

MINUTES OF MEETING
2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
May 6, 2026

Members Present: Chris Aiola, Andy Bemer, Elizabeth Gerstenhaber, Collen, Hauer, Chris Klym, Michael O'Donnell, Pat Roberts, and Peter Sullivan Jr.

Members Excused: Dr. Al Melton

Presence Noted: Mayor Pamela Bobst, Building Commissioner Ray Reich, Recreation Director Bob Holub, Planning and Community Development Director Kathryn Kerber, Police Chief George Lichman, Fire Chief Aaron Lenart (via phone), Civil Service Member Jim Riedl, Civil Service Member Brian Hurtuk, Planning Commission Chairman William Bishop, Parks and Recreation Board Member Dr. James Ulchaker, and Board of Zoning and Building Appeals Chairman Patrick Farrell

Chairman Bemer opened the meeting at 6:01 PM and asked the members of the Charter Review Commission about the last week's meeting minutes and with no comments, he stated that they stand as presented. He noted that Charter Secretary Greco has provided a list of charter language regarding the removal of the mayor and law director from the surrounding communities as requested from the last meeting. This topic is on the master list of further discussion he stated.

Chairman Bemer then turned the meeting over the Charter Member Roberts who is in charge of this evening's discussion of Articles V and VI which deal with Civil Service Commission and Boards and Commissions. She stated that this is wonderful opportunity to review these articles for the city. She began with Article V Civil Service Commission and reviewed the article with the commission. She stated that the article looks pretty good and then Chairman Bemer invited the two civil service commission members to the front to speak. Charter Secretary Greco stated that he had Fire Chief Lenart on the phone as well for questioning if needed. Commission Member Riedl stated that everything is going well with the civil service commission. He stated there is no contention, there have been no problems, both chiefs and the law director attended the meetings. He continued by stated that the commission gets ahead of the hiring to deal with any future vacancies especially caused by retirements. Commission Member Hurtuk then spoke stating that he is a relatively new appointee to the commission and had a chance to sit with both chiefs to discuss the futures of their departments. He stated there has been one meeting this year so far and it ran smoothly. Charter Member O'Donnell then asked both civil service commission members if there is anything in charter as it stands now that gets in the way of doing their job. Commission Member Reidl stated it is running pretty smooth and sees no need for any charter changes now. He noted there have been changes in the past especially with the use of lateral transfers now and that has really helped with recruitment and hiring for the city. Charter Member Roberts stated that this article is pretty straightforward and organized. Chairman Bemer then stated that charter sets the organization of the civil service commission and that the civil service rules really dominate on how that commission works. The rules find their authority through the charter and through the council now.

Charter Member Roberts and Chairman Bemer thanks to the two members and then turned their focus on Article VI which deals with the city's boards and commissions. The first section dealt with basic general provisions. Charter Member Roberts then reviewed the section with the charter review commission and the steps to establish a commission, establish the number of members and the voting rules, duties and powers of such commissions. Discussion then focused on how the quorum is needed for a commission. She stated that maybe there can be a discussion regarding a supermajority and if it is needed in some of the established commissions with the city. Charter Member O'Donnell did mention that the supermajority is an interesting topic and Chairman Bemer did state we can review this topic with land use commissions when they are up to speak.

Charter Member Roberts then turned her attention to Section 4 of the Article VI the Parks and Recreation Commission. She reviewed each topic stated in the section and noted that there is great coordination between the city and the city school system. She did make a statement regarding the Rocky River Parks Foundation and the Rocky River Parks and Recreation Commission. She then reviewed the organization structure, purpose, and goals of the Rocky River Parks Foundation and concluded by asking how do these two groups interface? Chairman Bemer then asked Recreation Director Holub and Parks and Recreation Board Member Dr. James Ulchaker up to the podium to speak. Director Holub began speaking and stated that both groups do work well together and pointed out that Charter Member Klym is the President of the Foundation currently. He went on to say the monies received as donations are used in a variety of ways for projects or general use. Director Holub went on to describe how the money is used by the Foundation throughout the city, for example, to help fund the Fall Arts Festival that is held every year. He stated that foundation and the committee do work in conjunction but do have their own separate funds. Charter Member Klym then spoke on how the two groups are completely separate in that one is defined by the charter and the other is one that run privately. The foundation may act as a fiscal sponsor for various groups in city. For example, he said the project Elle's Enchanted Playground and their work to purchase playground equipment is under their umbrella for the foundation. He then gave other examples in how the foundation helps other organizations in the city. Charter Member Klym then went on to say that the Parks and Rec. Commission are in charge of for example, presenting legislation to council that deals with increasing fee and/or rates for the outdoor pool. They have more of a legislative function he points out. He concluded by stating they are doing separate services in the city and the names can be a bit confusing. Charter Member Roberts pointed out that the two groups work well together and now knows the difference. She did ask the director and commission member if they feel there should be any changes made to the current charter language and Parks and Recreation Board Member Ulchaker stated the way it stands now it works very well. They are recommending no changes. Chairman Bemer concluded with a question regarding what is currently going on with the recreation center and what projects are going on with it. Director Holub gave a summary of the current work.

The mayor did acknowledge Member Ulchaker service of the Parks and Rec. Committee for over 28 years now and thanked him. She also wanted to make sure that the charter review commission members knew why this section of the charter has a lot of detail. It came to be because years ago the schools here had their own recreation program separate from the city. Then those two programs acknowledged that they had a lot of redundancy and eventually came together and

agree to develop a parks and recreation commission which falls under the charter now. It is a little unusual she points out because the commission does approve certain fees unilaterally and do not go to council, but other fees do. She believes that this was established back in the 1970s.

Charter Member Roberts turned her attention to Section 2 of the article and Section 5 which deals with the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals and Design and Construction Board of Review. She stated that she was on a BZA board member herself in another town and was a member for 8 years and 5 years as the chairperson and she loved the work. She continued by reviewing the BZA section with the charter review commission. Building Commissioner Ray Reich then spoke and suggested that the BZA section and the Planning Commission section of the article should be reviewed together since they work more hand in hand. Charter Member Roberts then reviewed Section 3 regarding the Planning Commission of the city. She summarized for the charter review members and then the topic of the city's master plan was discussed. The mayor pointed out that the currently master plan for the city was developed in 2018 and is reviewed every 10 years and will be up for consideration in 2028. The mayor did state that there have been supplements added to the master plan as well. Charter Member Roberts continued the review of the section then and addressed the concern of the quorum for the various committees. Director Kerber then spoke stating that in regard to a supermajority, that has never been a concern and there has never been a tie vote thus far. The discussion then continued on how these two committees handle an actual vote when it comes to approving projects. Building Commission Riech and Planning Chairman Bishop explained how a project is presented to the board and how the developers are advised if the plans are incomplete and then the vote is tabled. Chairman Bemer then explained to the charter review commission that the Planning Commission received development plans that are not residential and the Board of Zoning Appeals handles any application that has been determined not code compliant by the Building Commissioner where then you would need an exception or variances from the code. He then discussed some detail of the development code with the panel speakers and where any changes may occur there, especially the use of generators.

Chairman Bemer then asked the panel speakers on how it is going on finding members to these boards. Chairman Klym did ask if qualifications are a hindering factor for the city to find anyone. Mayor Bobst then stated that the city has been looking at this and they were looking at two factors for qualifications and they are residency and credentialing. What the city has determined, with research looking at surrounding communities as well, this issue can be handled through legislation through council, and no charter action is needed. She continued by stating that they may state that these committee members may have to be comprised of a majority of members who are residents of the city or a majority of credentialed individuals for example architects and/or engineers. She pointed out that they do not have to be same individual though. The city is looking at creating a hybrid of qualifications. Chairman Bemer then spoke about possibly expanding the member of the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals. Discussion then ensued about the number of individuals needed for that board. Research was then presented to the charter review committee on what other committee qualifications are in the surrounding communities. Charter Member Sullivan Jr. then asked for clarification regarding how members are currently seated for the BZA Commission. Building Commissioner Riech stated that all seats are filled but there are just no alternates. The discussion then turned what if you a board that is ready to vote but there are no certified members present and just residents are present. Building

Commissioner Reich stated that most likely the vote would be tabled until all members had a chance to review the project at hand thoroughly and then it proceeds with a full vote of the committee. Charter Member Sullivan Jr. then asked if the residency requirement of the boards is coming from the charter or from the ordinances and Building Commissioner Reich stated that comes from the ordinances passed by council. Charter Member Klym then raised the question about financial compensation of these members and Mayor Bobst stated member are paid but has not been raised in a number of years and their service almost qualifies as being volunteer. Charter Member Klym stated that is you want to attract qualified members to help, the city may want to look at those rates of pay and Mayor Bobst stated that is a good point they may have to look at that. The discussion then concluded with idea of conflict of interest if a board member has a personal project on the agenda and then it was pointed out that the member would then excuse themselves from the vote. Building Commissioner Reich then pointed out this where it is important to have alternates for the boards, especially for the Planning Commission.

Charter Member Klym then stated that what he is hearing then is that there are no changes needed to the charter language for these particular sections and that the changes they were just discussing would be handled legislatively through council. The panel agreed there are no changes especially maybe changes the number of individuals on the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals as pointed out by Director Kerber.

The discussion then returned to the definition of a quorum and what qualifies a majority and what qualification should be present in order for a vote to proceed. Should the make up of the board be a majority of residents and have a minimum number of qualified professionals for each board. Charter Member Gerstenhaber did suggest that the charter review members should look at the minimum number of members needed for each committee and how many of them should be a certified professional. Chairman Bemer agreed to that point. Mayor Bobst did point out that the Directors here tonight are the support the boards and commissions rely on and that a lot of issues are resolved even before a project is presented to them. All the expertise that the directors possess do help the approval process along. Charter Member Klym then spoke and stated that what he is hearing is that there is an issue of finding those qualified individuals for each of the boards and that one of the recommendations he is hearing is removing the residency requirement through legislation so that you can look beyond the city to find this expertise. What also he is hearing is that if the board here wants to submit the recommendation of reducing the number of qualified individuals on particular boards, then he suggest that legislatively, the city should recommend that the remaining members of those boards be residents of the city. The board did agree with this assessment.

Building Commissioner then asked the charter review commission members that they should review each section just to make sure everyone is on the same page. Everyone agreed that the only change for discussion would be with the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals.

After all of the members spoke, there was one item that was placed on the master list of further discussion:

Article VI – Boards and Commissions - Section 2 . Board of Zoning and Building Appeals –
have a discussion regarding the number of certified professionals along with the number of

citizens on the board. Does the board reduce the number of professionals and then require the remaining members to be residents of the city.

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 13, 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.