

MINUTES

RAMSEY COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION

February 6, 2006

7:00 p.m.

The Ramsey County Charter Commission met on Monday, February 7, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. at Ramsey County Public Works, 1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive, Arden Hills, MN.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

District 1: Sharon Klumpp
James Speckman
District 2: John Gulbranson
District 3: Charles Aguirre
Franklin Gurney
District 4: Christopher Leifeld
Gretchen Wolf
District 5: Rod Halvorson
Lyle Nelson
District 6: Russ Miller
District 7: Robert Berry
Mary Nepper

At Large: Michael Fratto
Minoka Kitto

MEMBERS ABSENT:

District 2: Robert Bell
District 6: A.L. Brown
At Large: Anthony Coletta

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough
Terry Speiker, Intergovernmental Relations
Mark Pettit, Sheriff's Department
Darwin Lookingbill, County Attorney's Office
Bonnie Jackelen, County Manager's Office
Victoria Dahlquist, Secretary
Bruce Kennedy, citizen

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Sharon Klumpp called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A MOTION was made, SECONDED and CARRIED to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2005 Charter Commission meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

This was the first meeting for several members. There was not sufficient time before this meeting to hold an orientation session; one will be held before the next meeting. All members introduced themselves.

CITIZEN INPUT/COMMENTS:

None.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE:

Subcommittee member Frank Gurney reported on the subcommittee's progress. He stated that he and other subcommittee members, Mike Fratto, AL Brown and Bob Bell, met once at the Hamline Law Library and had a very productive meeting. The subcommittee, however, does need to meet again to draft language.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Jim McDonough addressed the Charter Commission and his comments are summarized below:

Commissioner McDonough reported on the recent activities of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. First, he discussed the merger of the communications center in the county. Groundbreaking for the new communications center is scheduled for April 2006. This center will service about 99% of the county and will receive and dispatch out all 911 calls from across the county. This consolidation represents a huge improvement for public safety. It makes sense and is best practices proven over and over again across the country to consolidate these activities into one central dispatching center. Moving to the 800 MHz communication system for broadcasting makes sense as that 800 MHz system is a great improvement over UHF or VHF systems. The communications center will be located on the Law Enforcement Center campus.

Ramsey County's communication center will be the largest communication center west of Chicago. Large doesn't always mean best but it will be much easier to coordinate natural disasters or manmade disasters and keep people informed.

Commissioner McDonough believes there will be total participation from the Ramsey County communities. It is too costly for communities to have independent systems and coordinating through one center will outweigh all other issues. In addition, other metro counties are either already on the 800 MHz system or plan to be in the near future.

Another issue the Board has been dealing with is the status of the Ramsey County Nursing Home. Over the years, the nature of the nursing home business has changed. The property tax subsidy that has been put toward the nursing home has been consistent over the years. It took a steep jump over the last three years and the trend is expected to continue. The County Board hired a consultant to explore all options for the nursing home. One option is adding an assisted-living area to the nursing home. The County Board has made a commitment that the current residents and employees of the nursing home are the #1 concern.

Terry Speiker, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, addressed the Charter Commission and her comments are summarized below:

Currently, the Board has not completely decided on all of the legislative initiatives, but they have decided on Federal financing requests. The county's legislative package is posted on the website and there will be print copies available as well.

One thing that will be in the Board's legislative package again this year, as it has been the last two years, is a request for a special rate for the Ramsey County Nursing Home. Thus far, the County has been unsuccessful in establishing a special rate. Last year, the County was successful in working with a broad coalition to see the general rates raised for nursing home care. These rates increases did benefit the county home a little bit, but not enough to make a difference.

Another portion of the Board's legislative package is the bonding request at the State level for transit and transportation programs. That involves the Central Corridor, the Union Depot, Rush Line and Red Rock for transit, rapid transit, commuter rail or light rail and, in the case of the Union Depot, the transit hub and possibly high-speed rail to Chicago into the east metro area. This is a bonding year so that is where the Board's focus will be.

A Reconciliation Bill has been proposed to assist local governments in managing mandates in the areas of Human Services, Public Health, Community Corrections and Daycare Assistance.

The Board has discussed a review of the strategic plan, which is to take place again in 2013. The strategic plan is highly integrated into the budget, along with the mission, vision and priorities. The County is in the second year of the two-year budget cycle and the focus is on performance measures.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next meeting will be Monday, May 1, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. at the Linwood Community Center, 860 St. Clair Avenue, St. Paul, MN. An orientation session for new members will begin at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION was made, SECONDED and CARRIED to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business to come before the Charter Commission, the meeting was adjourned.