

Citizen Government Review Committee Minutes – May 1, 2014

Executive Conference Room, 215 SE 7th Street, City Hall, Topeka, Kansas, Thursday, May 1, 2014. Jim Reardon, Committee Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. with the following Committee Members present: Jim Reardon, Judy Moler, Maynard Oliverius and Tina Williams -4. Absent: John Nave -1.

Jim Reardon announced City Manager Jim Colson was planning to attend the Committee meeting; however, Mr. Colson was called away to another meeting. He reported Mr. Colson was scheduled to provide a brief overview of the City of Topeka Strategic Plan and how he perceives it to work in the community. He noted Mr. Colson reviewed the concluding comments and stated he believes the language adds depth to the report. He stated the purpose of the Committee meeting was to make sure the changes as proposed in the draft report dated May 21, 2014 (*Attachment A*) are acceptable to all Committee members. He recognized City of Topeka Mayor Larry Wolgast and asked him to provide his thoughts on the final report.

Mayor Larry Wolgast requested the Committee consider the following changes to the report:

- He referenced page 5, lines 171 through 175 of the report. He reported the Shawnee County Health Department consolidation was mandated by State law and the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library was approved by the voters of the city and county; therefore, the Parks & Recreation Department consolidation would have been the only “functional consolidation” or actual merger of City and County departments. He asked that the report reflect these facts in some manner.
- He referenced page 5, lines 185 through 190 of the report. He stated he believes the perception or the tone of the paragraph is misleading. He reported the change in the form of government took place because the City Manager Form of Government was a better form of government not because of dissention among city government members. He also stated the last sentence of the paragraph, beginning on line 188 and ending on 190 is not necessary because it states the obvious, that the role of the Mayor would be diminished by the transfer of administrative duties to the City Manager *i.e.* the City Manager Form of Government.

Judy Moler stated she concurs with Mayor Wolgast and believes the language as stated in lines 185 through 190 would not be necessary and may be perceived as inflammatory.

Tina Williams questioned if the portion of the sentence beginning on line 189 that states, “and as a result the Mayor’s salary was substantially reduced.” should be expanded and placed elsewhere in the report.

Jim Reardon stated he understands the concern expressed by Mayor Wolgast in regards to the perceived tone of the report; however, he believes it is important for people to understand the complete history of why the change in the form of government took place.

Mayor Wolgast referenced page 8, lines 301 through 306 of the report. He commended Jim Reardon for his work and stated he believes it was written very well. He spoke in support of the role of the Mayor as outlined in City of Olathe Charter Ordinance No. 28, Section 2.4, and stated he believes the Mayor of the City of Topeka should serve in the same capacity. He read the following paragraphs as outlined in City of Olathe Charter Ordinance No. 28, Section 2.4:

“He or she shall represent the city Governing Body at all official city functions, and shall be the official representative of the Governing Body at all meetings, conferences and negotiations relating to policy matters involving other governmental units and shall recommend Governing Body action relating thereto.

The mayor shall be the official representative of the Governing Body at all conferences and meetings with citizen groups and organizations interested in promoting the welfare and development of the city, and shall recommend Governing Body action relative thereto. The mayor may inform the Governing Body concerning questions and policy, and may make policy recommendations to the Governing Body. The mayor shall be empowered to call special meetings as provided by law.”

Judy Moler stated it has been the consensus of the Committee through the entire review process to recommend the Mayor of the City of Topeka serve in a similar capacity.

Mayor Wolgast requested on behalf of City Manager Jim Colson, he would respectfully request that lines 1097 through 1137 (Mr. Colson’s comments) be placed in a different section

of the report as the Citizens Government Review Committee was impaneled by the City Council, not City Administration. He commended Mr. Reardon for the excellent tone expressed in the last three paragraphs of the report (lines 1139 through 1152) and stated he believes the overall report is exceptional and addresses the majority of issues raised by citizens. He commended the Committee for listening and accepting guidance from Allyn Lockner, an expert on the subject matter and referenced “Steps to Local Government Reform” a book written by Mr. Lockner.

Jim Reardon commended Allyn Lockner for providing excellent guidance during the review process.

Mayor Larry Wolgast asked Mary Feighny, Deputy City Attorney, if she had any suggested changes to the report.

Mary Feighny, Deputy City Attorney, stated she has no further suggested changes to the report and believes the Committee has done an excellent job in capturing necessary information to complete the report.

Jim Reardon stated as requested, Mr. Colson’s comments would be placed elsewhere in the report as it is not the intent of the Committee to have Mr. Colson’s comments appear as a directive to the City Council. He thanked Mayor Wolgast for his comments and stated he understands and agrees that the role of the Mayor must be clear.

Maynard Oliverius stated he agrees that they should address the tone of the document so they do not draw inappropriate conclusions or make statements that would encourage people to overlook the purpose of why the Committee was impaneled.

Tina Williams suggested the sentence (lines 189 through 190) be expanded and placed after the sentence ending on line 180 of the report. She made the following suggested language revision:

“As a result of the transition to the City-Manager Form of Government and the transfer of duties to the City Manager, the Mayor’s salary was substantially reduced.”

Jim Reardon stated it was his intent to capture the flavor of how and why the change in the form of government transpired; therefore, he will delete lines 185 through 190.

Mayor Wolgast commended the City Manager for allowing him to be part of city government and more than just a figure head.

Judy Moler requested to delete lines 311 through 312 on page 8 of the report. She stated she is not comfortable with the language and believes they should not make reference to concepts used by other cities.

Maynard Oliverius expressed his appreciation to Jim Reardon for his work in drafting the report. He stated he appreciates the comments that have been made thus far, and has no further changes to add. He expressed the importance of addressing the tone of the document as to not raise questions where it is not necessary.

Judy Moler questioned duplication of comments made by Jason Fizell on page 12, lines 433 through 435; and on page 25, lines 989 through 993 of the report.

Tina Williams thanked Jim Reardon for his work on the report. She referenced a sentence on page 8, beginning on line 305 of the report. She suggested the sentence be moved to the beginning of the report because it is a powerful statement. The sentence reads as follows:

“This has led us to the understanding of why it is so important for the City to conduct a periodic citizen’s review.”

Following a short discussion, Committee members agreed the sentence is a powerful statement that should be included in the closing comments of the report.

Jim Reardon asked Committee members to review their resume’ and bio to make certain they are agreeable to the information that has been included.

Maynard Oliverius approved that his resume' and bio information and would suggest that each member make sure the statements are consistent in regards to theme and format.

Judy Moler and Tina Williams approved their resume' and bio information as listed.

Judy Moler asked if City Manager Jim Colson's comments would be listed under Part 4 of the report along with the other comments made by City officials.

Jim Reardon stated Mr. Colson's comments would be Part 5 of the report and titled "Interview with Jim Colson" and Part 6 of the report would be the conclusion of the report. He reported that he has notated all revisions discussed by the Committee and would distribute a final report to the Committee within the next week.

Judy Moler moved to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2014 Committee meeting. The motion seconded by Maynard Oliverius carried unanimously. (4-0-0)

Judy Moler moved to accept the changes made by the Committee to the draft report dated May 21, 2014, and approve the report as revised. The motion seconded by Tina Williams carried unanimously (4-0-0)

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Brenda Younger
City Clerk