

**State of Texas**  
**County of Bexar**  
**City of San Antonio**



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Charter Review Commission**  
Central Library Building  
600 Soledad Street  
San Antonio, Texas 78205

**Commission Members**

Bonnie Prosser Elder, Co-Chair | David Zammiello, Co-Chair  
Elva Pai Adams | Josh Baugh | Luisa Casso | Mike Frisbie  
Pat Frost | Frank Garza | Martha Martinez-Flores  
Naomi Miller | Bobby Perez | Shelley Potter  
Dwayne Robinson | Rogelio Saenz | Maria Salazar

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**Thursday, April 11, 2024**

**5:30 PM**

**Central Library Building**

The Charter Review Commission convened a regular meeting at Central Library, 600 Soledad, Auditorium at 5:32 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Members present:

**PRESENT:** 13 – Prosser Elder, Zammiello, Baugh, Casso, Garza, Frisbie, Frost, Martinez-Flores, Miller, Perez, Potter, Robinson, Saenz

**ABSENT:** Adams, Salazar

**Approval of Minutes**

1. Approval of the minutes from the March 21, 2024 Charter Review Commission meeting.

Commissioner Perez moved to approve. Commissioner Garza seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Prosser Elder, Zammiello, Baugh, Garza, Frisbie, Frost, Martinez-Flores, Miller, Perez, Potter, Robinson, Saenz

**Absent:** Adams, Casso, Salazar

## Public Comments

Betty Eckert spoke in opposition of 4 term for City Councilmember Terms unless there was language to address removal process not including for petition.

Raymond Zavala spoke in spoke in opposition of removal of statutes in Charter for holding contractors accountable for work and spoke of his concerns of fraud waste and abuse on recycled bins.

Robert A Abraham, a San Antonio Housing Commissioner, spoke in support of salary increases for Mayor, City Council and City Manager. He noted that they managed a \$3.4 billion dollar organization, and their salaries should reflect that.

Ryan Hollins, Dr Chyssa Delgado and Christina Martinez spoke in support of increased funding of 20% of growth revenue funds be used for youth and child education programs at all levels of education. They stressed the importance of education programs and impact to the overall community.

Mary Bureau spoke in support of establishment of Ethics Officer position and a separate ethics review board outside of current staff in order to properly address ethic issues. She supported three-year terms for council members.

Evita Morin, CEO of Rise Recovery, spoke in of support for advocacy for increased funding for quality programs for youth and young adults training and development programs.

Keith Toney, former City Councilmember, spoke in support of funding for increased funding for youth educational programs, increased salary compensation and unlimited term limits for City Manager. He also supported increased compensation for City Councilmembers and Mayor.

Guillermo Vasquez, AFSCME Union representative, spoke of concerns for equal representation and compensation for uniformed personnel and City employees.

Andrea Flores of Move Texas spoke in support of changes to agenda changes to address autonomy and equity for gender neutral language. She stressed the importance of gender inclusivity in City Charter language.

Anthony Cruz spoke in support of expansion of district seats in order to gain fair and equal representation for all residents. He also spoke of removal of charter language for allowance for city workers to speak freely on agenda items.

Evelyn Delgado, CEO of Healthy Futures Texas, spoke in support of use of 20% of growth revenue to be used for youth and young adult education and programs.

Dylan Villalon of Move Texas advocated for updating of City Charter language to gender inclusive language which would set precedent for the City community and other organizations.

Diann Andy, League of Women Voters, spoke in support of rank choice voting for the state and City. She submitted a letter to the Commission for review.

Barbara Robles Ramamurthy, founder of Teku Family and Community Mental Health, spoke in support of increased budgeting for youth and child programs to be funded by 20% of growth revenue funding. She also spoke in support for updating current language to gender inclusive language in the Charter.

William Whiting spoke in support of City Charter amendment to allow for ranked choice voting in the City of San Antonio elections. He provided materials supporting his comments to the Commission for their review.

Ana Trevino with Texas Rising spoke in opposition of increasing tenure for City Manager and rather increase the salary of City employees in order to achieve pay equity.

Chris Baecker of Infuse SA spoke in opposition of increased salary for Mayor and City Councilmembers and that the position is not considered full-time position. He supported the movement of City Council meetings to evenings or weekends for more residents to attend. He did not support term limits for council nor increased salary compensation for City Manager. He supported revision of Section 4 of the Charter related to petitions.

Lee Denning spoke in support of gender equity language within the City Charter.

Ananda Tomas, Executive Director of Action SA, expressed concern of limited time to address commission. She spoke to concerns of increasing City Manager pay and not that of lowest paid City employees. She did not support the removal of term limits for City Manager.

Eda Saenz, CEO of Boys and Girls Club of San Antonio, spoke in support increased funding for youth and young adult programs and services be funded from 20% of City growth revenue.

**Briefing on the following items:**

2. Presentation from staff related to public engagement.

Assistant Director of Communications and Engagement Laura Mayes provided an overview of outreach for the Charter Review Commission. She noted that the primary goals of the engagement were to encourage residents to participate in public comment process and understand the role of the Charter in the City. She reviewed the various ways for the general public to participate included attendance at Charter Review meetings, through SASpeakUp and by submitting comments with 3-1-1 system. She introduced Luke Simmons, Public Communications Manager, and Melissa Escamilla, Engagement Manager, to review the Communications and Engagement staff efforts for outreach and engagement for the Charter Review meetings.

Simmons provided an overview of the staff communications efforts which included media materials such as press releases/requests for coverage and coordinated media interviews with Commission co-chairs. He noted that efforts also included social media videos and social media ads on City social media channels. Simmons spoke to grassroots communication efforts including City-wide text messages via the City's text notification system, discussions with local partner organizations, email outreach to City lists and stakeholder groups, distribution of flyers and digital signage at City facilities and kiosks.

Simmons mentioned that engagement was first started by a press release on February 28, 2024, to

inform the community of the Charter Review process and assigned commission. He noted that live interviews were also conducted in English and Spanish on television and radio. Simmons stated that request for coverage were sent out for every Charter Review Commission meeting which not only reminded the community of meetings and allowed for low-cost media coverage from all sources of media channels.

Simmons noted that staff utilized social media posts to expand coverage of the Commission meetings and subjects covered. He provided an overview of over 76 social media posts and metrics from expanded sharing of those posts. Simmons spoke to social media videos created to educate the public on City Charter review process, obtain input and next steps in revising the charter by including as election ballot item. Simmons stated that social media ads were also developed on Meta and YouTube for meeting coverage and topics.

Simmons spoke to City-side text messages for those enrolled to receive text updates on City of San Antonio events and issues. He reviewed other speaking engagements coordinated by staff to include events with the South Texas Business Partnership, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, San Antonio Business Coalition and the “bigcitysmallcity” podcast.

Escamilla spoke to communication efforts via email that were distributed on March 1 and March 28, 2024, established lists collected from Neighborhood Engagement briefs, associations and organizations registry, City Departmental lists and chambers of commerce.

Escamilla provided an overview of digital engagement conducted by staff to include email established lists and contacts. She stated that emails were issued on March 6 and April 3, 2024, reaching over 19,000 individuals. Escamilla spoke to digital signage campaign throughout the City’s downtown area which included kiosks located at City Tower, City Hall and 26 IKE locations. She added that flyer distribution was conducted at 70 locations throughout the city to include libraries, council districts, community centers and senior centers both in English and Spanish with total distribution of 2,500.

## DISCUSSION

Co-Chair Zammiello spoke to the importance of outreach and communications and thanked staff on their efforts of engagement to the public about the Charter Review process.

Commissioner Casso stated that it had been very helpful to the Commission on the sharing of the communications and that she supported increased outreach and communication efforts.

Co-Chair Zammiello asked what other efforts would be conducted in the upcoming two months. Simmons stated that similar efforts already conducted would continue and that staff welcomed input and recommendations from the Commission on future efforts.

Co-Chair Prosser Elder expressed her support of staff efforts. Commissioner Potter echoed her support of communications efforts. Co-Chair Prosser-Elder stressed the importance of non-digital communications and outreach to make sure digital divide concerns were addressed.

This item was for briefing purposes only.

3. Briefing and discussion of the working recommendations from the following subcommittees:
  - a. Language modernization
  - b. Ethics
  - c. City Council compensation and term length

- a. Language Modernization

Commissioner Saenz provided an overview of Language Modernization Subcommittee charge which was to review whether the Charter should be generally amended to update its language to reflect current processes, acknowledgments, and roles more accurately. He added that the subcommittee was also charged with reviewing the Special Meeting Section of the City Charter (Section 11) and evaluated language that provided for special meetings of the City Council, and how those meetings are should differ in purpose, use and timing from the current policy making process of Council Consideration Requests (CCR).

Saenz stated that the subcommittee had met twice since the March 4, 2024, presentation to include meeting with the Human Resources Department and reviewed additional provisions of the Charter submitted by Human Resources, Public Utilities, Finance and Budget to address their charge.

Saenz stated that under Article VI: Civil Services Provisions and Human Resources Department that the subcommittee reviewed 10 provisions and that of those eight had recommended revisions with 17 total suggested amendments.

Saenz mentioned that the subcommittee reviewed the entire City Charter and had 12 provisions recommended for revisions and 18 total suggested amendments for language covering Finance, Budget, and Public Utilities.

Saenz spoke to subcommittee analysis on Article VI, Section 70: Civil Service Provisions under Human Resources recommendations included removal of outdated provisions authorizing investigations at Commission, Council or management initiative, which has not been exercised in over 15 years and already within authority of Human Resources. He added that under various sections of Article VI, it was recommended to change Personnel Director to Human Resource Director throughout the section and remove language associated with personnel lists for promotion, probationary reporting and certifications which had not been practiced in decades.

Saenz reviewed recommendations for removal of outdated language associated with unused provisions requiring written notice of suspensions or other disciplinary actions which did not apply to civilian employees and language pertaining to Civil Service meeting requirements related to disciplinary appeals.

Saenz stated that under Article VI Section 78 – Provisions, that the Human Resources staff nor the subcommittee did not have any recommendations regarding employee participation in general elections, and that this could be addressed in future Charter Review Commissions and that recommendations would be a substantial change to the Charter.

Saenz reviewed recommend revisions of outdated provisions to sections addressing powers and

duties of the Finance Department which were now completed by other departments such as Office of Management and Budget and City Council Offices. He spoke other recommendations addressing outdated language in Article VI and VII related to budget and public utilities to reflect updated State or County requirements or allowances.

Saenz spoke to the subcommittee recommendations to the City Charter, Section 11 associated with Special Meetings by Written Request which currently stated that a special meeting could be called if three councilmembers requested in writing. He noted that the standard to agendaize an item was through a Council Consideration Request (CCR) which required five councilmember signatures. He stated that a Council special meeting request had only been used three times in the last 15 years and were reserved to be used by City Manager and Office of the City Attorney to address emergency situations or meetings not on the regular Wednesday or Thursday schedule.

Saenz provided an overview of feedback received in the conducted meetings and through SASpeakUp supporting no change in Section 11, citing transparency, democracy and public engagement. He stated that feedback impacted the subcommittees recommendations for Sections 11 and 78 and that further changes would be best suited for a full Charter Review Commission study and analysis which could lead to substantive changes and individual propositions on a ballot.

Saenz stated that the subcommittee supported to maintain recommendations made on March 4, 2024, except those related to Special meetings. Under Special Meetings, he spoke to the subcommittee's recommendation of no amendments other than striking calling a meeting by the City Clerk, as the City Manager's Office and City Attorney's Office now manage. He added that changing the purpose of a special meeting would require a review by the full Commission.

## DISCUSSION

Commissioner Garza reiterated the charge of the subcommittee was to make modernization of general language and that the entire commission would be charged to address larger issues. He stated that the subcommittee stressed that it was easier for a special council meeting to be called by three members and it was more difficult to put an item on an agenda. Co-Chair Zammiello spoke to the worthiness of discussion by the full commission on the issue of special meetings.

Commissioner Frost asked for clarification on the changes to the general language. Saenz provided clarification. Co-Chair Zammiello asked if there was a red-line draft of proposed edited changes. Saenz confirmed that a red-line version was being kept so to monitor all recommended changes.

Commissioner Perez asked for clarification to the removal of the language of removal of the "City Clerk" putting the item on the agenda.

Commissioner Casso asked for clarification on the items being considered by the full commission and how the subcommittee subject matter experts provided recommendations. Garza stated that the subcommittee was charged with review of topics as requested by the mayor and that the entire commission would make their recommendations to the Mayor and Staff. Co-Chair Zammiello clarified the process for review and rendering of commission recommendations.

b. Ethics

Ethics Subcommittee Chair Frisbie provided an overview of the Ethics Subcommittee recommendations about Ethics Officer, Ethics Review Board (ERB) and other proposed recommendations. Frisbie stated that the charge of the Ethics Subcommittee was to determine if an Ethics Officer position should be appointed as an independent ethics auditor with a legal background. He noted that currently the position was held within the City Auditor's Office.

Frisbie spoke to the ERB and whether it should be autonomous with independent oversight and power to compel testimony and whether additional recommendations would strengthen the effectiveness, authority and/or jurisdiction of the ERB.

Frisbie reviewed the resource investment and research conducted by the subcommittee and feedback received in reviewing their charge. He noted that information was requested on time spent on ethics training and that staff noted that 29 hours of formal ethics training was provided to City Council, boards and commissions, and staff across the City in 2023.

Frisbie provided an overview on the ERB structure under the City Charter and stated that the ERB, coupled with the Compliance Auditor, was an overall best practice model and that Section 16 of the Charter outlined specific cause is required to remove a member of the ERB.

Frisbie reviewed the research and conclusions of the Ethics subcommittee and noted that the regarding "conflicts of interest", the Ethics Code contains several sections that address conflicts of interest in a variety of ways, but the Charter did not have language that addressed it directly. Due to this, he spoke to subcommittee recommendation to include high level statement that addresses the City's principles regarding conflicts of interest.

Frisbie reviewed the subcommittee recommendation on the possible extension of look-back to Council members full tenure would conflict with existing statutes of limitation under state law for same offenses, and thus the subcommittee would no longer consider.

Frisbie mentioned that the subcommittee did not recommend the appointment of an independent Ethics Auditor with a legal background. He stated that the recommendation was to leave the Ethics Auditor position as it was and noted that the current structure fostered a balance between independence and collaboration.

Frisbie stated that additional recommendations would strengthen the effectiveness, authority and/or jurisdiction of the board which included a higher-level definition of "conflict of interest" and strengthen autonomy of ERB with increased funding in budget, eliminate term limits due to the existing process available for appointment of new members if desired.

Frisbie reviewed the subcommittee next steps which included continuation of seeking feedback from the public and the entire Commission and ultimately finalize recommendations for Charter languages changes.

## DISCUSSION

Commissioner Potter requested to discuss the subcommittee's review for balance of the ERB.

Frisbie discussed the importance of accessibility and structure in the maintaining of balance.

Co-Chair Prosser-Elder asked for clarification on the current structure of the Ethics Auditor and if they should have a legal background. Frisbie stated that it was not a recommendation that the position have a legal background and that the current position was in the Auditor's Office and showed to be effective. Garza noted that the current position could at any time work with the City Attorney's Office to gain legal stances and guidance.

Commissioner Casso commended the subcommittee on their recommendations and asked how the recommendations were arrived. Frisbie stated that the process started with large amount of research and evolved due to feedback from subject matter experts and current structure.

c. City Council Compensation and Term Limits

Subcommittee Chair Casso spoke to the charge of the City Council Compensation and Term Length subcommittee which was to determine whether Mayor and City Council terms should be extended to four years with limit of two years and in staggered structure. She reviewed resources provided by City staff to include benchmarking of comparable cities and that the subcommittee had met seven times to review research and data.

Casso spoke to the subcommittee's action plan which included the review of term limits in comparable cities, interview of former council members, determination of areas of discussion as related to term limits, and discussion of implications if there were changes to term lengths and term limits. She noted that the cities benchmarked were Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, Austin, Phoenix, San Jose, Philadelphia, San Deigo and Corpus Christi and reviewed the term limits for each city.

Casso reviewed the benefits and shortcomings of research findings of expanding term limits to four years which included comparing frequency of election cycles, focus on governance, completion of capital projects, commitment of candidates and impact of turnover.

Casso spoke to the subcommittee's evaluation of three different term cycle options (Simultaneous Concurrent, Staggered and Hybrid) and the benefits and shortcomings of each option. For each option, Casso discussed costs, continuity of business, drawing of terms and turnover.

Casso stated that the subcommittee's recommendation was to change Council terms from two years to four years, run concurrently and be limited to eight years total.

Casso reviewed the subcommittee's charge of reviewing the compensation of Mayor and City Council and input from subject matter experts (SME) on compensation, and that it was determined that additional research was needed, and that subcommittee would provide their recommendation at the April 25, 2024, meeting.

She reviewed the subcommittee's action plan for reviewing Council compensation which would include the review of charters and Council compensation models of other cities, interview of former council members, analyzation of compensation data and discussion of options with staff and SME.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Garza asked when considering four-year terms did the subcommittee take into consideration House Bill 3613 and its impact to census and requirements of elections. Assistant City Attorney Iliana Daily clarified that the house bill only applied to staggered terms.

Garza asked if the subcommittee considered the recall component of 10% being required and if appropriate. Commissioner Baugh stated that the subcommittee did review the issue after data was provided by City staff.

Frisbie stated that he initially supported staggered terms but the more the issue was studied he supports concurrent 4-year terms. Co-Chair Zammiello supported the inclusion of data gathered by staff and as reviewed by the subcommittee.

Miller asked how the expanding to 4-year terms would impact the current Council tenure. Daily stated that staff would draft the language on how to proceed with the implementation. Commissioner Baugh stated that the subcommittee did discuss implementation and added that the review would consider 1st versus 2nd term candidates. Co-Chair Prosser-Elder stated that the process would be refined and that even a drawing of straws process could take place.

Casso thanked the subcommittee and staff for their input and work conducted in the review of Council term limits.

4. Discussion of subcommittee assignments and issues to be considered by Charter Review Commission including future meetings calendar.

Co-Chair Zammiello reviewed the proposed roadmap of remaining meetings and subjects to be reviewed on May 6, 2024, and May 9, 2024, and then final discussion and actions by the Commission set for May 20, 2024, and May 23, 2024.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

**Approved**

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*Bonnie Prosser Elder, Co-Chair*

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*David Zammiello, Co-Chair*

**Respectfully Submitted**

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*