

WESTCHESTER COUNTY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 23, 2012

Members in Attendance: Richard Wishnie, Raymond Belair, Jeff Binder, Herman Geist, Derickson Lawrence, Steve Mayo, Anne McAndrews, Florence McCue, Paul Meissner, Vincenza Restiano, Bertrand Sellier, Paul Windels, Gary Zuckerman

Absent Members: Anita Delgado, Alfred Gatta, Julie Killian, John Mattis, David Menken, Jane Morgenstern, Guy Parisi, Matthew Thomas, Ronald Volino, Sam Zerka

County Staff in Attendance: Justin Adin, Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz, KerriAnn Stout, Chris Crane, Melanie Montalto

Commission Counsel: Lester Steinman

Guests: Jim Robertson, Brian Miller, Milt Hoffman

MINUTES

With a quorum present, Chairman Wishnie called the meeting to order at 7:11 PM.

With a motion by Florence McCue, seconded by Gary Zuckerman the minutes of January 25, 2012 were approved with a vote of 10-0.

Chairman Wishnie introduced Jim Robertson, Assistant Chief Deputy County Attorney, who gave a powerpoint presentation on the Board of Acquisition and Contract. A copy of the presentation is on file and available for review.

The Commission discussed the powers of the Board of A&C, as well as the powers of the County Executive and the Board of Legislators over the Board.

Chairman Wishnie introduced Milt Hoffman, former Senior Editor of the Editorial Page of The Journal News.

Mr. Hoffman discussed how he used his power of the press to make positive changes to the county government. The example that he gave was that he felt that the Board of Acquisition and Contract meetings should be open to the public, and since he published his opinion in the paper the meetings have been open.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he supports county government and he thinks it should get stronger. He explained the history of the current county government structure, including the public voting to establish the office of the county executive as well as changing the board of supervisors to the board of legislators. He explained the history of the financial

cap in the charter that prevents the county from construction projects that cost over \$10 million. Mr. Hoffman asked that the Commission make a change replacing the mandatory referendum with a permissive referendum for the county to do projects over \$10 million. His second suggestion is to have property evaluation assessments done by the county instead of the municipalities. He understands that it would have to be put on a referendum but he says let the voters decide if this is what they want.

Mr. Hoffman also suggested that municipal fire departments be consolidated to save the tax payers a lot of money and to run the fire departments more efficiently. He stated that this idea has been repeatedly suggested in reports over the decades but no one has ever done anything about it. Vincenza Restiano stated that her focus group is beginning to look at consolidation. A discussion ensued regarding consolidation and sharing services.

Chairman Wishnie stated that we will have elections of the vice chairs at the next meeting when everyone is back.

Gary Zuckerman stated that the Executive/Legislative Focus Group will meet on Tuesday the 28th at 11:00 to hear from former county legislators George Latimer and Martin Rogowsky. The meeting will be at Al Gatta's office in Scarsdale.

Vincenza Restiano stated that the Local Government/County Government Relationship Focus Group is investigating consolidation of services possibilities and will invite Luisa M. Iadeluca to the next meeting on March 29th at 530 pm to share her dissertation on the specifics of our focus group, and village managers and city managers to the April meeting.

Florence McCue gave an update on the Charter and Codes Focus Group. She stated that at the last meeting they reviewed their mission statement and received a copy of the full report of the previous charter revision commission to go over their suggestions. She also stated that as recommended by Mr. Steinman and counsel that we look into the role of the county attorney and will be inviting former county attorneys in to speak on specific areas of the charter.

Paul Meissner gave an update on the Budget & Finance Focus Group. He said they set up some parameters of things they would like to achieve and a laundry list of speakers they would like to have in. He stated they do not have another meeting scheduled yet.

Chairman Wishnie stated that the next meeting of the Commission will be on March 29th, 2012 at 7:00 pm.

With a motion by Anne McAndrews seconded by Gary Zuckerman the Charter Revision Commission adjourned at 9:07 pm.