



CHARTER COMMISSION
Columbia Heights City Hall, 3989 Central Ave NE, Shared Vision
Thursday, January 18, 2024
7:00 PM

AGENDA

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

Members of the public who wish to attend may do so in-person. For questions, please call the Administration Department at 763-706-3610.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL/STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP

- 1. Appointment of Commissioner Marsha Stroik**
- 2. Resignation of Commissioner Cliff Johnson**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 3. October 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Election of Officers

- 4. President, Vice President, and Secretary**

CORRESPONDENCE

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

- 5. Introduction of new Interim City Attorney Scott Lepak**
- 6. Approval of the 2023 Charter Commission Annual Report**

ADJOURNMENT

Please call President Laine at 612-834-0452 if you cannot attend.

Auxiliary aids or other accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available upon request when the request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Please contact Administration at 763-706-3610 to make arrangements.



CHARTER COMMISSION
Columbia Heights City Hall, 3989 Central Ave NE, Shared Vision
Thursday, October 19, 2023
7:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Charter Commission President Carolyn Laine called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Matt Abel, Ramona Anderson, Kathy Ahlers, Ben Harris, Cliff Johnson, Veronica Johnson, Carolyn Laine, Frost Simula, Gregory Sloat, Susan Wiseman, Wolid Ahmed.

Members Absent: Excused: Larry Betzold, Bill Hugo, Nick Zeimet

Also Present: Council Liaison Rachel James

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Able, second by Anderson. Motion passed, unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brief review of state law regarding minutes and a handout "Guidelines for Meeting Minutes in Local Government."

1. April 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Motion by Wiseman to accept. Second by Abel. Discussion. Ayes: 6, Nays: 4. Motion passed.
2. January 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes:
 - a. Motion to remove from table by Able. Second by Ahmed. Motion passed.
 - b. Corrections suggested by Laine, amended by Able.
 - c. Motion by Abel to accept as corrected. Second by Veronica Johnson. Motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE

(None)

OLD BUSINESS

(None)

NEW BUSINESS

Handout "Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance"

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Harris made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Sloat. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

Submitted by: Frost Simula, Commission Secretary

DRAFT



Carolyn Laine <carolynlaine@gmail.com>

Answer to charter commission questions regarding the city attorney

1 message

Rachel James <RJJames@columbiaheightsmn.gov>
To: "carolynlaine@gmail.com" <carolynlaine@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 9:51 AM

Hello Charter Commission President Carolyn Laine,

At the meeting, Commissioner Ahlers asked about the city's legal representation. Please share this response with the Charter Commission.

The information publicly presented at this time is found in the City Manager's Proposed 2024 Budget, page 19. https://www.columbiaheightsmn.gov/departments/finance/budget_and_financial_reports.php

"The Legal Services Department handles all civil and prosecution matters for the City. These services are currently under retainer with the law firm of Barna, Guzy, and Steffen, Ltd. This Department also budgets for outside employment and labor attorney services.

The proposed Legal Services budget is estimated at substantially the same for 2024 (\$186,300) as for 2023 (\$186,200). The principal item in this department's budget are legal services contracted with the law firm, Barna Guzy and Steffen. With the attorney from this firm that has been assigned to the City for many years retiring at the end of 2023, potential alternative arrangements for 2024 and beyond are under consideration at this time."

In addition, I posed the questions to the City Manager for clarification. The assistant City Manager provided me with the following information:

"The legal services provided by Barna Guzy are both by retainer and by the hour depending on the situation. The City retains the general services of the firm with a base contract where Jim is the lead attorney. When legal services expand beyond the scope of the base contract, there are hourly fees. Expansion beyond the base contract may include the services of Jim or other attorneys in the firm depending on the subject matter.

In the case of the Charter Commission, Jim is expected to attend the regular meetings to provide legal oversight and answer questions that arise in the meetings. Legal services provided outside of meeting attendance by Jim would trigger additional hourly charges to the City. The Council can authorize additional funding for legal services related to Charter Commission matters. Before such authorization, Jim is not available to provide legal services to individual members of the Charter Commission outside of his regular attendance at meetings."

Please let me know if you have any further questions. Thank you to all the Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Rachel James | City Council Member

[City of Columbia Heights](#) | Mayor/Council

[590 40th Avenue NE | Columbia Heights, MN 55421](#)

RJames@columbiaheightsmn.gov

Direct: 763-706-3618 | Main: 763-706-3600

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**CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CHARTER COMMISSION
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

MEMBERSHIP:

The following members served in 2023:

Matt Abel	Ben Harris	Frost Simula
Kathy Ahlers	Bill Hugo	Gregory Sloat
Wolid Ahmed	Clifford Johnson	Steve Smith
Ramona Anderson	Veronica Johnson	Susan Wiseman
Larry Betzold	Carolyn Laine	Nick Zeimet

During 2023, Commissioner Tyler Eubank, Steve Smith, and Clifford Johnson resigned. Commissioner Gregory Sloat was reappointed. Commissioner Wolid Ahmed was appointed in March, and Commissioner Marsha Stroik was appointed in November for 2024.

Councilmember Rachel James served as the Council Liaison.

OFFICERS:

The following members served as officers for the Charter Commission in 2023:

President: Carolyn Laine Vice-President: Veronica Johnson Secretary: Frost Simula

MEETINGS:

The Charter Commission held three meetings in 2023: January 19, April 20, and October 19.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

The Commission discussed the following issues in 2023:

Question regarding Chapter 5, Section 47, Recall Elections

The City Attorney provided an email answer to a member’s question regarding who can sign a petition for recall; there is no reference in the Charter’s Recall section to “registered” voters. Attorney Jim Hoeft gave his rationale for considering the word “electors” as synonymous with “registered voters.”

Hearings were held on changes to the mayor’s role

A motion was made to remove management of the police department from the mayor’s role and to change the mayor’s term from 2 years to 4 years. Motion failed.

A motion was made to only remove management of the police department from the mayor’s role. This motion also failed.

Carolyn Laine, Commission President
(approved January 18, 2024)