



# County of Allegheny

436 GRANT STREET ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15219

## **Government Review Commission**

**Agenda: Tuesday, October 27, 2015  
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 pm**

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Roll Call:** All members were present except for Jay Hagerman
- 3. Opening Remarks by the Chair Foerster included the following:**
  - The Chair introduced and acknowledged the depth and breadth of the work of the interns from the Duquesne Law School who have assumed the responsibility for research for their assigned Government Review Committees.
  - A review of the template to be used for recommendations to change the Charter and/or the Administrative Code as well as schedule for recommendations from commission. He also requested that by each committee have draft recommendations prepared for the December 15 meeting.

In response to this request, Commissioner Nowalk stated that receiving the recommendations from all committees in as much advance as possible would be optimal. The Chair concurred and emphasized his desire to have each committee member have enough time to review the recommendations.

#### 4. **Approval of Minutes**

- A motion to approve minutes of the September 2015 meeting was set forth by Commissioner Nowalk, seconded and approved by the entire commission.

#### 5. **Form of Government Subcommittee Report: Report by Chairman Nowalk**

While Commissioner Nowalk stated that the committee is still in the process of researching issues related to their charge, he noted the following themes are emerging. Prior to delineating the themes, he recognized that the committee's recommendations on these themes will be made to the entire Commission for the appropriate action.

- Process for Ensuring Adequate Compensation

1. The Chair noted that County Executives salary of \$90,000. was set 15 years ago (Year 2000) in the Charter and has never been changed since then. Because of this, the committee:
  - a. Might want to suggest a salary range based on some benchmarks for process and/or that it be pegged to other metropolitan salaries.
  - b. May propose a suggestion that there be a process that would allow the salaries to be regularly adjusted rather than only once every 15 years.

- Whether At-Large County Seat Could Be Eliminated

1. Replace the County-At-Large seat with district seats. This would be an opportunity to better align the municipalities. Some of the County Council representatives have 100 square miles to cover-and that may be a lot for a part-time elected official

In response to these two themes, the following observations and inquiries were made by Commission members:

- Commissioner Magley expressed concern over this model fearing that minority party representation could be compromised particularly in a closed primary state. She is requesting supplemental data from the Elections Division that could be pertinent for the Commission when making its final decision on this recommendation.

- Chairman Foerster stated his opinion with respect to the salary that it should be a part-time council and that the salary should be set to match salaries throughout the nation.
- Commissioner Nowalk advocated considering the populations when calculating the salaries.
- Commissioner Oliphant stated that she would like more of a discussion at a future meeting focusing specifically on this issue and before the subcommittee's recommendation are presented to the Commission as a final set of recommendations.

Chairman Nowalk indicated that other issues under consideration and being researched are:

1. Manner in which district lines for county council should be drawn as he noted that in every single home rule county outside of Allegheny County non-partisan guidelines to draw the lines is implemented.
2. Manner in which County Council is elected and has information sufficient to render an appropriate decision.
3. Whether the positions of County Treasurer and Sherriff should be eliminated after reviewing relevant research and interviews with the respective parties.
4. Whether County Council members should be required to resign from office in order to run for other offices.
5. Would PA law permit a Commission such as the GRC Commission to put an item on the ballot.

After a review of the presentation of themes, Commissioner Oliphant made an inquiry to Commissioner McCants-Lewis regarding the status of recommendations underway coming from the EEOE Committee related to the elimination of the Treasurer and/or Sheriff given that the role of independently elected officials is the primary focus of her committee.

In response, Commissioner McCants-Lewis stated that there are costs and benefits, pros and cons to such actions and that more research needs to be done on the matter from her committee. Given the themes being pursued by the Form of Government Committee, Commissioner McCants-Lewis indicated that she will coordinate with Commissioner Nowalk.

Additional discussion from the members included the following:

- Commissioner Schwartz expressed that there are different rules for placing referendums on the ballot that he is researching this issue on behalf of this committee.
- Commissioner Nowalk stated that the Duquesne students are also researching the manner in which other home rule counties look into address the aforesaid issues.
- Commissioner Nowalk stated that in the past County Council did vote to consolidate the Sheriff's office with another county office but to his recall some procedural issues prevented it from being placed on the ballot.
- Commissioner Nowalk stated that any recommendations the Commission may make could affect other provisions in other County documents, and that it would be wise for the Commission to include in its recommendation a notice that these other rules may be affected.

## **6. Fiscal and Personnel Subcommittee Report**

Committee Chair, Andrea Gerahty presented the following update:

- The committee met on October 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm, and heard testimony of County Manager McKain and the County Executive staff regarding the requirements for the Sunset Review as defined in the Charter and the Administrative Code. In reviewing the charge, the administration noted that the Charter requires a review of agencies and departments every four years. Given the broad scope of this mandate, the current administration has opted to adopt a four-year cycle. As a result, the administration is conducting a review of one quarter of the departments and authorities every year. Additionally, as the Charter allows for additional issues to be added by request of the county manager, Departmental reviews also include a Vision and Mission Statement, as well as, a listing of achievements occurring since the previous review. Given this, a recommendation reflecting this process may be submitted for consideration.
- The administration maintained that the process has achieved benefits as from this process a decision was made to combine the functions of the Department of Real Estate into the Department of Administrative Services. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Commission has been determined to no longer be necessary.
- The next meeting is scheduled for November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00pm will discuss recommendations that it will submit to the larger body. Recommendations will be formalized into a written document.

## 7. **External Entities, Reviews and Independently Elected Officials Subcommittee Report :**

Committee Chair Tracey McCants-Lewis offered the following update:

- Recognizing that there may potentially be a dearth of volunteers to serve as poll workers for election days, the committee is researching strategies that are employed by other counties nationwide to address possible shortages.

In response, the following observations were made by Commission members:

- Commissioner Nowalk commented that he believes that this would be an excellent means to introduce and engage young adults into government.
- Sharing that view, Chairman Foerster commented noted that frequently on election day it is challenging to find people to run the polls and reinforced the need for the youth to assume the responsibilities provided by the older generations.
- Commissioner McCants-Lewis stated that the current system, poll workers (judge of elections and constable, and minority and majority) are reimbursed. However, she advocated for the position that students could get academic credit.
- Commissioner Oliphant commented that connecting with organizations like P.U.M.P, CORO and other Pittsburgh young professionals organizations might be an avenue for getting younger civically minded citizens involved in the political process.

## 8. **Public Comment:** Five (5) minutes per speaker

Carolyn Spornza ( 2021 Plainview Ave, Pittsburgh, PA15226) spoke on behalf of a variety of organizations about public art; including a grassroots coalition of the Pittsburgh for Art Team, the Hill District Consensus Group, Fight Back Pittsburgh, CAPA High School, Nocturnal Guerrilla Marketing, etc.

Essentially, the presentation was to bring to the attention of the commission to the coalition's position that there was a non-adherence

and lack of enforcement of Ordinance #r 39-05 Chapter 207 that was passed on September 6, 2005 which she indicated was Allegheny County's Public Art law. Additionally, she noted that:

- Currently there is also a motion in the Public Works committee of the County Council that would expand the workability and functionality of the original ordinance. If enforced, it would not just increase the region's livability portion, but it would also have an economic impact as these projects translate into government art projects for contractors and architects.
- A substantial percentage of each budget (usually 60%) members of trade unions will construct the public artworks for long-term durability.
- Public art makes a difference for communities and neighborhoods-including public process and engagement of input.
- Currently, 20,284 people throughout the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County have signed petition that was directed to the County Executive to support the campaign for the neglected ordinance.
- Shortly after the launch of the petition in early 2013, the group received an email from the County Executive's office saying that the previous administration had not implemented the provisions of the ordinance, and that County Executive Fitzgerald has indicated that he would review this issue with County Council. To date, no action has been taken.

Because of these items, Ms. Sporonza requested that the Commission advise County Council to take action on this law.

After a motion to adjourn with a second to the motion, the Commission adjourned at 5:00 p.m.