

City of Albion  
Study Session Minutes  
September 25, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Council Members Lenn Reid (2), Marcola Lawler (4) Jeanette Spicer (5), and Andrew French (6) and Mayor Brown. Council Members Maurice Barnes (1) arrived at 7:34 p.m. and Sonya Brown (3) arrived at 7:04 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT:

Sheryl Mitchell, City Manager; Cullen Harkness, City Attorney; Jill Domingo, City Clerk; John Tracy, Director Planning, Building & Code Enforcement; Scott Kipp, Chief Public Safety and Stacey Levin, Assistant City Manager.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Persons addressing the City Council shall limit their comments to **agenda items only** and to no more than three (3) minutes. Proper decorum is required).

No comments were received.

IV. ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

A. Charter Revision-Attorney Peter Letzmann

Mayor Brown stated the Charter is a fundamental document used for City governance. Our current Charter has not been fully revised in whole since the 1960's. We have obsolete items and items that need to be updated. Mayor Brown introduced Peter Letzmann, Attorney who updated the Council on Charter Revision and Amendments highlighting the following:

- The Charter is the supreme document for a City. It is the City's Constitution.
- No ordinances or resolutions can be passed that violate the Charter.
- The Charter for the City of Albion does have some glaring inconsistencies such as not having a reference to the Open Meetings Act; Freedom of Information Act; Changes in Election laws and no Code of Ethics.
- A Charter needs to be user-friendly and easy to work with for Council, City Staff and the Public.
- A Charter revision entails have a Charter Commission go through the entire Charter and make changes whereas a Charter Amendment will only change one (1) or two (2) items at a time.
- The Charter Commission consists of nine (9) people who are elected by the people.

- There is generally opposition to a Charter Revision as change is difficult and most people don't like change.
- You must hold an election for a Charter Revision. You may hold both the Charter Revision and the Election of the Charter Commissioners at the same election.
- It will take a Charter Revision approximately three (3) years to complete. The City must provide a place for the Charter Commission to meet and must also compensate them for the meetings (i.e. \$25.00 per meeting). Meetings are open to the public and generally held once a week.
- The Council may also hire a legal consultant to work with the Charter Commission. This can be helpful in helping Commissioners understand the inner workings of government.
- Minutes of the meetings must be kept and revisions must be published.
- Mayor and Council Members are encouraged to attend meetings and provide input.

Questions & Comments from the Council were as follows:

- Concern with changing the form of government we currently have.
- What is the total cost of a Charter Revision? *Mr. Letzmann would charge approximately \$30,000 in consulting fees and approximately \$30,000 for cost of the Commissioners pay, copies, publications, etc. Total cost=\$60,000*
- Concern with finding citizens to run for the Charter Commission and level of knowledge of how government works. *The consultant will spend time teaching the Commission how government works.*
- Can anyone run for a Commission seat? *They must be an elector of the City.*
- Charter revisions don't always pass the first time they are voted on.
- Concern with Commissioners understanding what the powers of the Commission actually are.
- Is a Charter Revision the best use of our resources?
- Does a Charter Revision need to be done at this time.
- We have enough items in the Charter that either need to be deleted or updated to make a Charter Revision worthwhile.
- Do most cities do a complete edit or edit the current Charter template? *Most cities edit the current Charter but it would be up to the Charter Commission on how they would like to update.*
- Can city employees and elected officials be on the Charter Commission? *No neither city employees nor elected officials may be on the Charter Commission.*
- The revision would set structure with plain language that would make it easier for citizens to reference and Council to follow.
- Does it generally take the full three years for a Council revision? *Yes*

Comments were received from Council Members Barnes, Brown, French and Spicer, Mayor Brown and City Manager Mitchell.

B. Charter Amendment

Charter Amendment was discussed under item A, Charter Revision.

- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Persons addressing the City Council shall limit their comments to no more than three (3) minutes. Proper decorum is required).

Comments were received from Rick Lange, 810 Haven Road.

- V. ADJOURNMENT

Brown moved, Spicer supported, CARRIED, to ADJOURN Study Session. (7-0, vv).

Mayor Brown adjourned the Study Session at 8:05 p.m.

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Date

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Jill Domingo  
City Clerk