

**Charter Review Commission
Other Boards and Agencies
Subcommittee Meeting
September 22, 2021**

A meeting of the Charter Review Commission Other Boards and Agencies Subcommittee was held at Charlotte County Administration Complex, Room B-106, Port Charlotte, Florida at 2:00 p.m. on September 22, 2021

Roll Call:

The following members were present:

Theresa Murtha, Chair
Adam Riley
Steve Drake

Members Absent: None.

Citizens: None.

Agenda Items:

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Chairman Theresa Murtha.

Approval of Minutes: None.

I. Citizen Input: None

II. Old Business:

- a. Review of the additional questions added to the questionnaire list for interviews.
- b. Review of scheduled meetings on October 5th and 11th.
- c. Discussed reviewing the Final Reports from 2010 and 2016 as examples for writing our report. Chair Murtha will prepare an outline for the committee to discuss as a starting point. The previous reports included: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations for possible Charter Amendments.

III. New Business:

- a. 2:15 p.m. Interview with Suzanne Graham, CD/BA.

Introduction: I am the governmental affairs chairperson for the Charlotte Desoto Building Industry Association. I am the past President at the local level and at the state level – Florida Homebuilders Association. I used to own American Pest Control for twenty years. My husband and I sold it ten years ago to Massey Services and I still work for them handling all the regulatory items for them in seven states.

Do you think we should introduce Term Limits in the Charter for our Legislators? You already have term limits via the election process. On the other hand, if you introduce terms limits, you may lose someone who is good in their office. Do you really want them to leave? "No" because

elections ultimately take of it.

Do you think there should be fewer or more Commissioners on the Board of Commissioners? I believe we are good with five Commissioners due to the size of our County which is not very large. With only one municipality it serves the will of the people perfectly.

Should County Department Heads and members of Administration be required to be county residents? No, as long as they have historical knowledge of our County. (Originally, I thought "Yes" but with so many open positions I do not think recruiting from nearby counties would be out of the question).

Should Constitutional Officers be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners or elected? Definitely Elected and it is what our Constitution already says.

Should the County Administrator be appointed or elected? Appointed. If it was elected, they would be constantly be running for office and not doing the job they were hired to do.

Should the percentage of the required signatures for the public to propose a change or a new ordinance be reduced or increased from 10 percent to another number? I think ten percent is a good number and many of the other Charters use that same percentage.

If the State of Florida pass Casino Gambling, should there be a provision in the Charter for allowing Charlotte County citizens to give input to the County on Casino Gambling? If we are truly "open for business" we should not stop anyone from doing business in our County. We should embrace free enterprise that does not restrict anyone from doing business, but with local restrictions/codes.

Should the Charter Review Commission recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help in business development efforts or to improve the business climate in Charlotte County? What changes would you recommend in that regard? No. I advocate the removal of impact fees, it is an undue tax on builders and developers, and it hinders growth.

Do you think the County should have a requirement by the Charter to update their comprehensive plan on a specific schedule? Should the Charter require specific elements to be within that plan? For instance, water resources. No. We already do it every seven to ten years and it is updated when changes come down from the Legislature. Why put something in the Charter that would tie their hands when they already doing it when necessary per State or Local changes?

Is the project selection allocation process for the one percent sales tax in the best interest of the overall county and fair to every region of the county? I have served on several of these committees that looks for ways to raise the money to get it approved by the voters. I don't think anything needs to change about the process. The political action committee (PAC) oversees how the money is spent.

Should there be a continuing oversight advisory committee dedicated to this tax? No, I think there are enough businesspeople to oversee it (official or not).

Should there be a requirement for an Environment impact planning? It is already being done so I don't believe it should be formalized as a law.

Should there be a need Congress or Forum for County Leadership to discuss major long-range planning? It was done for the 2050 Long Range Plan. No, we already have good relationships between the County and the builders, realtors, and chambers of commerce.

Are there any other changes to the County Home Charter that should be considered? No, but I would eliminate impact fees.

Should there be restrictions on the amounts of money raised for financing local campaigns? No. I have seen both - very little raised with people winning elections and then when others raise a lot. If someone wants to raise a lot of money for a job that does not pay much, why? There should be no restrictions. I wondered how this would fit into our Charter and then I read that Alachua County had it in their Charter with guidelines. They are not buying votes; they are wasting money. It is more about how many people the candidate can get in front of than how much money is raised.

Should there be a minimum age to serve in a local elected position? Voting age. I think that if they are eligible to vote, then they are eligible to run for office.

Should the county via a referendum or commission vote have a say on any major changes to the airport management? (Currently state law prevails.) No. The County does not have jurisdiction over an elected board. I would see it differently if the Airport Authority Commission were an appointed body. I would leave it with the Airport Authority to fight it out.

Should residency requirement to hold positions such as commissioner, sheriff, supervisor of elections be longer than the current six months? Yes. Six months is too short of time to learn about our community. The challenge process would take six months itself. I think one year would be a good start.

Should voting for commissioner be restricted to residents within the district the commissioner represents? No. The Commissions are making decisions on behalf of the entire county and people should have a chance to vote for them all.

End Interview:

b. 3:00 p.m. Interview with Sean Doherty, Tourism Director, Charlotte County

Do you think we should introduce Term Limits in the Charter for our Legislators? Yes, in general. The current Commission does a great job, but some level of term limits is beneficial in getting fresh ideas and perspectives into government. What that looks like, I don't know, but something reasonable.

Do you think there should be fewer or more Commissioners on the Board of Commissioners? No. Five works well. If it isn't broke, don't fix it. They represent the County well with that number. I see a time down the road of adding to the commission as the County expands

Should County Department Heads and members of Administration be required to be county residents? Yes. The decisions they are making directly affect the citizens of the County. You don't want to have someone making decisions that did not also affect them as residents.

Should Constitutional Officers be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners or elected? Elected.

Should the County Administrator be appointed or elected? Appointed. It is a very complexed position handling all aspects of the County. The Commissioners are very knowledgeable of what the skill set for that person should be.

Should the percentage of the required signatures for the public to propose a change or a new ordinance be reduced or increased from 10 percent to another number? I would not reduce the number and it should be at least 10 percent.

If the State of Florida pass Casino Gambling, should there be a provision in the Charter for allowing Charlotte County citizens to give input to the County on Casino Gambling? Yes. Citizens already have input on what affects them in the County at some level and should have input on that issue as well.

Should the Charter Review Commission recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help in business development efforts or to improve the business climate in Charlotte County? What changes would you recommend in that regard? I am pro-business, but I couldn't say what needs to be added to the Charter. Anything that favors business development I would be in favor of looking at.

Do you think the County should have a requirement by the Charter to update their comprehensive plan on a specific schedule? Should the Charter require specific elements to be within that plan? For instance, water resources. I am comfortable with the State schedule of requirements.

Is the project selection allocation process for the one percent sales tax in the best interest of the overall county and fair to every region of the county? As long as they continue to get citizen input from all parts of the County, I am good with that and would say "Yes'.

Should there be a continuing oversight advisory committee dedicated to this tax? I would not be opposed but I haven't seen any issues with the programs to start one. It would be difficult to get the sales tax passed again if the County and Commissioners had not done what they said they would do. **How do you feel about the School Board receiving part of the One percent when they receive money already under a different taxing authority?** I would agree that they are not eligible, and that the money should go to what benefits the entire County. However, school security upgrades were a definite need and not just a want and should have been considered.

Should there be a requirement for an Environment impact planning? N/A.

Should there be a need Congress or Forum for County Leadership to discuss major long-range planning? It wouldn't hurt. The more input from different areas of the community, the better.

Should there be restrictions on the amounts of money raised for financing local campaigns? I would be in favor of restricting but do not have a recommendation of the dollar amount. The important thing is to get the word out on how you stand on the issues which can easily be done by posting on the candidates' website. With our County size it should not take a lot of money to reach 186,000 citizens.

Should there be a minimum age to serve in a local elected position? Yes, you need maturity and experience as a requirement. I would be in favor of some type of minimum age.

Should the county via a referendum or commission vote have a say on any major changes to the airport management? (Currently state law prevails.) Yes.

Should residency requirement to hold positions such as commissioner, sheriff, supervisor of elections be longer than the current six months? I think six months would be okay if you had previously been working in the County. You would have a good understanding of what Charlotte County is all about. We changed the Tourism Board requirements to accommodate someone who lived in Sarasota County but had for many years owned and ran a business in Charlotte County.

Should voting for commissioner be restricted to residents within the district the commissioner represents? No, because most of the decisions they make affect the County as a whole. Citizens should be able to vote on all five commissioners.

Are there any other changes related to tourism that the County Home Charter should be considered? Nothing from a Charter standpoint. We have a solid Commission, and all members seem to be pro tourism, County Administration as well. I have no complaints regarding resources or anything we have been provided to do our jobs.

Are there any other changes to the County Home Charter that should be considered?

Water quality and affordable housing are two issues that affect tourism. Fishing, boating, kayaking, etc., are all affected by water resources. Hospitality jobs require lots of housing, especially for the Sunseeker Resort that is being built and the employees will need affordable housing. We have a shortage of housing within the County, and I know the County is working on both issues. It is all about water quality – red tide is an issue. The County has recently hired a Water Quality Manager, so the County is taking that issue seriously.

End Interview:

c. Interview with Don McCormick, Chair, Beaches and Shores Advisory Committee

Do you think we should introduce Term Limits in the Charter for our County Commissioners? Yes, I no longer think voters will take care of the matter on their own. **How long?** For commissioners, two terms for eight years.

Do you think there should be fewer or more Commissioners on the Board of Commissioners? Five is a good number.

Should County Department Heads and members of Administration be required to be county residents? No.

Should Constitutional Officers be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners or elected? The subject is moot now but in general I am in favor of elections for positions.

Should the County Administrator be appointed or elected? Appointed.

Should the percentage of the required signatures for the public to propose a change or a new ordinance be reduced or increased from 10 percent to another number? Ten percent seems fine.

If the State of Florida pass Casino Gambling, should there be a provision in the Charter for allowing Charlotte County citizens to give input to the County on Casino Gambling? I believe they should have a say but that it shouldn't be in the Charter. The county commissioners should bring it forward saying it needs citizen input. I don't think the Charter should have too much stuff in it like the Constitution. I wouldn't be upset if something was put into the Charter but am now on the fence.

Should the Charter Review Commission recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help in business development efforts or to improve the business climate in Charlotte County? What changes would you recommend in that regard? It is very difficult for government to be involved in business development due to the Sunshine Law. As businesses move to Charlotte County, they want their change to be kept secret until it is a done deal because of repercussions from their customer base and employees. They are desperate for secrecy. It is very hard for a government agency to operate in secrecy. A question to raise is to see if there is any way our Charter can get around this matter.

Do you think the County should have a requirement by the Charter to update their comprehensive plan on a specific schedule? Should the Charter require specific elements to be within that plan? For instance, water resources. I am also a member of the Planning and Zoning Board. There are some anomaly's like park and recreation land designated on the empty lots. It is worth looking into. There needs to be an ongoing process rather than just at the seven-year mark.

Is the project selection allocation process for the one percent sales tax in the best interest of the overall county and fair to every region of the county? It was all done in a very open way. Of, course money should be given to our schools. I thought it had a lot of public input and I am fine with the way it turned out.

Should there be a continuing oversight advisory committee dedicated to this tax? No, it is handled as a matter of the regular course of business by the County.

Should there be a requirement for an Environment impact planning? We already have a lot of environmental impact studies in the county for people developing the land and I do not see a need for it in the Charter.

Should there be a need Congress or Forum for County Leadership to discuss major long-range planning? It would be desirable – people sitting down to discuss their function in the

community as developer, as community activists, as non-profits – it is beneficial to discuss things to reveal needs and directions.

Should there be restrictions on the amounts of money raised for financing local campaigns? No.

Should there be a minimum age to serve in a local elected position? Voting age to serve.

Should the county via a referendum or commission vote have a say on any major changes to the airport management? (Currently state law prevails.) Yes. The State should not be telling us what to do. I believe in Home Rule.

Should residency requirement to hold positions such as commissioner, sheriff, supervisor of elections be longer than the current six months? Six months is fine.

Should voting for commissioner be restricted to residents within the district the commissioner represents? I prefer it the way it is. Any time you are having a discussion with an elected official, it helps that he knows that you can vote for them. If you can only talk with the one that you can vote for, the others will be really tough to talk with. Voting for a person is leverage.

Are there any other changes to the County Home Charter that should be considered? No.

Is there anything related to Beaches and Shores that you would like to bring to our attention? The Beaches and Shores is a significant Advisory Board in two instances: 1) The recent \$20 Million Dollar Beach Renourishment Project that was successful. We interviewed the engineers every month for updates. Over the years, Beaches and Shores has been instrumental in getting good input, good engineering and really earned their keep. 2) Beaches and Shores is the point people for abandoned vessels which is an ongoing problem. People who no longer are enamored of their yacht, go out and dump it. **What happens?** Fish and Wildlife gets involved. There was an ongoing lawsuit that lasted two years which prevented any boat from being picked up. Now there is a 21-day process for notification, however if the owner moves the boat and throws out the anchor again, the 21-day process starts all over. If the owner does not respond in the designated time, then it is cleared to be removed. We have the funding to do that through West Coast Inland Navigation District. We have a county group that is an advisory to that to which some portion of the funds go to.

Is there anything in the Charter about Advisory Committees and their Rules? No. Should there be? There seems to be some different rules among the different advisory committees. You might want to look at that. Lucienne Paris was the champion of changing all Boards so that they had the term "Advisory" in there. She didn't want the CRA interfering with Sunseeker. She changed Planning and Zoning from Board to Advisory – to avoid potential lawsuit. She didn't want the advisory boards to have any real teeth. **These are places where citizens can have significant input. Is there a need to have something about Advisory Boards in the Charter?** I don't know where that would go. They could be manipulated and there is nothing to prevent it.

Water Districts: Do you see a need for desalinization in the future? I refer you to the books written by Cynthia Barnett, Author. Water districts are political entities and determined to be watersheds – it is very difficult for Charlotte County to have a water policy that is divorced from the

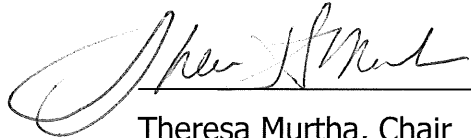
policy of Lee or Desoto County. I believe Water districts should be on a water shed basis and not on a county or city basis.

End Interview:

IV. Discussion: None.

V. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 4:05 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 5, 2021 @ 2:00 p.m.

 12/8/21

Theresa Murtha, Chair Date

Other Boards & Agencies Sub-committee