

100430Minutes

Cumberland County Charter Commission, Room 209 Portland City Hall, 6:30 pm.

Members present: Claude Morgan (chair), David Lunt, Steve Gorden, Dick Feeney, Kathleen Babeu, Meredith Burgess

Others present: Jim Cloutier

Discussion of Steven Scharf's letter – Mr Scharf, a Portland resident wrote a letter taking issue with the scheduling of the Portland hearing at the same time as the Portland Charter Commission, and for not publicizing the meeting more broadly. Morgan pointed out that he has sent multiple press releases to the papers in the areas of each meeting, but the press seems to have limited interest. Burgess pointed out that we can send announcements to the "datebook" section of the online press herald.

There have been misconceptions by the public, who find it hard to believe that the county doesn't already have a charter. Feeney notes that part of the problem with the last vote was the language on the ballot, which last time could be interpreted as replacing an old charter. The group will have to review the language on the upcoming ballot.

Lunt spoke to someone about the proposed increase of commissioners districts. As this is discussed with interested parties, it's best to put the emphasis on increase of districts or increase of representation rather than increase of commissioners.

Feeney pointed out that when the new districts would be created has not yet been resolved. Morgan agrees that this needs to be addressed tonight.

Gorden: the group has decided it's too rushed to elect new commissioners in Nov 2010, but the charter could instruct the three sitting commissioners to start the process and new commissioners could be elected in Nov 2011.

Cloutier asks question about terms and staggering, recommends having four year terms, and only have elections on the same years as legislatures to save cost of ballot printing and primaries.

Current commissioners are on four year cycles, with elections every two years. Two commissioners are elected one year, and one two years after that.

Current draft specifies elections every year, three year terms, three terms maximum.

Discussion of partisan nature of elections; current plan would elect new commissioners at the first election in non-partisan fashion, then continue in partisan.

Question of whether we could work off senate district lines.

Group debates value of having 7 vs 5 districts.

Feeney suggests that the charter set 5 and that commissioners can put future charter amendments to voters.

Discussion of whether the number of districts was really a determinant of the failed referendum two years ago. Group agrees that the primary problem is general lack of information about the county.

**Hot topics (which can be used to generate press)**

Eliminating two elected offices

Changing to 5 or 7 districts

Finance approval process

The fact county doesn't have a charter

Term limits

Strength of having option to offer services regionally

Creating living charter that can be tweaked in the future

Job is to create document so that county can serve community

County vs city charter

Education campaign – capture a couple hundred people per town. Gorden says town clerks will send info out to their lists.

Send email campaign in late June or early July (here's what we've done so far, here is a link, here is an upcoming hearing),

Send update in late August. Quick paragraphs with links work well.

Get legislators to include blurb in their mailings to constituencies

\*ALL get towns to put links to county charter website

\*\*TRICE & BURGESS to send out a constant contact email- first one has to say "hi!"

\*\*BURGESS, BABEU, EDER & TRICE will make a timeline for outreach actions.

\*\*TRICE Put together chart of representation of each of the counties

\*\*TRICE Check back in with Somerset County

\*\*TRICE check on June 7 Commissioners workshop

\*\*TRICE put Outreach committee with May 5 on website.

Issues of getting FAQs, brochure, EDER has been tasked with brochure.

Issue of number of districts tabled.

Adjourned 8pm