

**Charter Review Commission
Constitutional Officers
Subcommittee Meeting
November 16, 2015**

A meeting of the Charter Review Commission, Constitutional Officers Subcommittee was held at Charlotte County Administration Complex, Room B-106, Port Charlotte, Florida.

Roll Call

The following Constitutional Officers members were present:

Katherine D. Ariens, Chairman

Jerry J. O'Halloran

William Dryburgh

Frank C. Weikel

John M. Davidson (alternate)

Citizens present: Gary Farino

Michael Zarzano

David Kesselring

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by Chairman Ariens.

Agenda Items:

I. Approval of October 20, 2015 minutes; signed and adopted.

II. Citizens Input

My name is Gary Farino, I want to propose the Charter Review be every two (2) years instead of every six (6) years. It would then help the County and the people if there was a national disaster like last time and anyone who has signed contracts with the County, we still had to pay them their bonus contracts and did not have the money. If the review is every two (2) years we could make the necessary changes required.

My name is Michael Zarzano, I am the Executive Director of American Freedom Farm, a citizen think tank. I would like to know if you are going to consider the proposal that has been made before you on several occasions, which is an idea we are advocating. We grow ideas to better government and to insert virtue in government. This concept we call Zip Code congress is a district representation. If it cannot be adopted formally we hope that you would at least consider it in an official manner. In the future allow for input and questions to be asked and work together. We the People are the master, you are the servants. Thank you and we hope to work with you in the future.

III. Old Business

Interview previously scheduled with Sheriff William Prummell, Jr. and list of questions was provided prior to this meeting and are attached.

IV. New Business

Interview with Sheriff Prummell

What is your opinion of non-partisan elections for Constitutional Officers?

I am only speaking today for myself. I can understand where people should say the Sheriff is a non-partisan position because we represent everybody, but so does every position in office. They are supposed to represent everybody, not just their party. I feel that it is probably important that you do disclose what your political party affiliation is. I am a politician, but I am also a law enforcement officer first. If it comes down to a public policy, public safety type issue I will do what is best for the citizens of the County.

What is your opinion on setting term limits for Constitutional Officers?

I am not in agreement with it. I believe if someone is in a particular position and if they are doing a good job and the people want them to stay, they should have that ability. I would like to be in office for as long as I feel I can do good for the citizens of Charlotte County or as long as they think I have something to contribute to them.

What is your opinion on changing the Constitutional Officers to an appointed position rather than elected?

I do not agree with that, there is a balance of powers. As the Sheriff I am accountable to the people who put me in office.

Do you have any alternative forms of funding?

We progressively go after different grants, we have crime prevention monies, forfeiture funds, things of that nature for getting equipment and items we necessarily would not be able to get through the budget. We try to keep the budget as controlled as we can. We do not have any alternative forms.

Chairman Ariens – You are now under MSTU's and they did that for transparency; how is that affecting your budget?

Sheriff Prummell – I do not think it has really affected the budget, I think it is more transparency when people see what they are paying for law enforcement. After our Citizen Police Academy graduation last week a gentlemen told me he noticed it on his tax bill. Now he understands what he is pay for and did not have a problem with it.

What are your observations regarding the relationship of Constitutional Officers and the Board of County Commissioners?

I really cannot speak for the other Constitutional Officers, I have not heard anything negative and I speak with the other Constitutional Officers from my staff and engage with them often. My personal relationship with our County government at all levels has been excellent. I meet with each Commissioner individually several times over the budget process to let them know what I am facing and they in turn tell me what they are looking at for the County.

Would you favor the Sheriff's Office no longer being the franchisee of the jail?

There are certain things where I believe that government should not contract out. If you are asking me about the County running it versus a for profit organization, I would kind of be against either one. The jail can be the biggest liability that a Sheriff can have, but we are trained in budget safety and dealing with inmates so we run a very professional agency here in Charlotte County. We are a model jail and are looked at by other agencies nationwide. As using a for profit organization there are several examples where that has failed.

What Charter amendment would you propose is needed to improve the efficiency of your office in relevance with serving the citizens of Charlotte County?

Personally things are running very well, right now I would not recommend anything.

Committee comment – If you think of something in the future, please let us know.

Do you feel that the Charter Review is beneficial to your department or is this process a waste of time?

I think any time we are doing a system of checks and balances is good, whether we make changes or not I would not say it was a waste of time.

Chairman Ariens and the subcommittee members thanked Sheriff Prummell for his time and service.

V. Discussion

Our next meeting is December 16, 2015 at approximately 4:15 p.m. after the full Commission meeting and we will be discussing our Final Report.

Frank C. Weikel – I want to give a summary of what I have heard during all of the interviews. There are no thoughts from any of the Constitutional Officers that there should be a partisan election. Setting term limits I heard no interest in correcting that and concerning appointed positions, absolutely not. Also, nobody supported a ballot for alternative forms of funding and the relationship with the County Commissioners seems to be excellent so there is no reason to change that.

VI. Citizens Input

My name is Gary Farino, regarding the five (5) minute limit, I am a member of the MSBU here and if we have questions we email them and they can be brought up at the next meeting. Also, Wal-Mart uses the Sheriff's Department more due to theft, so should their ad valorem tax be more than a regular citizen who does not use their services as much. I live on a street with only a couple of houses and hardly ever see the police.

My name is Michael Zarzano, Director of American Freedom Farm. I have given you a copy of an informational handout about the concept of this Zip Code congress. Let it be known this will not cost the County a single penny. This idea is utilizing the citizen's assistance at their own self-funded manner. The citizens will be organized in a way that can be beneficial to the official leaders, creating districts by Zip Code. We will assign individuals who have skills relevant to the local government. What we are proposing is you simply recognize this organization in the future.

Jerry J. O'Halloran – We are a Charter Review Committee and I believe Citizen Input is extremely important. However; we are reviewing the Charter is this input relevant to a Charter change. If not is this the correct forum. I would like this question addressed to the whole commission.

William Dryburgh – This is something we should discuss with Mr. Berntsson.

VII. Adjournment: Upon motion made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 2:03 PM.


Katherine D. Ariens, Chairman

Attachment #1
Interview Questions

What is your opinion of non-partisan elections for Constitutional Officers?

What is your opinion on setting term limits for Constitutional Officers?

What is your opinion on changing the Constitutional Officers to an appointed position rather than elected?

Do you have any ballot suggestions for alternative forms of funding?

What are your observations regarding the relationship of Constitutional Officers and the Board of County Commissioners?

Would you favor the Sheriff's Office no longer being the franchisee of the jail?

What Charter amendment would you propose is needed to improve the efficiency of your office in relevance with serving the citizens of Charlotte County?

Do you feel that the Charter Review is beneficial to your department or is this process a waste of time?