

**WESTCHESTER COUNTY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
JULY 13, 2011**

Members in Attendance: Richard Wishnie, Herman Geist, Julie Killian, John Mattis, Matthew Thomas, Gary Zuckerman, Jeff Binder, Sam Zerka, Ronald Volino, Ann McAndrews, Vincenza Restiano, Raymond Belair, Anita Delgado, Florence McCue, Guy Parisi, Jane Morgenstern, Paul Meissner, Derickson Lawrence, Steve Mayo

Guests in Attendance: Dominica O'Neill

Legislators in Attendance: Ken Jenkins

County Staff in Attendance: George Oros, Jim Castro-Blanco, Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz, Chris Crane, Melanie Montalto

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM.

With a motion by Jane Morgenstern and seconded by Gary Zuckerman the minutes of June 15, 2011 were approved with a vote of 16-0.

George Oros, Chief of Staff to the County Executive presented the County Executive's response to the Commission's request for concerns regarding the Charter. He stated that while the Commission is independent to look at the entire charter, there are three areas that the County Executive has identified that the Commission could look for. The three areas are: redundancies and duplications in charter, outdated language and processes, and consolidation of services. Mr. Oros provided a letter to the Commission which is on file and available for review.

Ken Jenkins, Chairman of the Board of Legislators presented the Board's response to the Commission's request for concerns regarding the Charter. He presented a letter to the Commission referring to the ACT passed creating the Commission and stated that the Board does not want to make any further suggestions to the Commission to ensure that the Commission remains independent and inspects the charter freely. He stated that the Commission was created for no other reason than a routine check as many counties do every ten years. A copy of the letter is on file and available for review.

Interim Chairman Wishnie stated that in the near future we will have presentations from all of the department commissioners in the county and take tours of the facilities so the Commission can become familiar with the county government.

Mr. Binder asked about a public relations operation for the Commission. Chairman Jenkins stated that we are already discussing building a website with the Administration and will provide any PR the Commission needs. Mr. Binder asked if we can send out a press release stating the Commission's meeting schedule so that the press can be aware of the meetings. Mr. Wishnie stated that once a schedule is set we can do that.

Chris Crane of the Board of Legislators showed the Commission how to access and navigate the county charter online. The Commission discussed areas of concern over the organization of the charter and its need to be more user-friendly for the public. A discussion ensued regarding how changes to the charter are made and if there will be resistance to changes the Commission proposes.

Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz and Chris Crane of the County Board of Legislators presented the recommendations of the 1988 Charter Revision Commission and which ones were enacted and which were not. Mr. Crane stated that while there were not many charter and code changes there were policy practice changes. A copy of the recommendations and implementations are on file and available for review.

Interim-Chairman Wishnie began discussing organization of the Commission by asking for a day each month that everyone is available. The Commission circulated a calendar to show when people are available and agreed not to meet in August.

The Commission discussed how many members would be required to set a quorum. Mr. Belair suggested 15 members. The Commissioner agreed, the quorum is set at 15 members.

Interim-Chairman Wishnie asked that anyone who is interested in serving as the Chair, Vice Chair, or Secretary submit their resume to Commission staff and they will be distributed the Commission prior to the September meeting for a vote at that time. Mr. Parisi stated that he hopes the Interim-Chair is considering staying on as Chair. Mr. Wishnie said that he is interested in remaining the Chair. Ms. Restiano said she would like to motion to make Mr. Wishnie the Chairman right now.

Moved by Ms. Restiano and seconded by Dr. Volino, Richard Wishnie is the Chair of the Westchester County Charter Revision Commission with a vote of 19-0.

Chairman Wishnie suggested 5 focus groups to begin doing the work of the Commission. The focus groups are:

- 1) Steering Committee
- 2) Executive/Legislative Relationship
- 3) Budget, Finance & Contracts
- 4) Charter & Code Issues
- 5) County/Local Government Relationship

Mr. Parisi stated that he thinks it may be too soon to break into groups and we need more of an overview. Ms. Killian stated that she thinks is a good starting point and if we need

to we can add to it later. Chairman Wishnie asked that everyone email him with their thoughts on which focus groups they would like to be on.

Mr. Wishnie discussed the lack of diversity on the Commission and stated that we need to get more people who represent the whole face of the County involved. Ms. Killian suggested that this be added to the press release that goes out stating the meetings of the Commission and its makeup.

Mr. Binder asked about focus group number 5, County/Local Government Relationships. Chairman Wishnie used the consolidation of the Ossining Police Department with the County Police as an example and said there are many opportunities like that for us to find in the Charter.

Ms. Delgado stated that she works closely with the Hispanic community and she can reach out to them to help get them involved.

Mr. Lawrence suggested that we add an education focus group. Ms. McCue stated that the state and federal government as well as the local school districts are responsible for funding and regulating public education and the County has no jurisdiction with regard to school funding.

Mr. Castro-Blanco offered to work with Pace Law School to set up 2 interns to help the Commission in time for the Fall semester. Mr. Binder suggested that we reach out to the New York State Association of Counties to get expertise on how other counties operate.

Chairman Wishnie reviewed the calendar that was sent around and stated that no one present has a conflict with the fourth week of the month, so a date in the fourth week of the month will be selected and emailed to everyone soon.

With a motion by Mr. Parisi, seconded by Ms. McCue the Westchester County Charter Revision Commission adjourned at 8:43 pm.