

MINUTES OF MEETING  
2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION  
APRIL 29, 2026

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Members Present: Chris Aiola, Andy Bemer, Collen, Hauer, Chris Klym, Dr. Al Melton,  
Michael O'Donnell, and Pat Roberts

Members Excused: Elizabeth Gerstenhaber, Peter Sullivan Jr.

Presence Noted: Pamela Bobst - Mayor, Michael O'Shea – Law Director, Richard Snyder –  
Director of Public Safety-Service, and Jonathan Lindow – Finance Director

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Chairman Bemer opened the meeting at 6:00 PM and stated that the two absences for this evening are noted and gave the committee notification a few weeks ago. Chairman Bemer did remind the committee that it is the mayor's birthday this evening. The minutes were then dispensed and then approved as submitted. He moved on to the review of the past election results of charter amendments going back to 2002 which were researched by Charter Secretary Greco.

Chairman Bemer moved on with the agenda and stated that the committee will be reviewing Article IV and Article VII which address the Administrative Offices of the city and the financial processes of the city. He went on to review the general provisions of Article IV which address the Law Director, the Public Safety-Service Director, and the Finance Director. All serve at the pleasure of the mayor except the Law Director, which is an elected position. He went on to explain that the Director of Public Safety-Service oversees the Service Department, the Police and Fire Departments, as well as the public and sanitary projects for the city. He stated that there has been a decent amount of discussion over the years if both chiefs should directly report to the mayor instead of the director himself. He stated that however, all the collective bargaining agreements with the city has the Director of Public Safety Service serve as a mediatory during grievance and arbitration proceedings. This director's position serves an important role, and it is a best practice of the city to have the position remain in that role. This director has the role of enforcing the general laws of Ohio as well.

Chairman Bemer then turned his attention to the Law Director. He reviewed the provisions of Article IV addressing the position. He asked Law Director O'Shea to approach the committee and give his opinion of charter addressing his role. Member O'Donnell did make statement regarding the Police and Fire Chief directly reporting to the mayor in that the mayor's position itself does have some sort of appellate role and asked would the mayor lose that role if they did in fact report directly to her. Chairman Bemer stated the mayor would lose that role because it would expedite processes, but the city would be encouraging remedies in the court of law inside of having settled administratively in house. The courts do like to see cities exhaust their administrative remedies first before you proceed legally to court. The more remedies you have, the better off the city is in that regard. Member Roberts did ask if the mayor still has her ruling power in the final say. Chairman Bemer stated that she does.

Law Director O'Shea began to speak then on his portion of the charter by stating the duties and responsibilities of the law directors over the last 10 years or so have increased at least 5-fold. This is at no fault of the law departments across the state, this is just how society and government have developed. The Law Director is the only director, he pointed out, that does not receive any benefits. He explained that this occurs because the position itself is an elective one and is deemed to be part-time. From a purely financial standpoint, he cannot put in the same amount of time in as a full-time individual, this person is going to delegate duties to outside law firms. Director O'Shea then went on to explain the salary history of his position and where it stands compared to the other positions throughout the county. He indicated these numbers are just for the municipal positions whereas the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are obviously bigger stakeholders. In order to attract people to this position, he stated, you need to make the position more attractive. Director O'Shea stated again that benefits would make it more attractive, and he doesn't know if this subject would be a charter provision. He then focused on the staffing of Rocky River's law director's office and then compared it to other city's staffing levels. He explained all the work that is assigned to his office from the city, as well as the municipal court. He reminded the commission that city work is offloaded to other law firms to help him out and he currently shares staffing with the city. Law Director stated that in the charter it states the council is permitted to hire their council clerk and it doesn't technically state that he has that authority to hire. He asked the commission to consider that as well.

Law Director O'Shea then turned his discussion to the election of the law director. He stated that about 50% of the city law directors in the county are elected and the other half are appointed by the mayor. He stated that he believes it is important to have the position remain an elective position. This is important he states because it gives the position independence from the other offices. He stated that he is thankful that this city gets along so well and works great together. Sometimes appointed law directors are ordered to perform in a particular way, and he sees it as a potential conflict with administration and council. With that, he believes that the position should be elected one.

The discussion then turned to position of being full-time. Law Director O'Shea stated that it would just not be feasible in that the salary itself would be high. He went to discuss the difference between urban vs. suburban law departments and their workload and salary pay. All but one city has their law department on a part-time schedule. Charter Member Roberts stated that this position acts like a gatekeeper for the city and she believes it is important that this individual keeps a full-time job outside this scope because it allows them to stay in the legal realm of various topics and not just focused on municipal matters. She also stated that additional staff would be nice for the department as well. Charter Member O'Donnell then asked Law Director if he had brought these concerns to council. Law Director O'Shea replied that he loves his council, they work well together, but there is a concern this it is up entirely up to council when it comes to salary, benefits, and staffing. Charter Member O'Donnell stated that he recalls that when he was on council, they did try to catch the salary up to a certain degree. Charter Member Klym agrees that most of these issues are a council issue, but he also agrees that if the Law Director had some language in the charter to assist him that would be helpful as well. The other question Charter Member Klym had was in regards to the 2-year and 4-year term and asked the Law Director's opinion on that. Law Director O'Shea stated that he agrees with the mayor that a 2-year term is accountable for the city and keeps everyone honest to a certain degree.

Chairman Bemer then concluded with saying that he did go to city council before he retired and presented reasons as to why they should discuss the salary and benefits of the Law Director's position. He stated that is well below the average in the county and even adding benefits to the position was still low. He stated that in his opinion that council has failed in this regard in addressing this concern. He doesn't know if it should be specified in charter or go to city council. He agreed with Charter Member Robert's comments on a diversified practice in that it does help with this position. He stated that he was fortunate that when he came into office, he had experience with employment and land use issues of which helped him ease into the municipal law director's position. He also stated that with that diversified background, the law director then can borrow the best practices of the surrounding communities and apply them here in the city which is the biggest benefit coming into the position. He then reminded the committee that changes were made to the qualifications section of the charter back in 2002. Charter Member Roberts did speak up and asked that doesn't the discussion of salary and benefits go through Human Resources or the city's handbook? Chairman Bemer then replied that the H.R. position only is the administrator of those benefits, it does not determine the amount of benefits for that position. Mayor Bobst concluded this conversation by stating that the city's health insurance and other benefits are offered to full-time employees and not the part-time employees. The issue here tonight she stated is accessing those benefits by the part-time council or the law director's position and that there are ordinances that are passed by council prior to the elective office's term that set the compensation and then could address the benefits question. She went on to state her salary and benefits are spelled out in an ordinance passed by council, again prior to the start of a new term. This is done for council's salary as well. Charter Member Klym then asked the mayor does council statute state if the mayor's position is full-time or if the law-director's position is part-time. He asked if this was the role of council. She responded that they would have to traverse the issue with part-time and full-time status. She then focused on the staffing of the law office and spoke about how the office does have a para-legal currently that is shared with her office and does have stipend for another position. The conversation the concluded on the definition of full-time employee and Chairman Bemer pointed out the elected officials are not considered full-time employees through litigation, not under that umbrella of employee. This whole topic should be discussed through council.

Director of Public Safety-Service Richard Snyder was the next speaker to address his charter section. He explained to the committee that there are just tiny paragraphs that addresses the role of the Safety-Service Director of which covers a huge roll of responsibility for the city. He did state that this is a prime example of doing more with less. He stated that this department oversees all the safety departments, the public works departments, and is the chief purchasing agent of the city. He stated that the department does work diligently with the leadership of this city in that they do have a broad scope of knowledge with the other departments of the city which helps us accomplish a lot. Talking a little about contracts and purchasing for the city, the director had a chance to speak with the other department directors regarding teaching and education on the purchasing guidelines in place by the city and also the state. This helps with the flow of processing as Director Snyder stated and makes sure the city stays in compliance with purchasing guidelines. Briefly, the commission mentioned my role in overseeing the police and fire chiefs. He stated that he sees his job to be a system of support for them. He stated that he does not manage the day-to-day and let's each chief manage their own departments. He went on

to say that he is there to give them support and give them whatever they need to keep the operations flowing smoothly. They come to him with questions regarding the contracts, personnel, and grievances and the city does follow collective bargaining agreements very closely and it is important to have that extra layer between the chiefs and the mayor to get any issues solved before they come to her. He stated he utilizes this all the time in the day-to-day operations of the city. Working with the public works aspect of the position, he thinks it makes a lot of sense being the purchase agent and working with contracts, it helps in working with the engineers and getting the projects completed. He stated that he thinks all in all, this charter section works pretty well.

Chairman Bemer then stated that there a number of other departments in the city but are silent in the charter. He asked Director Snyder to give any thought in providing those departments in the charter. Director Snyder responded that he believes it would not really help the city because when working with those directors on a day-to-day basis, he doesn't see them as working beneath him. He stated that all the directors are mutual professionals that work hand-in-hand, and ultimately, those individuals do work underneath him because of the purchasing, contractual, and financial aspects that are included in their positions. Charter Member Roberts then spoke that in regard to the Senior Center, those directors should have some independence in their decision making to make sure those specialties are focused on, not stuck in box with a charter amendment. Director Snyder then spoke about how the directors are there for one another in helping and giving advice on how to accomplish projects or get contracts sent to council and gave example how this past week he did just that with a fellow director. The director stated that it is their job to be the chief momentum officers and to keep city business flowing and progressing. He continued by stating that the city does this by hiring and maintaining good individuals in the positions and letting them manage their departments. Chairman Bemer then asked Director Snyder who reports to him directly. After answering, Mayor Bobst pointed out that another role of the Public Safety-Service Director is with public works and works directly with those public works departments and serves as a liaison to council when projects are presented to them for approval. Director Snyder then gave examples of recent city projects that stemmed from various other departments and how he was directly involved with all of them. Charter Member Roberts then asked when the city is doing a project, for example a road paving, and goes to Fairview Park or Westlake, how do we coordinate that with the other city she asked. Director Snyder then replied that the city does have a city consulting engineer on retainer for the year that helps with day-to-day projects, as well as design and project management. The city does use other firms as well to help with these projects. Charter Member O'Donnell then asked Director Snyder about his role with the Finance Director and the Mayor regarding the Board of Control. It was pointed out the Finance Director will clarify that role when he speaks about his porting of the charter up next.

Chairman Bemer then asked the Finance Director to approach the committee and begin to speak about his section of the charter in Article IV and Article VII. Charter Member Hauer questioned Director Lindow regarding the dollar amount that is spelled out in the charter and how does the Board of Control approve those payments by the city. Director Lindow responded that the city approves everything in that these approvals go through other members of an approval chain, meaning two or three individuals look at the request and then it moves on to the next. This is what's in place instead of the Board of Control which is allowable by the State of Ohio. The

\$500 amount stated in the charter probably goes back to 1960 in regard to approval, but the director pointed out that the city approves any and all dollar amounts so there is more oversight than what the charter requires. There is the same approval if an invoice is \$1.00 to let's say \$1,000 the director stated. Director Snyder then spoke stating that when a requisition is submitted it is done so by the Director, then approved by Safety-Service Director and/or the Finance Director and then the final approval is done by the mayor. Charter Member O'Donnell then asked if this dollar amount of \$500 was changed to \$1,000 it wouldn't make a difference to the approval process because all dollar amounts are submitted for approval the same way. The two directors and the mayor stated that is correct. They treat all requisitions and invoices for payment the same in regard to approval. The Finance Director stated there is a multi-step approval process in place for these approvals. Charter Member Milton jumped in and had one last question for Director Snyder about qualifications. He asked the director if his position is the only position that does not have any specific qualifications and does that concern the director? Director Snyder says he does not recommend any specific qualifications because this position keeps all the directors together to keep the operations flowing. He stated that this position very broad and people from various backgrounds are able to do that. Director Snyder then explained his career background to the commission and what matters is what type of person holds this position. The mayor did state as well that the city does have position descriptions which specifically outline the qualifications and background experience needed for all positions in the city.

The conversation then turned to the final section of evening with is Article VII Finance. Director Lindow began the discussion that he has seen cities with less wording and requirements in their charter. He then stated his professional background to the charter commission and stated that experience is very valuable because has been with cities that have low funds and robust funds, been with cities with mayors or city managers and it helps with a review like this tonight. Charter Member Hauer then reviewed each section with the director. She questioned the director on specific tax limits in section 1 of the article. Director Lindow then explained how the tax millage is broken down, what the limits are in the city and what the state law allows in requesting extra millage. Charter Member O'Donnell did ask if the city was at those limits and Director Lindow responded yes. It was clarified by Chairman Bemer that the city is already at the 10 mill limitation for the city as well. He recommends no changes to this section because there is no need for any new levies for the city. Charter Member Hauer then asked about section 2 of the article and reviewed the discussion between her and the director and stated that there is no need for change in the section. Next, section 3 was discussed and Charter Member Hauer reviewed specific language regarding deposits and investments and stated that the current language is pretty cut and dry. Director Lindow did agree. Section 4 regarding public bidding was discussed next and it was noted by Charter Member Hauer that the city has to follow state law for procurement and public bidding. Chairman Bemer then spoke regarding the level of procurement dollars that is set by the general laws of Ohio is followed by the city. Director Lindow did state that the level of procurement does now go up annually with a 3% increase. Charter Member Hauer asked the director if any changes were needed here and he said no. Section 5 was the focus next and Director Lindow stated that this wording just states that the city should try to do work in house and then go outside if needed while keeping separate budgetary accounts. No changes were recommend for this section. The final section of the article dealt with the annual appropriation budget of the city and Charter Member Hauer stated that the city goes above and

beyond these requirements and has their budget approved by end of the year and not by the month April the following year. Director Lindow then reviewed the budget process with the charter commission and stated it works well. Charter Member Roberts did ask Director Lindow about how often the city goes through an audit. He responded that the city goes through one every year and they are in the middle of one right now with the state. The audit includes the city, the court, the wastewater plant, payroll, vendors, contracts, payroll, processing, documentation etc.

Chairman Bemer then wanted Director Lindow to explain the relationship of the city court and the city itself. He then described how Rocky River is the host city and the city is the fiscal office for them and are appropriated the same way as the city. His department also process their payroll and the court uses the same budgeting software as well.

After all of the members spoke, there were four items place on the master list:

Article IV – Administrative Departments - Section 2 Law – have a discussion regarding

- The removal of the law director – who does it?
- Length of the term
- Should it be appointed or elected
- Clarification of benefits for the position

Charter Secretary Greco reviewed the task list that was set by the commission for the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Charter Review Commission will be held at 6:00 p.m. on May 6, 2026.

The invited guests will be Chairs and members of the city’s boards and commissions, Police and Fire Chiefs, and Rocky River Police and Fire Personnel. Discussion will be regarding Article V – Civil Service Commission and Article VI – Boards and Commissions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.