

MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 7, 2013

Members in Attendance: Richard Wishnie, Jeff Binder, Herman Geist, Derickson Lawrence, Steve Mayo, Anne McAndrews, Paul Meissner, Jane Morgenstern, Bertrand Sellier, Matthew Thomas, Gary Zuckerman, Paul Windels

Absent Members: Raymond Belair, Alfred Gatta, Julie Killian, John Mattis, Florence McCue, David Menken, Guy Parisi, Vincenza Restiano, Ronald Volino, Sam Zerka

County Staff in Attendance: Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz, Chris Crane, Justin Adin

Commission Counsel: Lester Steinman

Guests: Frank Mauro, Fiscal Policy Institute;
E.J. McMahon, Empire Center for NYS Policy

MINUTES

Chairman Wishnie called the meeting to order at 7:44 PM.

Chairman Wishnie turned the meeting over to Jeff Binder, chairman of the budget & finance focus group, to introduce the meeting guests and lead discussion. Mr. Binder thanked members and guests for attending and described how the focus group had arrived at this point. He noted that the focus group had yet to hear from the “think-tank” community, which the two guest speakers represent. Mr. Binder introduced Frank Mauro, Executive Director for the Fiscal Policy Institute, and E.J. McMahon, Senior Fellow at Empire Center for New York State Policy, and briefly described their credentials.

Mr. Mauro initiated discussion by referencing his experience with the New York City Charter Revision Commission and highlighting in particular the development of the 1989 Independent Budget Office (“IBO”) for New York City. The materials provided by the Westchester Commission suggest consideration of a similar entity to the IBO. He clarified that the NYC IBO does not perform administrative or budget-preparation functions for NYC, but rather it provides information and analysis to help guide debate.

As a prelude to the IBO, Mr. Mauro noted the interest during the 1975 NYC Charter Revision of increasing legislative oversight of the Mayor’s budget. This resulted in the establishment of the Legislative Office of Budget Review (LOBR). The LOBR was designed to, and succeeding in, increasing the City Council’s analytical abilities. However, the LOBR became a problem for the Koch administration, which pushed for the office to be defunded. When the 1989 NYC Charter Revision Commission began, many “good government” groups still advocated for independent

budget analyses, to make information available to both elected officials and civic groups. Over its three year term, one of the two chairs of the 1989 commissions pushed for a model based on the Congressional Budget Office, with independent expertise. The City Council Speaker at the time did not feel there was a need for a new legislative budget office. This ultimately resulted in the creation of the IBO.

Mr. Mauro thought the IBO was formed, in part, because New York was dominated by one political party, and budget tensions are among party members. He didn't think the IBO model would succeed in settings with competitive political parties. The IBO director is appointed to a four-year term by a special four-member committee of NYC elected officials, based solely on the recommendations of another screening committee. The screening committee has thus far retained an independent nature. The IBO director then hires all IBO staff.

Mr. Mauro commented that the IBO's success is exemplified by the New York State Legislature granting the IBO with certain oversight authority on New York City schools, which came under mayoral control in 1999. Additionally, former LBOR members had testified in support of an IBO at the public hearings, which resulted in a guaranteed appropriation for the IBO of at least 10% of Mayor's office of management and budget. This is a sizeable amount, considering that this funding goes solely towards budget analysis, rather than budget administration (implementation). The IBO has attained much respect, which is evident by the recent funding to this office above the statutory minimum of 10%.

Mr. Mauro noted that the Commission appears to be reviewing the divided responsibilities and accountability of the County Budget Director. He thought the budget director should be primarily accountable to the chief executive, as opposed to providing budget support to the legislature. For Westchester, a budget office for the County Executive and a separate fiscal office for the Board of Legislators would seem necessary and appropriate. He inquired why the Commission was interested in an independent budget office. In New York City, the IBO opens up the analysis of the NYC budget issues that are at the forefront of debate, which otherwise would be more opaque. A Westchester analogue to the IBO would not seem as necessary.

Mr. Binder identified obstacles in the current budget adoption process: a condensed timeframe for budget adoption (5 weeks); the difficulty expressed to the Commission by legislature on obtaining budget information; and the imbalance in staff resources between the legislature and executive administration. Tension among political parties or between branches of government can also hinder the process. Therefore, the Commission is reviewing whether Charter amendments can improve the budget process and promote better information exchange. Mr. Windels added that the County's use of an independent audit firm to assist in budget review has yielded data that all branches and parties can utilize and has helped narrow issues. Also, the County Board's retention of former Budget Department staff has assisted in budget analysis. Mr. Mauro acknowledged the reality of political factors and the rationale for adopting the budget after elections. He suggested ongoing budget analysis to mitigate the short time frame.

Mr. Binder inquired about the best practices for managing the County's budget. Mr. Mauro responded that the Commission was looking not only at efficiency or best practices in financial stewardship but also at maintaining a separation of powers democracy. Mr. Meissner

commented that the Commission seeks to codify procedural changes in the Charter that balance the democratic process and efficiency, beyond simply operational strategies (e.g., staff resources). Mr. Zuckerman noted that the Commission was also evaluating alternate forms of government, and he asked Mr. Mauro to clarify his comments on a “non-separation of powers” form. Mr. Mauro replied that he meant a form similar to a parliamentary system, in which the same branch conducts both administration and policy. In large governments, which would include Westchester County, there is a public expectation of checks on an executive, which the legislative branch provides.

Mr. Mauro asked about the analysis provided by the independent audit firm. Chairman Wishnie described the audit services, and he queried whether funds should be allocated for a concentrated audit by an outside firm (similar to the existing budget review) or allocated for year-round, in-house staff. Mr. Mauro noted that a legislative budget office like the Congressional Budget Office may better address budget analysis needs than the NYC IBO model, which operates more independently. He referenced a distinction in staff between the New York Legislature and the California Legislature, in which the California office has a significant amount of non-partisan staff. The Congressional Budget Office is similar. He surmised that the Commission needs to decide whether to strengthen the analytical resources of the legislature versus creating a new, independent entity. Given the current political party tension and potential for new coalitions, a non-partisan analytical resource, available to and respected by both parties, could be a valuable resource. Mr. Binder commented that there is also tension among the branches, as to which branch sets fiscal policy.

Mr. Mauro replied that both branches effectively make policy. He referenced a proposed 2005 constitutional amendment, and the general consensus that large governments require executive leadership. Given a legislative/executive form of government, legislative power might be increased either by strengthening partisan staff or by creating a new institution. Chairman Wishnie observed that the County Budget Director has historically provided independent, non-partisan assistance, but a perception remains that the director is more responsive to the executive because of the executive’s appointment. At present, numerous legislators are not receiving timely or adequate information, but this had not previously been the case. He described the current Administration’s submission of a budget that contained identical amounts as requested by departments (estimates) and as approved by the County Executive. This was not previously encountered. In response to Mr. Mauro’s inquiry, Chairman Wishnie stated that testimony to the Commission members indicates that the County Board fiscal staff do not have access to the same budget information as the County Budget Director. As such, a tension between the branches exists and the Budget Director is inclined to support the County Executive, the appointing authority. Mr. Windels disagreed with a notion that the Budget Director has concealed or distorted information, to which Chairman Wishnie agreed but maintained that the Budget Director has a pressure to support the Executive/Administration position.

Mr. Binder inquired how an independent budget office could obtain the information it seeks, putting aside cost considerations of establishing such an office. Mr. Mauro acknowledged this could be difficult to enforce, noting that the IBO initially had to go to court several times to get the information it required. He questioned whether, in “modern times”, it is possible for a budget director to evenly serve the needs of both branches, such as executive budgeting &

administration and legislative oversight. In this sense, it may not be possible to re-create the previously strong tradition of public administration.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Mauro if there is a distinction between budgetary “work product” and finished work to be shared. Mr. Mauro said this question similarly concerns separation of powers. He again expressed his view that a chief executive very likely needs his/her own budget director, and it is unrealistic to try to make the budget director independent of the executive. Mr. Geist commented that, since his time as Board chairman in early 1970s, social services still accounts for nearly 2/3 of the budget and other mandates upon the County continue, like Medicaid. Previous County institutions such as the courts and community college are now separate from the County’s control, and thus only 35% of the County budget is subject to review by the executive and legislative branches. During his previous experience as a legislator, the Budget Director had provided information directly to the County Board, and the timing of budget adoption had less tension because the Board had been kept informed. But, there was a change in communication once the County Executive transferred to a different floor of the building. Mr. Mauro observed that the “good-government” ethos that appears to have previously existed in the County cannot be written into the Charter.

Chairman Wishnie solicited Mr. McMahon’s input. Mr. McMahon thought the Commission is focusing on too much detail for a government charter, and the current political balance/imbalance has no place in a charter. He suggested the Commission concentrate on its objectives. For example, does the Charter promote a budget that is fiscally responsible, fiscally accountable, and fiscally transparent? His informal review of the Charter indicates some areas could be improved.

Mr. McMahon referred to the key issues in the focus group report. He agreed that the current budget schedule is too compressed and thought it could be changed to resemble Suffolk’s timeframe, which requires budget introduction by September 15 and adoption by November 10. Mr. McMahon did not agree with the suggested change to a July budget adoption. He did agree that the Charter should clarify that the County Board has access to departmental funding requests; this would be similar to the New York State Legislature’s powers since about 1928. However, Mr. McMahon believes it must be acknowledged that there is an executive budget process in place, handled by a budget director who is appointed by the Executive. He thinks this is the best approach for a government the size of Westchester’s, with the legislature providing checks and balances. The balance to an executive-driven process is that the legislature can say ‘no’ to the budget, which is a considerable power. The New York State “Executive Budget” law permits the Legislature to strike or reduce items from the budget without any response by the Governor. Legislature line item additions are subject to Governor veto and legislative override by two-thirds majority. These provisions support fiscal control and responsibility; however, laws cannot be effective if parties are determined to be irresponsible or uncooperative. He does not think Legislature(s) provide adequate oversight on budgets.

He disagreed that a two-year budget cycle would benefit Westchester, although it might be useful at the state level. He also disagreed that the Charter language should be changed regarding capital projects. Mr. McMahon thought that the budget should require a more formalized monitoring process, such as on a quarterly basis. He emphasized the value of

requiring a five-year financial plan in the charter, similar to New York City's plan. This would be updated every quarter, so as to help reveal any structural imbalances. In response to Mr. Meissner's question, he replied that the format of the five-year plan need not be too prescriptive and again suggested reviewing the New York City format. Although not identified by the Commission, he strongly suggested consideration of this approach and urged simplicity. Many large counties and school districts actually have an internal multi-year plan, but it is often not released because of a perception that it would potentially embarrass the officials if it is inaccurate.

Mr. McMahon did not think a county government needed or should have an independent budget office, except perhaps to monitor the budget of the legislature (i.e., budget for BOL). However, an office like the Congressional Budget Office would be useful for New York State. The New York City IBO is warranted because of the City's large size, as well as the depth and complexity of both its services and revenue streams. As a comparison to New York State, Mr. Mauro observed that the Governor can modify agency requests in any way prior to budget submission, but, once the budget is introduced, the Governor may only veto legislative additions. The Governor may only veto line-item additions, rather than veto the entire budget (NY Constitution expressly prohibits this). In contrast, the Governor can veto items in the budgets for the Legislature and the Judiciary because these budgets must be initially submitted without Governor modification.

Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz clarified that, although not expressly stated, the Charter has been interpreted that the County Executive can veto the entire the budget, as well as legislative additions or increases. Mr. McMahon commented that the Legislature's power to strike and reduce items is a strong (and underutilized) power that balances the Governor's power to veto items. Mr. Steinman noted that, where the legislature approves the executive's budget with only reductions or deletions, many other counties' charters prescribe that such adoption completes the budget process, thus eliminating the potential for a county executive to veto the entire budget. Mr. McMahon added that New York City's budget process is on-time and regular, with a preliminary budget in January, formal budget submission in late April and adoption in late June to July 1. In NYC, the Mayor's revenue estimates are controlling, and City Council must resort to tax levy if it seeks to increase revenues (rather than adjusting estimates). Mr. McMahon thought this attribute was important for executive budgeting. Mr. Geist noted that the cap on Medicaid expenses would assist in developing a multi-year plan, but pension costs are less predictable. Mr. McMahon stated that pension costs can be reliably estimated for planning purposes.

Mr. Mauro requested clarification on the memorandum of additions and deletions to the budget. Chairman Wishnie described the additions procedure, and Mr. Adin stated that the Budget & Appropriations Committee may increase revenue estimates such as sales tax in its additions memorandum. Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz noted that such modification must occur at that point, rather than later in the adoption process. Mr. Mauro wondered whether the County Board's ability to modify revenue estimates should be changed, particularly if there had been any 'abuse' of this process. Mr. Windels commented that the testimony to the focus group had indicated that later dates (timeline) for the adoption process yielded more accurate data and estimates, and he was not aware of any controversy on these estimates. Chairman Wishnie stated that the external auditor retained by the County Board provided input to the Budget & Appropriations Committee

on whether increasing revenue estimates is warranted. Mr. McMahon responded that legislative authority to modify revenue estimates is not consistent with an executive budget process. Chairman Wishnie noted that any additions in the memorandum could still be removed by the entire Board or vetoed by the County Executive.

Mr. McMahon noted that a reason New York City survived the recent recession without crippling budget cuts was because the Mayor had control of the revenue estimates. These estimates ended up closer to actual revenue amounts, in contrast to the higher estimates of the City Council which had been accompanied by proposed spending. New York City's outcome was in significant contrast to the disparity between New York State's revenue estimates and actual revenues. By placing authority for revenue estimates solely with the executive, the executive is also made accountable. Despite frequent low revenue estimates, the New York City Mayor has often had funds 'in reserve' that the City Council has then used. Mr. Lawrence said that the main points both guests present are whether there should be a strong executive-driven process versus a co-managed process that is in place right now, as well as how the charter should support either process. Chairman Wishnie expressed appreciation for the guests' outside perspective and noted that the Commission's findings and recommendations are not mandatory upon the County Board. Mr. McMahon responded that legislatures often think of an executive-driven process only in terms of the current executive in office. Although the Charter can't be made 'fool-proof', incentives can be structured to favor or promote fiscal responsibility, accountability and transparency.

Regarding the report's recommendation of enhanced public notice for borrowing of pension costs, Mr. McMahon thought this may be worth considering as a local law but not necessarily for the Charter. Mr. McMahon stated he was not informed enough to provide a meaningful answer on the report suggestion to create a mandatory aging period between the issuance of the Budget & Appropriation Committee memorandum on deletions and the budget adoption by the full Board. Mr. Mauro commented that the notice period could be looked at as it relates to the overall time frame of the budget review and adoption.

Mr. Mauro asked Commission members to clarify their point on the County Board's ability to recommend Capital Projects. Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz responded that, in the past, the Board had added projects to the capital budget upon submitting their additions to the budget. Mr. McMahon asked whether the Board participated in the capital projects committee functioned, to which Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz replied that this Committee could easily reject Board proposal because it is weighted towards the County Executive. Chairman Wishnie noted that typically, on day of budget adoption, legislators had added capital items to the additions as part of the budget negotiations. The current County Attorney, however, halted this practice, essentially by considering the Board as a type of County department, which the Charter requires to proceed through approval by the capital projects committee and Planning Board. Mr. Adin stated that the position of the County Attorney is that any capital project that is proposed to be added must go through the planning process before its inclusion in the capital budget.

Mr. McMahon referenced a relatively recent practice at the State level, in which local capital projects that benefit third parties are being financed through State general obligation bonds, giving rise to the term 'bonded pork'. Alternatively, the Legislature had enacted special

appropriations to fund such projects (no longer done). Mr. McMahon inquired how New York City provides for local projects. Mr. Mauro was not sure whether the City Council could make additions to the capital budget. Chairman Wishnie clarified that projects included in the capital budget must be separately authorized by the Board (by act), and Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz added that any amendments to the capital budget must be initiated by the County Executive. Mr. Mauro suggested the Commission might consider codifying the existing procedures (Board addition of project in capital budget, followed by Planning Board approval).

Regarding a fiscal year beginning in July, Mr. Mauro commented that Nassau County had previously changed to this type of schedule but found it unsuccessful and switched back. Mr. Binder asked the guests for their opinion on having an independently-elected County Comptroller, particularly for promoting accountability. Mr. Mauro said the New York State Comptroller model does not conform to good 'business practices' at the County level because the NYS Comptroller has a combination of various duties of other offices (e.g., part Treasurer, part Auditor, part Comptroller). To promote accountability in an independently-elected office, he thought that an auditor position could be a possibility, and numerous states have variations of elected or appointed auditors (e.g., auditor general, legislative auditor, etc.). However, the 'book-keeping' tasks performed by the New York State and New York City comptrollers are executive functions. Mr. Mauro suggested reviewing the experience of states with auditors elected by the public versus auditors 'elected' (appointed) by the legislature.

Mr. Mauro asked Commission members whether the independent audit helps inform the budget process as well as budget oversight, to which members affirmed. He noted that the County Board contracts with the auditor, indicating legislative power (check/balance). Mr. McMahon agreed with Mr. Mauro, and he added that little needed to be changed presently. He did not think that comptrollers in large New York counties had provided meaningful benefit (e.g., Erie, Nassau, Suffolk). He added the County is subject to federal securities regulation [because of bond issuances], which places issuers at risk of securities fraud for improper statements. Mr. Geist observed that no financial scandal had recently occurred because of the many 'whistle-blower' aspects in place, and the large portion of County budget devoted to social services is subject to federal oversight. Mr. Meissner inquired whether the County is subject to audit by New York State, which Mr. McMahon confirmed.

Mr. Binder asked whether these mechanisms provide needed oversight, noting that the County Board's auditor is only retained during the budget season. Mr. Mauro stated that an auditor general conducts program audits, in contrast to a federal agency or comptroller. Mr. McMahon questioned whether or not a government of Westchester's size needed this additional office. He again reiterated his point that unless a legislature agrees to an executive proposal, nothing is final, thus underscoring the legislature's leverage. Mr. Mayo commented that much of the recent controversy has concerned subsidized child day care funding, and other important areas such as public safety had less controversy. He thought public attention to the County budget generally should be greater than simply public notice. Mr. McMahon responded that child care at the county-level is a fairly straight-forward policy choice (either for, or against), and other jurisdictions (e.g., New York City, Yonkers) are more complex.

Mr. Windels asked the guests for clarification on the appropriate length of the budget timeline, contrasting an approximate 6 week duration in Westchester with an 8 week duration in Suffolk. He also noted Westchester's budget adoption process begins after November election. In contrast with some other counties, Mr. McMahon referenced Westchester's historically solid fiscal experience, which has also been characterized by same political party control in the executive/legislative branches. As such, he expressed caution in making changes at the charter level on the budget process. Mr. McMahon noted his initial reaction that Westchester's timeline appears to be compressed at the end of the calendar year. Without being close to the Westchester process, he could not say whether a post-election budget season has an impact. He believed 7 to 10 days would be an appropriate increase of time for budget consideration. Mr. Mauro thought Westchester was somewhat unusual in its budgetary time frame, and he acknowledged a dilemma in lengthening the budget timeline with a potential impact of an election on the process. Mr. Steinman agreed that many other counties have a September/November schedule. Mr. Binder noted the unique characteristic that Westchester towns and cities guarantee payment of taxes.

Given the strengths expressed for an executive-driven budget process, Chairman Wishnie asked how to resolve conflicting loyalties of the County budget director. Mr. McMahon thought that the budget director should serve solely at the pleasure of the County Executive. Chairman Wishnie replied this would then need to be balanced by larger fiscal staff or services of the independent auditor, and Mr. Mauro concurred with strengthening information flow. Mr. McMahon referenced the Suffolk County Legislature's Budget Review Office, which he maintains has more fiscal resources than available to the Suffolk County Executive and which he does not think has worked well in Suffolk's executive budget process. Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz queried how the County Board can get the financial information that it requires. Mr. McMahon identified the New York State 'executive budget' law and New York City Charter as having provisions that require information to be provided to the legislative body at certain times. He commented that the City Council directly examines the budget director to get financial information. Mr. Mauro noted that monthly financial reporting is shared with the NYS Legislature (both houses, majority & minority) and NYC Council. In New York City, the FISA agency generates this data. He anticipated that a government of Westchester's size would be able to generate similar management-level reports.

Chairman Wishnie inquired on the type of charter amendment to effectuate the information flow. Mr. Mauro thought that quarterly reports could provide the same types of information required in the annual budget (e.g., amount expended to date, amount approved, etc.). Mr. Sellier noted that more formalized reporting was suggested by the focus group. Mr. McMahon observed that the legislature's information requests are related to its oversight function, but this can further develop into a "co-management" function, which he does not believe is appropriate beyond a certain point. One way to gain information may simply be to require the Executive to make certain information public, such as through the Internet, which would thus be available to the Legislature and public alike. Mr. Binder mentioned the distinction between internal work-product and data to be shared. Mr. McMahon and Mr. Mauro described work-product as similar to a special, internal study or analysis. Mr. Sellier suggested sharing information at a similar standard as what would be available under Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Mr. Zuckerman commented that the Internet has made much information available. Mr. McMahon

agreed, and he observed that a Legislature's vigorous fight for information is more related to its interest on a particular management approach, rather than simply the data. The guests reinforced the notion that significant changes to some processes could have unintentional consequences and that Charter amendment recommendations should not be taken lightly. As an example of a significant charter amendment, Mr. Mauro provided historical background on the elimination of the Board of Estimate in New York City.

Chairman Wishnie concluded the discussion and thanked Mr. Mauro and Mr. McMahon for attending and providing valuable input to the Commission. Chairman Wishnie then sought comments from members. Mr. Steinman urged the Commission members to look at the material Chris Crane had prepared and its relation to the meeting tonight. Mr. Sellier recommended the Commission form its conclusions while the ideas from this meeting are still fresh in mind. Commission members noted that the meeting minutes for this meeting would be particularly important. Chairman Wishnie suggested that the Commission return to previous expert witnesses, such as Budget Director Soule, with questions based on the information that has been gathered.

Mr. Zuckerman agreed with Mr. Sellier, while expressing his interest in reviewing the meeting minutes and other relevant issues before deciding what direction to move in and before bringing people back in. Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz noted the consideration in the 1988 Charter Revision that the Budget Director reported to both branches. Mr. Zuckerman thought some points are relevant to issues considered in other focus groups and emphasized the need of the full Commission's input. Mr. Sellier reiterated the need for specific ideas, for which reviewing the minutes would be useful, and members should come prepared with their ideas and suggestions to go over as a group before bringing a witness/department representative back in. Mr. Binder agreed with distilling the material from this meeting and reexamining it before they move forward.

Mr. Lawrence acknowledged the necessity to go deeper into the issues being considered, noting that, when it first started, the Commission did not have the benefit of this expert testimony. The various points should be discussed with the full Commission, such as how Westchester compares to other counties. However, he suggested the Commission avoid "getting into the weeds" too much. He suggested progressing incrementally and methodically, using the guidelines of "doing no harm" described by the speakers. Mr. Thomas stated that they have begun to take the focus group reports and begun to examine them while trying to figure out how to go deeper. He noted that the number of members in attendance for quorum needed to be looked at, to ensure the ideas and materials get passed onto the next level. Mr. Zuckerman stated that different focus groups had different objectives, and the complexity of information and issues varied among the groups. Tonight's meeting was a major issue that required a lot of thought and time to be handled appropriately.

Mr. Windels brought up the planned "retreat" day, along with figuring out a "decision day" on the pertinent issues and recommendations. He did not want to see voting based solely on the number of people in attendance. Chairman Wishnie stated that the Commission is still far off from voting, as the public has not yet been engaged and the Commission is still in an information gathering process. Chairman Wishnie referenced the upcoming presentations of the Executive/Legislative focus group.

Mr. Mayo touched on what Mr. Lawrence had referenced, suggesting the possibility of a presentation by a PR firm, or something similar, in order to garner more public interest and support. Chairman Wishnie discussed the current plans for “marketing” the Charter Revision Commission and its findings. He said a process is underway to reach out to various organizations and County agencies, to whom the Commission will send its findings and request input. He expected a fairly strong response, and was optimistic on the outcome.

Mr. Steinman commented that meeting attendance should become more mandatory, within reasonable bounds, as the meetings are growing more important. Missing a meeting means missing information. Chairman Wishnie stated a process is underway to request additional resources because the workload, in addition to the frequency of meetings, has increased. He noted a possibility of going back to monthly meetings, albeit longer meetings, if the additional help and conditions allow it. He believed that the retreat would help the Commission build consensus on the issues under review. Commission members have not responded entirely, so it is not yet possible to set a date. He has requested Melanie to contact the remaining members who have not submitted their retreat availability. Mr. Meissner briefly touched on individual responsibilities of commission members, to which Chairman Wishnie commended the members and their work so far.

Chairman Wishnie noted the next meeting date is February 21, 2013, with the possibility of an alternate date because of the winter break. He also mentioned that consideration was given to using Doral Arrowwood’s facilities at no cost for the retreat, which Doral had offered. However, Mr. Steinman explained the ethical obstacles in using these facilities. Chairman Wishnie affirmed that the Commission would instead likely seek the use of an appropriate County facility.

With a motion by Gary Zuckerman seconded by Mr. Windels, the Charter Revision Commission adjourned at 10:02 PM.