

**MINUTES**  
**RAMSEY COUNTY CHARTER COMMISSION**  
**August 7, 2006**  
**7:00 p.m.**

The Ramsey County Charter Commission met on Monday, August 7, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sunray Library, 2105 Wilson Avenue, St. Paul, MN.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

District 1: Sharon Klumpp  
Ben Stephens III  
District 2: Bob Bell  
John Gulbranson  
District 3: Charles Aguirre  
Frank Gurney  
District 4: Gretchen Wolf  
District 5: Rod Halvorson  
Lyle Nelson  
District 6: A. L. Brown  
Russell Miller  
District 7: Bud Berry  
Mary Nepper  
At Large: Mike Fratto  
Minoka Kitto

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

District 4: Chris Leifeld  
At Large: Anthony Coletta

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Bonnie Jackelen, County Manager's Office  
Darwin Lookingbill, County Attorney's Office  
Joe Mansky, Ramsey County Elections Department  
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 May 1, 2006 Charter Commission meeting.

**CITIZEN INPUT/COMMENTS:**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Possible Charter Amendment Pertaining to the Election vs. Appointment of the County Attorney and Sheriff – Subcommittee Update

As reported by A.L. Brown, the subcommittee met on two occasions and drafted language. The first part of the draft includes presumed findings of the subcommittee and the Commission, based on prior discussion. Two findings are listed which state that the current system may not be the best and the second part lists four recommendations for a new system of appointment of county attorney and sheriff rather than election. The first recommendation is that the Ramsey County Charter be amended to change the way the county attorney and sheriff are put into office, appointed vs. elected. The appointment would be done by an eleven-member Blue Ribbon Commission composed of the Chair of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, the Chief Judge of Ramsey County, the Ramsey County Manager, the president of the Ramsey County Bar Association, the Chief Public Defender of Ramsey County, the City Attorney of certain Ramsey County municipality rotated on the date of incorporation, the Chief of Police certain to Ramsey County municipality, a victim of a felony, an ethnic or racial minority, a resident of the City of St. Paul to be appointed by the mayor and a resident at large to be appointed by some unknown person.

That eleven-member commission would open up the application process to anyone who is a licensed attorney qualified to apply and they would then screen those individuals based on their credentials and character. This Blue Ribbon Commission would recommend three candidates to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners and the Board would appoint one of the three recommended candidates for the position. The appointee would serve a four-year term. At the end of the term, a question would be presented to the voters in the form of a retention vote. If 60% of the electorate agrees, the appointee would serve another four-year term. If not, then the Blue Ribbon Commission begins the process once again to recommend three candidates for the position.

Commissioner Nelson suggested that another approach to the elected vs. appointed status of the county attorney and sheriff would be to impose term limits on the offices.

MOTION that the Commission adopt the sub-committee's recommendations as presented and be open to any amendment. **SECONDED.**

Commissioner Halverson offered a friendly amendment. That the work of the subcommittee be adopted as a framework that can be changed and altered by further discussion of the Commission itself.

MOTION to adopt the sub-committee's recommendation as a framework for the continued work of the Commission. **SECONDED.**

The first count was 8 yes, 8 no. There were 15 members of the Charter Commission present so a roll call vote was taken.

After further discussion on this issue, a MOTION was made to call the question. **SECONDED.** Motion **CARRIED.** The original MOTION was made once again to adopt the sub-committee's recommendation as a framework for continued work of the Commission. **SECONDED.** Motion **CARRIED** 8 yes, 7 no.

MOTION to study the proposal to have term limits for these positions. The Motion **DIED** for lack of a second.

Presentation on Rank Voting by Joe Mansky, Ramsey County Elections Department

Mr. Mansky's presentation is summarized as follows:

There are three ways to elect people to various governing bodies. First, there is a general election without a primary. If there are two candidates or 20, they are placed on the general election ballot; citizens vote for two and the top two candidates are elected.

The second way is a primary election. A primary is held for the sole purpose of selecting nominees in partisan races like federal and state selected by political party. In nonpartisan races like district court judge, the nominees will be the top two candidates who will then go on to the general election.

The third way is to use a run off system. Generally, run off systems in the United States tend to be in areas where there is a single dominant political party. Many of the southern states have the runoff system.

Minnesota has a combination of the first two systems. For the bulk of Minnesota offices, there is a primary to reduce the field and then a general election at which point people are elected. And for a handful of offices like Soil and Water where either no primary is allowed by law or none has been created by town board or city council, there is just one general election and whoever gets the greatest number of votes, wins.

Instant run off for preference vote has ranked choices and there is no general election. For example, if there are 5 candidates, voters rank them. The outcome of the election is dependent upon what scheme is used. There are different ways of calculating rank votes.

As far as counting ballots, the current system counts ballots up and down. Ramsey County's voting equipment is programmed to read the ballot in this direction. If we use the instant run off voting, the ballots would need to be counted crosswise. Mr. Mansky stated that the ballot counters would need to have new chip sets inserted to do the counts both ways. If the Legislature passed a law authorizing this kind of voting system, it is possible the ballot counting machine makers would replace the chip sets at no cost. However, Mr. Mansky was not sure on this point and also does not currently have information as to the cost of updating the County equipment.

Darwin Lookingbill asked about using the run off system just on the situations where there is a special election and what would be the cost.

Mr. Mansky stated that there was a special election in District 4 to replace Commissioner Haigh. The cost for doing both elections, including staff time, was about \$110,000. If there were no primary, for example, the County would likely save \$40,000 to \$45,000.

Mr. Mansky also stated that the Charter Commission might want to consider allowing members of the armed forces serving overseas to vote in the state elections by using this method.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

**SET NEXT MEETING DATE:**

The next meeting will be Monday, November 13, 2006 at 7:00 P.M. at Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, 2015 North Van Dyke Street, Maplewood, MN.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Charter Commission, the meeting was adjourned.