

FW: Board progress

Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>

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From: Jim Crawford <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2023 12:23:25 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik

To: Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>

Subject: Board progress

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November 6, 2023

Recently a friend told me that five months into their responsibility, this 2023 Charter Board seems to be stuck on providing a minor modified version of the failed 2014 Charter. Thus far, I must agree that seems true.

It is time to take a proactive approach to writing a charter that will serve the county through a transition that will meet our current needs and moreover maintain a good county government for years to come. This requires an "out-of-the-box" creative approach which puts people and principles over party and politics.

In my previous comments which I submitted in writing (9-28-2023), I outlined 10 key points which must be adequately addressed for any serious citizen consideration of a proposed charter.

I am confident the Board will not ignore these key issues and hope the Board will begin to utilize my suggestions which I assembled from input by a number of both long-time and recent Charles County residents. These points are designed to make citizens closer to and inclusive in their government and meet the unique needs of our county, rather than copying the charter of some other county or the previously failed charter of 2014.

Of course it is easier to modify than to create, but the Board should not get stuck on simply modifying an out-of-date, failed document as its basis of writing a new one. Additionally, the Board needs to incorporate the input from the written comments and those offered by citizens at the public meetings.

As it nears the midpoint of its deadline, by now citizens are expecting to see some specific proposed wording by the Board or its committees.

Also, at the meetings, it would be more productive to have a written summary for review of the report by each committee rather than just reading the proposed text and opening for comments. For example, at the October 26 meeting, the text offered by the council committee was discussed by each member since there was not agreement on the number of council seats and whether they should be part-time or full-time.

In addition, the council section proposal should take an approach which would be a considerable improvement for diversity, equity, and inclusion by establishing a 9 member part-time council with non-partisan members elected by district and 1 at-large member and a full-time staff of 1 or 2. Council salary and perks should be defined. Among other responsibilities, the council should have adequate methods of checks and balances on the county executive and have a super majority defined as "6 votes."

The non-partisan factor has the benefit of inclusion of any Independent or "unaffiliated" registered voter in the election process as well as being able to fill any vacancy from anyone in the entire county district.

The models for this are not only our School Board, but this Charter Board itself; BOTH of which are comprised in this very way, i.e., 9 members with 2 from each district and 1 at-large. Both also elect their chair and vice-chair from the members. This is a method, proven to work. So, let's use it.

To give citizens more local representation, each of the 4 current districts should be divided into two, i.e., 1A, 1B, 2A 2B, etc. This can be determined by using the precinct census figures for easily establishing the 4 additional districts, which would then make a total of 8, with 1 council member elected from each. Members should be elected by district voting for each with term limits of 2 council terms total for each, regardless of whether district or at-large.

Taking this approach for each Charter section will provide the County with a clear choice for a charter that demonstrates how to structure our government efficiently and effectively to meet the current and future needs of our Charles County.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Crawford
Charter Board, Alternate member