

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2001
CITY COUNCIL ROOM
6:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Harvey Fox, Chair Mark Lawton
 Lew Benton Vassar Curtis
 Elio Del-Sette Chris Whann
 Lee Nelson Denise Polit

ABSENT: Mia Mouzon Rita Balmuth
 Margie VanMeter

STAFF PRESENT: Anthony J. Izzo, Assistant City Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Harvey Fox called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

BUDGET

Harvey Fox reported that there had been no changes to the budget other than weekly staff charges.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

Harvey Fox reported that he and Chris Whann made a presentation before the City Council last week. He said he appreciated the support of the Commission members who attended that meeting. He said this was a good opportunity to represent the Commission and report on its work to date. He said there were no concerns expressed by Council members and he hoped that was a good sign.

Harvey Fox informed Commission members that he was scheduled for the following programs: Rotary Club, April 18 at Longfellows; Lion's Club, April 19 at Broadway Joe's; YMCA, April 26 at the Spring Street school and several radio programs.

Mark Lawton said Margie VanMeter had sent letters out to several organizations and he hoped to hear from them soon on whether they would like a presentation and/or literature.

Mark Lawton said he is in process of writing an article for the Saratoga Business Journal. He said he had been informed by the Saratoga Business Journal that the Commission could submit as many articles as we would like, therefore, he encouraged Commission members to write articles for submission. He said the articles should be 1,200 words or less and a 4'x6' picture could be included.

Mark Lawton also reported that *The Saratogian* is interested in articles as well, and they too asked that Commission members write those articles. He said Barbara Lombardo, Editor, asked that the articles focus on the form of government.

Mark Lawton reported that Commission members have been making presentations at the Participation in Government class at the High School and it was going quite well. He said he hoped to get some publicity from *The Saratogian*.

Mark Lawton said the Outreach Committee is willing to send out letters to any organization, therefore, Commission members should give the addresses to him or Margie. He said the Historical Society has been scheduled for June 28; the Presbyterian Church on May 24 and the Open Space Project (no date yet). Lee Nelson pointed out that the Historical Society meets at the Casino and perhaps that would be a good opportunity to hold a public hearing.

Lee Nelson said she had talked to Skidmore representatives and there are two groups on campus (Greenpeace and Turn Left) that might be interested in a presentation. Chris Whann said he would be making a presentation to the State and Local Government class at Skidmore early next week.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

Chris Whann reported that the drafting committee would meet on Saturday, March 31, at 1:00 p.m. in the Council room.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Capital Project Committee

Lew Benton said he had proposed some language for the formation of a Capital Projects Committee and it now seemed to be appropriate to have an individual from the Finance Department sit on that committee.

Maintain Employee History

It was agreed this function belonged with the Human Resources Department.

Keep City Books

City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 26, 2001

It was agreed this function should remain with the Finance Department, however, there should be some clarification in the charter.

Disburse City Funds

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded that this function remain with the Finance Department noting that the Accounts Department will be responsible for pre-auditing. Ayes all.

Serve as Chief Financial Officer

Previously discussed.

Receives City Money

It was suggested that perhaps there be some general language that money received in other departments be turned over to the Finance Department within five business days. Elio Del-Sette suggested this be handled in accordance with state law.

Mark Lawton moved and Denise Polit seconded that the funds be turned over to the Finance Department within five business days with the proviso that when state procedures take precedent that those procedures be followed. Ayes all.

Conduct Internal Audits

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded that this function remain in the Finance Department. Mark Lawton said audits should not be done on a regular basis. Elio Del-Sette and Chris Whann agreed to amend the motion to include that random internal audits are to be performed. Ayes all.

Tax and Bill Collection

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded to retain this function in the Finance Department and send it to the drafting committee. Ayes all

Current Budget

Mark Lawton said he would like to see both the capital and general budgets developed in one department.

Mark Lawton said the Finance Department maintains its books according to the comptroller (accounting method) as it related to budget codes and budget items. He said an accounting

City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 26, 2001

budgets works for auditing but not for other methods of budgeting. Elio Del-Sette asked what was relevant for the City. Mark Lawton said there should be some language included in the budget which includes a narrative from each department on what they have accomplished and what they plan to accomplish.

Harvey Fox asked who should be in charge of developing the general operating budget. Mark Lawton said he would like to see this in the Mayor's Office since the capital budget is already there. He said that debt service, general operating budget and capital budget are all interrelated. He said perhaps the 99g language should be incorporated. Elio Del-Sette suggested going back to the language that Commission members agreed on in November. Denise Polit said the Commission adopted language in November to establish a capital program committee with the Mayor as chair.

Mark Lawton said he would like to see the general operating budget function in the Mayor's office. He said this would not preclude any commissioner from being involved. Harvey Fox said this would be a major shift of responsibilities. Elio Del-Sette asked what was the specific proposed language on this change.

Lew Benton said he did not believe that placing the development of the general operating budget in the Mayor's Office was a good idea. He said though that the Finance Commissioner should be part of the capital program committee. Vassar Curtis said that moving the development of the general operating budget was a significant change and he was concerned. Chris Whann noted that with this type of government there are many options. He pointed out that in Mechanicville, both the fire and police are not under the public safety commissioner.

Denise Polit asked what problems would be solved by moving this function to the Mayor's Office. Mark Lawton said the budgeting process would be more integrated and comprehensive. Elio Del-Sette said he would like to see this function left where it is. He asked where is the evidence of the inability to function as is. He said this function should be left in the Finance department.

Harvey Fox asked about moving the capital budget from the Mayor's Office to Finance. Mark Lawton said he would prefer to see it all in the Mayor's Office. Harvey Fox asked how the Finance Commissioner would be involved. Mark Lawton said that individual could be added to the committee. It was also noted that there should also be some enforcement such as utilizing the previous budget if a budget is not brought forth.

Elio Del-Sette said the budgeting function should be left in the Finance Department and the process clarified. Chris Whann asked how that might improve the budgeting process. Elio Del-Sette said there has been no testimony presented that warrants a change.

Lew Benton said although it was an interesting concept, the general operating budget should be left in Finance. He suggested that Commission members review his proposed language in his

**City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 26, 2001**

November 20 memo (the Commissioner of Finance shall act a chair of the operating budget committee)

Denise Polit said if Lew Benton's suggested text was used, how would the budget be integrated. Lew Benton said eventually they intersect. Denise Polit asked about the preparation of the capital budget and that time line. Lew Benton said currently both the general and capital budgets go on simultaneously and at some point the intersect. Denise Polit suggested that perhaps some thought be given to having the capital budget adopted earlier.

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded that the Commissioner of Finance be in charge of the preparation and implementation of the general operating budget and that the text from Lew Benton's November 20 memo be considered and by the drafting committee.

Denise Polit asked why the general operating budget should be in the Mayor's Office. Mark Lawton said because the Mayor is the chief executive officer.

Lew Benton said Mark Lawton's recommendation has merit, but is quite foreign to our current system. He suggested the general operating budget remain with Finance and the language be crafted so as to add discipline to the process that compels the City to have the information available to the public.

Chris Whann agreed with Lew Benton. He said there needs to be an effective way to make the budgeting process work and to have the information available to the public. Lew Benton suggested that perhaps in the preamble there be some language on an open government process.

Elio Del-Sette said we should keep this function in Finance and send it to the drafting committee noting that more effective language be added. Mark Lawton asked if there was any advantage to changing the time schedule. Tony Izzo said there could be some language presented that if the budget is not available for public review within a specified number of days than it could not be adopted.

Ayes: six; Nays: one. Motion carried.

Capital Program Committee

Denise Polit moved and Chris Whann seconded that the Commissioner of Finance be included on the capital program committee. Ayes all.

Human Resources Department

**City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 26, 2001**

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded that the Human Resources function be placed under the Finance Department. Mark Lawton said disagreed. Elio Del-Sette suggested that a specific list of duties of a Human Resources Department be developed. Denise Polit said that had been done. She said items such as personnel files, health insurance, employee assistance programs, training are only a few. Mark Lawton suggested that contract negotiations be added. Tony Izzo said traditionally contract negotiations has been handled by the Council.

Elio Del-Sette said currently the health insurance function is under the Finance Department. Tony Izzo said some personnel functions as noted in the charter are under three other departments. Elio Del-Sette said he was not prepared to take anything away from the Finance Department at this time. Chris Whann said many of the functions are not located anywhere at this time.

Mark Lawton said items such as orientation, policy manuals, work safety issues, benefits administration, disciplinary were all items that could be handled in a Human Resources Department. He said at this time there is no guidance for employees.

Lee Nelson pointed out that the Recreation Department reports to the Council while it is located under the Mayor's Office and asked if it might be possible for a Human Resources Department to report directly to the Council. Elio Del-Sette said we have already discussed this issue. He said we agreed last week that functions need to be tied to a commissioner.

Denise Polit asked why Lee Nelson wanted to see the Human Resources Department be independent. Lee said to allow for coordination among Council members through a committee that the Human Resources could report to.

Lew Benton said he believed that it made sense to place this function under the Mayor's office. He said it should be so noted that there needs to be some integration between this department and the Civil Service Commission.

Elio Del-Sette and Chris Whann agreed to withdraw the motion.

Elio Del-Sette then moved and Chris Whann seconded to place the Human Resources function under the Mayor's Office noting that the Council would set its priorities with the approval of the Mayor and that this item be forwarded to the drafting committee. Ayes all.

NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that Commissioner Bernard Mirling and Deputy Commissioner Carol Kennedy would be invited to the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

City of Saratoga Springs Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 26, 2001

Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Ayes all. There being no further business, Harvey Fox adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Moran
Clerk

Approved: