.
- Mike Bogo inquired about ordinances requiring three readings, and Mr. Cimino explained the three-part process of expediting legislation. A motion can be made to waive the three readings which will make the legislation effective in 30 days. A motion can also be made to adopt the emergency clause which will make the legislation effective immediately upon passing. The third is a motion to adopt the ordinance. Out of the 7 voting Council members, there must be a majority of 5 members to pass on the emergency clause.
- Deena Tannert addressed the time allotted to for the Charter Review and asked if it were possible to map out agenda items to ensure enough time to review everything.

**Public Comment:** Betsy Brown addressed the Charter Review Commission to suggest ranked-choice voting in Ravenna elections.

- It was stated that ranked-choice voting can be addressed in Article 10, Section 8- Elections.

**New Agenda Items:**

Discuss:

Article IV- Mayor

Article VI- Mayoral Appointment

Article XVIII- Charter Review Commission

Interview: Mayor Seman

- Motion to adjourn at 7:35pm by Mark E. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Deena Tannert- **All Ayes**