

# **Record of Proceedings**

## **VILLAGE OF MINERVA PARK CHARTER COMMISSION**

**Minutes of the**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Commission Meeting**

*Council Chairwoman Conger called the meeting to order at 6:34 post-meridian.*

**Roll:** Commission Chairwoman Conger, Members Harker, Estes, Silverman-Star, Wolf, Beeba, and Allison.

**Attending:** Eric Fisher

**Minutes:**

- ❖ Member Beeba moved to approve the 2/7/19 Minutes. Member Wolf seconded. All in favor.

**Public Meeting and Questionnaire Follow-Up:**

- ❖ The Commission reviewed the Questionnaire replies provided by Village Employees and Present/Former Council Members. Personal information was removed from all responses.
- ❖ With regards to the roles and responsibilities of Village employees, respondents generally thought they were not clearly defined, difficult to locate, and could use a regular review process.
  - Member Lewis explained that within governmental organizations, one of the usual administrative elements/functions is to regularly update job descriptions.
  - Member Wolf added that one of the functions of a charter could be to more clearly define the jobs and duties, or create a process by which those jobs/duties could be more clearly defined.
  - Member Walsh said that, as Village employees are members of OPERS, it is likely that there is some form of description on file somewhere.
  - Member Harker added that, in his experience working in government, there is wide latitude in describing non-union positions and job descriptions can be quite vague.
- ❖ Generally, the respondents thought the powers and responsibilities of the mayor, while defined by statute, were vague and confusing.
  - Member Wolf added that one of the difficulties with Statue is that it does not clearly lay out the role of Mayor.
- ❖ The respondents were divided as to Council duties and responsibilities, with regards to statutory powers (voting on ordinances, legislation, etc.), they are relatively clear. However, with regards to committees or council members exercising administrative functions Council roles are not as clearly defined.
- ❖ With regards to communications between Mayor and Council, the majority believed conflict was largely driven by personality.
  - Member Silverman-Star said that a Charter could approve communication by more clearly defining Council and Mayoral duties/powers.
  - Member Busick added that a lack of delegation also plays a role, more clearly defining roles and expectations would work toward better communication.

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### Public Meeting and Questionnaire Follow-Up (Continued):

- Member Lewis added that, in social services, there are very clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and that this is largely driven by clearly defined expectations. Communication difficulties could be addressed by promoting a more professional environment and expectations.
- Member Busick explained that, in his experience on Council, there were wide discrepancies between motivation in Council members--some were effective, some just came to meetings. He added that another problem was that there seemed to be no capability for long-term planning--such as with the issue of sanitary sewers.
- Member Estes asked if Member Busick felt that an increase in salary would spur more participation.
- Member Lewis asked Member Busick if the budget included depreciation. In her experience, depreciation was an integral part of the budget. Member Estes replied that she thought there was for safety and policing, but not for other matters.
- ❖ With regards to the processes for addressing work in Village committees, the general consensus was that, when roadblocks exist, it is largely result of the Mayor becoming over-involved in committee meetings and decisions. Also, a general lack of training for Chairs and clear action steps/deliverables.
  - Member Walsh asked if this wasn't a result of the Committees not exercising the full extent of their legislative powers.
  - Member Wolf replied that the Mayor being involved in Committee meetings might unduly influence decisions, such as in the case of bidding--where you are looking not only for lowest, but best, and that gives an opportunity for the Mayor to affect the process.
  - Member Estes added that, in her experience, Committee meetings have very little actual power, mostly due to information being withheld by the Mayor.
  - Member Wolf disagreed, explaining that Committees *do* have power, but that the difficulties arise when the Committee members do not exercise that power, either through lack of direction or simple confusion.
- ❖ With regards to the processes for decision-making with regards to Village finances, there was a marked lack of a mandate for Council to do any planning, and so the Council/Mayor is largely reactionary. The effectiveness of financial planning largely resulted from the ability of the Fiscal Officer, rather than a process.
- ❖ With regards to the duties of Finance Director, they seem to be clearly defined. The only difficulties could arise from the lack of checks and balances on the Finance Director, although no specifics were given.
  - Member Walsh enquired as to how often the Village accounts were audited, and Member Wolf replied that it was done yearly by a firm that reports to the State Auditor.
- ❖ With regards to the duties of Zoning Officer, the duties not clearly defined, but there is a general lack of work as Village Zoning is largely confined to fences, sheds, and permits.

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### Public Meeting and Questionnaire Follow-Up (Continued):

- ❖ With regards to the responsibilities of the Village Planner, they are clearly defined, but the position is largely contingent on the M/I Development. Also, many respondents stated that they weren't aware of what the responsibilities exactly entails.
- ❖ With regards to the responsibilities of the Police Chief, although the respondents *hoped* they were clearly defined, but were not aware of the exact duties.
  - Member Wolf explained that there is a manual that lists clearly designed duties and responsibilities for the MP Police Chief.
- ❖ With regards to the responsibilities of the Fire Chief, the role is not clearly defined, with difficulties arising in a lack of check and balances largely arising from the position's volunteer nature.
- ❖ With regards to the responsibilities of the Clerk of Courts, although the respondents weren't aware of specific duties, they believed they were defined by state statute.
- ❖ With regards to the duties of the Maintenance Supervisor, the respondents were mixed as to whether the responsibilities were defined.
- ❖ Concerning what roadblocks might exist to offering outside/alternative ideas, the respondents thought they were certainly able to offer suggestions, whether those suggestions were actually implemented relied largely on individual motivation and Council focus. In previous administrations and Councils, ingrained ideas and personalities contributed to a less welcoming culture of ideas.
  - Member Estes recommended that Commission members who have not attended Council meetings or work session should go in order to gain a more thorough understanding of processes and roadblocks.
- ❖ Due to time constraints, the remaining questions were placed on the Commission shared drive for review and examination.
- ❖ The Commission reviewed public comments received after the informational meeting.
- ❖ Member Estes asked if it might benefit the process to have another informational meeting specifically focusing on how the Charter will affect citizens.
- ❖ Member Wolf added that it would be useful to have public informational meetings monthly.
- ❖ Member Beeba explained that she had just spoken with the Mayor of Mount Vernon, who recently had their charter defeated, and that he stressed the value of education and outreach.
- ❖ Chairwoman Conger added that a monthly meeting might be difficult, but that we hold them for milestones.
- ❖ Member Estes said that she thinks the Charter will be defeated unless the Commission does a substantial degree of outreach.
- ❖ Member Allison explained that her takeaway was that the meeting was civil and very informative, and that it would be useful to have another public meeting after the Commission has selected a form of government--to solicit feedback and citizens' concerns.
- ❖ Member Estes added that it would be useful during the public meetings to speak to the Commission's process and decision-making.

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### **Public Meeting and Questionnaire Follow-Up (Continued):**

- ❖ Member Busick said that he felt it wouldn't be helpful to have a public meeting until the Commission actually has deliverables, and that the public meeting was very well run and useful.
- ❖ Member Lewis said that it is important to establish agreed upon talking points that are easily comprehensible and applicable to citizens of Minerva Park. We should emphasize that the Charter is written by Minerva Park for Minerva Park, and that it should establish a clear vision for the Village.
- ❖ Member Busick raised the need to establish a partnership and functional relationship with Council.
- ❖ Member Walsh asked Chairwoman Conger what citizens in the new development thought about the Charter process and Village government. Chairwoman Conger replied that they are not really aware of governmental processes and its affect on their lives (and how they can affect change in their local government).
- ❖ Member Estes asked about the possibilities of sending out a mailing. Member Silverman-Star replied that it wouldn't be helpful to send out a mailing or attempt outreach without having solid deliverables.
- ❖ Member Lewis argued that we need to create a skill-driven government.
- ❖ Member Lewis is going to write an introduction for the new Commission members on the website.
- ❖ Member Harker raised the possibility of getting a bio, description, etc. in either the Villager or the MPCA newsletter. The cutoff date is 2/15 for articles and updates. Chairwoman Conger said she would contact the Mayor regarding getting an update about the Informational meeting
- ❖ Member Busick said that it would be very helpful to have block representatives to reach each sub-section of Minerva Park, gathering neighborhoods.
- ❖ Member Harker said that he wouldn't be able to attend the 2/21/19 meeting.

Chairwoman Conger moved to adjourned. Member Wolf seconded. All in favor.

*The Commission adjourned at 8:30pm.*