

WESTCHESTER COUNTY CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
March 22, 2012

Members in Attendance: Richard Wishnie, Jeff Binder, Herman Geist, Julie Killian, Derickson Lawrence, John Mattis, Anne McAndrews, Florence McCue, David Menken, Jane Morgenstern, Vincenza Restiano, Bertrand Sellier, Matthew Thomas, Paul Windels, Gary Zuckerman

Absent Members: Raymond Belair, Anita Delgado, Alfred Gatta, Steve Mayo, Paul Meissner, Guy Parisi, Ronald Volino, Sam Zerka

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

Commission Counsel: Lester Steinman

Guests:

MINUTES

With a quorum present, Chairman Wishnie called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

With a motion by Paul Windels, seconded by Julie Killian the minutes of February 23, 2012 were approved with a vote of 14-0.

Chairman Wishnie stated that he would like to recommend David Menken as the First Vice Chair and Vincenza Restiano as the Second Vice Chair of the Commission. Gary Zuckerman moved the nomination which was seconded by Jane Morgenstern.

Jeff Binder stated that he would like to nominate Derickson Lawrence for Vice Chair for the Commission to consider. Anne McAndrews seconded the nomination.

Jane Morgenstern made a motion to close the nominations which was seconded by Paul Windels.

John Mattis made a motion to have three vice chairs which was seconded by Vincenza Restiano.

The Commission discussed the function of the three vice chairs and it was agreed that there would be a first, second, and third vice chair title, with the first vice chair taking the chairman's place in his absence.

Chairman Wishnie called for a vote on the motion to have three vice chairs. The motion carried with a vote of 13-2.

Chairman Wishnie called for a vote to appoint David Menken the First Vice Chair. The motion carried with a vote of 15-0.

Chairman Wishnie called for a vote to appoint Vincenza Restiano the Second Vice Chair. The motion carried with a vote of 15-0.

Chairman Wishnie called for a vote to appoint Derickson Lawrence the Third Vice Chair. The motion carried with a vote of 15-0.

Chairman Wishnie told the Commission that he met with the Legislation Committee of the Board of Legislators to request an extension for the Commission as previously discussed and the Committee signed out the extension for the Commission to end in December of 2013.

The Focus Groups gave an update on their most recent meetings.

Gary Zuckerman stated that the Executive/Legislative Focus Group heard from former county legislators George Latimer and Martin Rogowsky. He said that George Latimer said party and personal interest create conflict not the policy. He said Mr. Latimer discussed how the press focus mostly on the county executive because he manages the day to day operations and that even though the law department and budget director also work for the Board of Legislators they mostly work for the County Executive. Mr. Latimer stated that he thinks the county budget calendar should match that of the state and should be due in July rather than in December to simplify the process of balancing our budget with funds we receive from the state. Mr. Zuckerman stated that Marty Rogowsky focused more on structure and the need to clarify the power of the two branches. Mr. Rogowsky suggested reducing the number of legislators to increase efficiency and that a more homogenous structure is needed in the executive branch.

Mr. Zuckerman stated that the next meeting is March 27<sup>th</sup> and the speakers are Legislator and former Chair of the Board Bill Ryan, and former Legislator John Nonna.

Vincenza Restiano stated that the Local Government/County Government Relationship Focus Group is meeting next week on the 29<sup>th</sup> with Luisa M. Iadeluca who will share her dissertation on the specifics of the focus group and consolidation of services. She stated that they will be putting together the questions for the municipal officials soon.

Florence McCue gave an update on the Charter and Codes Focus Group. She stated that at the meeting today Robert Meehan the County Attorney answered questions about the charter and working for both the Executive and Legislature. She stated that Mr. Meehan stated that he represents the county as a whole and his job is to interpret the law so it is not difficult to provide information to both the branches of government. Ms. McCue stated that the group discussed how Chris Crane and Stacey Dolgin-Kmetz are not

employees of the County Attorney, but work for the Board of Legislators as counsel. She stated that the group discussed the possibility of a mediator but in the end decided against the idea. She stated that they also discussed the Playland Commission with Mr. Meehan and discovered that it has not been in operation in approximately 30 years. The group decided to look into possibly removing it from the charter. She stated that they also discussed the appointments process which is currently being looked at by the Board of Legislators.

Jeff Binder gave an update on the Budget & Finance Focus Group. He said they met with Olivia Rhodes and Anne Reasoner of the fiscal staff at the Board of Legislators. He said it was a helpful meeting and hearing that they felt this past budget season provided a good budget and the parties worked together. Mr. Binder stated that they will meet with Bennet Kielson next as they conduct the audit of the county budget every November. Mr. Binder stated that we may want to hear from the rating agencies next.

The members went around the table and provided their thoughts at this point in the process. It was suggested that the focus groups keep an index of suggestions, ideas, and submissions by speakers. Mr. Steinman suggested that the focus groups be ready with their recommendations by June 30, 2013 so that the entire group can go through them, pick which ones will go in the report and have the report written in time for the December deadline. Mr. Zuckerman suggested that we be finished with our suggestions even earlier than that. Mr. Windels suggested that we take a look at the issue of ethics and possibly have the District Attorney speak to the group. He said we should look to see if the state laws are adequate or if we think there is something we can do to help the county in that regard. He also said that we should address the issue of the unfunded mandates and pension costs. Ms. Dolgin-Kmetz informed the group that the county does have its own code of ethics in addition to the state code. Mr. Steinman said we should discuss the possibility of an inspector general. Mr. Menken stated that he hopes the report of the Commission does not get swept under the rug. A discussion ensued regarding the election commissioners and their positions as party chair.

Chairman Wishnie stated that we need to have public hearings when we are in the later stages of our work in order to educate and get input from the residents and generate support for our suggestions.

Chairman Wishnie stated that in the absence of our speaker and the confusion of meeting dates this month, the Commission will meet next week on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 7:00 pm.

With a motion by Anne McAndrews seconded by Gary Zuckerman the Charter Revision Commission adjourned at 8:20 pm.