

**MINUTES OF THE August 6, 2018
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE CITY COUNCIL**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Garnes at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL: Larry Dordea, James Edwards, Andrew Grove, Cindy King, Roger Rhome and Brian Simeone present.

Sheila Cherry arrived at 6:06 P.M.

Clerk Yost read the notice of the special meeting.

President Garnes announced the reason for the meeting and Councilman Dordea was given the floor. Councilman Dordea stated that although Julie Jakmides-Mack was no longer a Councilwoman for the City, she had done a lot of work and research on the subject and was present at the meeting. Mr. Dordea went on to express his desire that she be given an opportunity to address the Council and address the Charter Government issue. President stated that without objection, Ms. Jakmides-Mack could have the floor (there was no objection from the body).

Ms. Jackmides-Mack gave a brief history of the efforts to put the issue on the ballot and what research she had done on the issue. She also briefly explained the effort by the City of Canton a few years ago which did not pass at the ballot. Ms. Jackmides-Mack explained some of the benefits of Charter government and outlined the other communities in Stark County and surrounding area that are charter governments. Ms. Jackmides-Mack explained that the community of Mt. Vernon Ohio is currently addressing the issue and will place it before the voters in their community in November. Ms. Jackmides-Mack explained what some of the changes to operational government that can be made but also explained that it is not mandatory that all or any of those changes be put into a charter. Ms. Jackmides-Mack explained that a City Government under a charter may not look or operated much differently than our present form of Government, depending on the drafting of the charter by the Charter commission.

Councilman Simeone questioned if the voters vote on the entire charter once it is formed by the commission and it was explained that the commission proposes a charter and then the public votes to accept or reject the proposed charter.

Councilwoman Cherry questioned the criteria to by on the Charter Commission and it was explained that the members are elected by the voters if the voters approve the appointment of a commission to form a charter.

Councilman Grove went through a list of potential advantages and concerns with forming a charter at this time. Mr. Grove stated that commission members could be elected with self serving personal agendas that they attempt to put into a potential charter. Mr. Grove acknowledged there are many potential advantages to a charter if it is put together properly but stated he has a lot of concerns regarding potentially losing ward representation or other potential drastic changes a charter could bring. Mr. Grove also expressed concerns over the potential costs associated with the formation of a charter and the potential changes it could implement. Mr. Grove stated that proceeding down the path of charter government may run afoul of the financial recovery plan approved by the State Auditor. Mr. Grove stated that our focus should be on first addressing financial recovery before we attempt to change the City's form of government. Mr. Grove also stated he isn't sure there is a public outcry to change our form of government to a charter. He stated he hasn't heard any community support for the idea.

Councilman Dordea stated that he disagrees with Mr. Grove that a majority of citizens don't

think we need a change in the way we do things. Mr. Dordea stated that to say we don't need change is to say everything is fine with what we are doing and the public certainly doesn't think our city government is running fine. Mr. Dordea discussed the potential salary of a City Manager and stated that the state average is far lower than Mr. Grove stated. Mr. Dordea also addressed the idea of hiring individuals who live outside of town to run our City but the Charter Commission would be City residents deciding what is best for our City. Mr. Dordea stated that all of Mr. Grove's stated advantages were factual while his disadvantages or concerns were all based on speculation. Mr. Dordea stated we owe it to the voters to put the issue on the ballot and let the voters decide. He stated that we owe it to the citizens of the City to attempt to make change and make things better. Mr. Dordea stated he didn't have much hope of passage of the ordinance and felt someone will try to derail it but felt he needed to try and urged his fellow council members to join him rather than derail the attempt.

Councilman Edwards stated that he is neither for or against the idea of a charter form of government but he is concerned about the hasty attempt at it. Mr. Edwards stated that he believes a vast majority of the public doesn't understand the difference between charter and statutory government to even know if they want to change. Mr. Edwards further expressed concern as to who would be on the charter commission given the short notice to petition to be on it. Mr. Edwards stated that more input and research is needed before charging ahead.

Councilwoman King also stated that she is not for or against the proposal either but believes if the wrong people get elected to a charter commission, wards may be eliminated as well as other drastic changes. Ms. King stated she has a real concern that the citizens of the 1st and 2nd ward could lose their representation. She stated that she has not received any input from the residents of the 1st and 2nd ward on the issue because they don't understand the issue or the proposal. She stated we need more time to address the issue and this proposed ordinance is too soon.

Councilman Rhome stated he feels the same as Councilman Edwards. He has not had a single citizen approach him stating we need a charter form of government but several have approached and questioned why there is a push to change to one. Mr. Rhome stated that he feels that the issue is driven by opposition to the current administration and opposition to current leaders is not a reason to change a form of government. Mr. Rhome stated that a change to a charter could be a positive change for the City but the timing is wrong for this ordinance at this time.

Councilman Simeone relayed that he has talked to the Law Director of Ashland on the issue and how Charter government works for them. Mr. Simeone stated that he believes there are some real positive reasons to form a charter but is against rushing into it with this ordinance.

Councilwoman stated that we have talked for months about transparency and accused the administration of a lack of it. She believes this ordinance also lacks transparency. The fact that we want to rush into it and push it through just days before the filing deadline without proper research lacks just as much transparency and a lack of communication. Ms. Cherry believes due diligence requires that we do our homework before passage of such an ordinance.

President Garnes stated that the apparent deadline for individuals to submit petitions to be considered for the potential charter commission is less than 2 days away. This seems very difficult to get adequate candidates unless they have already been recruited

Councilman Dordea stated that he believed it is very possible to round up the signatures and file petitions in less than two days if someone was interested enough to want to serve on the

commission. Mr. Dordea stated that the question to the voters is merely “shall we form a commission to form a charter” not the changing if the form of government at this stage. If individuals believe there is a conspiracy with a pre-formed commission they need to get out and round up candidates to file.

Councilman Rhome stated he doesn't believe there is a huge movement to put this on the ballot. He hasn't had anyone asking him to do it, he hasn't fielded phone calls requesting we put charter government on the ballot, and we haven't seen council chambers filled with citizens demanding it.

President Garnes stated that he questioned having adequate commission candidates filed in time.

ADJOURNMENT: Noting no further business presented or discussed with Council, President Garnes adjourned the special meeting of City Council at 6:59 P.M.

ARTHUR GARNES, COUNCIL PRESIDENT

GERARD YOST, COUNCIL CLERK