



A Charter Review Committee Meeting of the City of Everett was held on March 24, 2016 in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor training room of the Wall Street Building located at 2930 Wetmore Ave. The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. and was presided over by Committee Chair Reid Shockey.

**Attendees:**

<b>Committee Members</b>	Christopher Adams Megan Dunn Dave Koenig Jim Langus Jo Metzger-Levin Tom Norcott Clair Olivers	Reid Shockey Angie Sievers Michael Swanson Erica Temple Michael Trujillo Walter White
<b>Excused Members</b>	Steven Graham	Terrie Battuello
<b>Guests</b>	Jim Doherty, Municipal Research	
<b>City Staff</b>	Liaison : Bob Bolerjack City Attorney: Jim Isles	Admin: Lisa Harrison

**1. Call to order**

- The March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

**2. Staff comments**

- Bob Bolerjack reported that Steve Graham had to resign his spot on the Committee due to change in work hours. The Ordinance for the Charter Review Committee calls for the mayor to appoint a replacement with the consent of the council. The hope is to have someone by next Thursday.
- The legal department had a discussion with the City Clerk on some issues brought up at earlier meetings. They concluded that the gender reference and capitalizations of departments/department heads are authorized in the Charter and do not have to be on the ballot to be made. Updating archaic language throughout the Charter, however, is a more substantive change and needs to go to ballot.



### 3. Comments from the public

Jackie Minchew, 5607 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, stated that districted elections is something he wants to see happen and asks the committee to consider.

- Chair Shockey acknowledged that this would be an important subject for the committee, starting with today's presentation from Megan Dunn and the help from Municipal Research.

### 3. Presentation and discussion with representative from Municipal Research Services

Jim Doherty from Municipal Research Services distributed a hand out regarding district voting. About 20 cities have ward or district voting out of 285 cities in the state. Not done in a small city, but as larger cities grow they have adopted this process.

- He stated that MRS does not advocate one way or the other. There are pros and cons to each approach. Yakima had it forced on them because they had a large Hispanic population and had no representation on the city council.
- Districting is often looked at as a way to provide a more comprehensive representation, but it can go wrong if Council members focus too much on their district and not the big picture. If Everett makes a transition to this approach, it will have to review district borders every time there is an election.
  - There is the option of having districts and a certain number of Council members elected at large.
- Some cities have adopted districting and then reversed. Committee members expressed the desire to learn more about these cities' rationale for going back. Jim will try to track down some more information from the more recent changes.

Doherty opened it up for questions from the Committee.

He was asked if he could provide an overview with how boundaries are changed due to census.

- Jim will follow up on this. The criteria are always equality of population across districts, but sometimes there can be disputes as to how these are derived.

If we get a yes in the vote in November, what is the timeline for how this would occur?

- Doherty stated that the committee would have to include that as part of their recommendation: a process that covers all the districts and number of council members.



One Committee Member stated that the issue driving a desire for districting appears to be the impression that south Everett is under-represented. Are there ways to address that?

- Doherty suggested that if the City Council gets a vacancy they can decide to pull someone in from that area who has been involved with the City in other ways, such as committees and boards.

Doherty was asked if districting is done to solve under-representation of minorities.

- This has not been his experience.

The suggestion was made that by a Committee Member that they get a better understanding of the percentage of south Everett residents that are registered to vote.

- Another Committee Member stated that he had looked at this and stated that the composition of voters is 2/3 south Everett citizens. Would be interested to know how many of those who are eligible are actually registered to vote and do vote.
- Chair Shockey will try to get more specific information from the Puget Sound Regional Council.

Doherty was asked to describe rank choice voting done in Pierce County and San Francisco.

- Committee Member Chris Adams stated that he will learn more and report back to the Committee.

Discussion took place as to the level of detail needed for the ballot should districting be desired. One committee member recommended that in the ballot proposition they should include the number of districts, number at large and by district and the boundaries as was the case when districting was on the ballot for the city of Seattle.

- One thing to look into is whether it would increase the cost of elections to go to districting (would need to ask the county). It was recommended that Bob ask County Auditor Carolyn Weikel to attend a committee meeting to answer some of these questions.

#### **4. City Council Districting**

##### **a) Presentation by Committee Member Megan Dunn**

- Dunn stated that this was presented to the city council in September but put together by a group of citizens. Issues identified in the presentation include lack of representation of south and lack of diversity on the council. She stressed that it is



important for creative input and problem solutions to have a broad group of people represented, which is the case for the Streets Initiatives Committee.

- Dunn presented maps which demonstrated the diversity across neighborhoods in terms of income, age and labor force. She stated that districting appears to help with representation in Seattle and Yakima, as well as driving increased participation. Cities that have moved away from districts are all smaller cities of less than 20,000 population.
  - As cities grow in population, they are more likely to use voter districting. Everett's size is right in the middle where others at a similar size are more likely to be districted or mixed.
- Dunn presented a first draft of Everett districts, created by geographer Richard Morrill who did the same for Seattle. The draft suggests five districts for Everett, with roughly 20,000 citizens in each district.
- One Committee Member noted that many smaller cities have more council members than Everett has (currently seven). It was stated that the Charter can be changed to increase the number of members if the committee desires, with or without districting.

**b) City Council Districting Discussion-- Initial reactions and concerns**

- One Committee Member stated concern that there is no incentive for the City Council to support districting because they could lose their jobs in the process. Should we be spending this much effort on this if it will not go anywhere?
  - One Committee Member disagreed, stating that they could run for the at-large positions. It might help get some people to come out of the woodwork and would hope that council members would look at themselves as representing the city at large.
  - Another Committee Member stated the desire not to include districting in their recommendations. Historically the city has been well managed and the council has never demonstrated a bias towards a particular area. There is concern that districting would introduce new variables and make our government dysfunctional.
  - Chair Shockey stated the opinion that this committee would not be doing its duty if it doesn't address this issue. This is an issue that has been lingering in this community for several years. If we don't put something on the ballot that gives the public to react to then it's going to continue to be an issue.



- They were reminded that this issue was reviewed by the City Council Members and some stated that it should be part of the Charter Review in September.
- One Committee Member shared the opinion that the current at-large system does provide diversity in the City Council. We have people who have diverse backgrounds, and the two longest-serving members were both minorities.
- Others expressed concern over the amount of time left before their report is due given the complexity of this issue. There is a need for more input and data before they can feel confident about a recommendation. There is also a need to explore the legal issues and the voting procedures as well as hear from the city of Seattle and what they went through prior to voting on districting.
  - City staff was asked to find out if there was a period of time between the Committee’s recommendation and the November elections where more work can be done.
  - One mentioned that a report was done 10 years ago by City Councilmember Drew Neilsen about districting. Bob Bolerjack will scan it and send it to the committee.
  - Discussion took place about hiring an attorney. Per Committee Member Chris Adams, Thom Graafstra is available to be the attorney for the committee. A motion made and seconded to retain Thom Graafstra as the outside attorney. Vote: 12 yes, 0 no, 1 abstained (passed by majority).
- Several stated the desire to learn more about the ranked choice option, and would like to be better information about that. Who do we want to get to speak with us?
  - Committee Member Chris Adams said that he will get more information to share with the Committee.
  - Chris Adams and the new attorney will work with a sub-committee to do more research on the work done in Pierce County.
  - Municipal Research’s Doherty will consult his partners to see if he can provide any more guidance.



**5. Sample Report Format from Reid Shockey**

- Shockey provided a sample report via email to the Committee this week which will be discussed at a later date.

**6. Date and topics for next meeting 3/31/2016**

- Note: meeting on 3/31 will be in the Mayor's Conference Room on 10<sup>th</sup> floor and chaired by Megan Dunn in Reid Shockey's absence.

**The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.**