

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024 @ 7:00 P.M.**

Attendees: Councillor Justin Tseng, Committee Chair; Council President Isaac “Zac” Bears, Committee Vice-Chair; Council Vice President Kit Collins; Councillor Emily Lazzaro Councillor George Scarpelli; Councillor Anna Callahan (non-voting member of the Committee); Councillor Matt Leming (non-voting member of the Committee); City Clerk Adam Hurtubise; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

Chair Tseng called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. on February 14, 2024 in the City Council Chambers on the second floor of Medford City Hall, and via Zoom. The start of the meeting was delayed by a committee meeting immediately beforehand. The purpose of the meeting was to address several papers referred to the Committee.

Chair Tseng thanked participants for attending. He said that there is one action item on the agenda, Paper **24-006**, the Governing Agenda.

President Bears said that this is not a super-long list of items in the Governing Agenda for this committee: ordinances, rules, zoning, the Clerk’s Office, the rules of the Council, special acts, and other items. He said he has been pushing for an updated City Charter. He said that this Council has proposed home rule petitions for Charter Review, targeted provisions of Charter Review that were not approved by the Mayor, and that the Mayor has a Charter Study Committee reviewing the Charter. He said that Charter Review has to begin with the Council. He said he would be excited to work on a new Charter, which could take effect in two, three, or four years. He said we have just over 22 months left in the term. He said he also wants to highlight oversight of the Elections Department and that the Council did get an update in January, and that the Council needed more than that report, and that the Elections Manager has resigned, with an election coming on March 5. He said that the Elections Office is working really hard but there is one full-time person in there and historically there were five.

Chair Tseng invited comments on charter review. Councillor Lazzaro said that the Charter Study Committee has taken some votes recently on issues the committee wants to review. She said they weren’t going to be able to present their final recommendations until the end of this year. She said it would be beneficial for this committee to work in tandem with them. She said she wants us to be working at the same time toward the same goal.

President Bears said he appreciates the work of the study committee. He said that one person appointed the study committee but that the Council is elected. He said that there was no consultation with the Council when this committee was appointed. He said we can take whatever the study committee has provided, but that the work product of the study committee needs to come to the Council. He said that there is a level of legitimacy and responsibility that comes from being elected by the voters rather than

being appointed by one person. He said he appreciates Councillor Lazzaro's comments but that at the end of the day, the Council is the body elected to vote on this topic.

President Bears said he would like to hear from the Collins Center regarding the work of the Charter Study Committee. He said he thinks December is way too late. He said he does not want to wait ten months for a report.

Councillor Lazzaro said that she would prefer to start working on this while the Charter Study Committee is also working.

Councillor Lazzaro moved to move the Charter discussion up in the calendar to April (President Bears second)—approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, and Councillor Scarpelli absent.

Discussion turned to **23-474**, regarding elections. Chair Tseng said that Councillor Scarpelli offered amendments on this topic. He said that given that the Presidential Preference Primary is coming up, he wanted to defer to the Elections Department workload, but that we do have this paper in committee.

Vice President Collins said that the Elections Commission came before the Council in a previous meeting. She said that the Council was unified in requesting a more explicit and specific response than what was laid out in the last report.

President Bears said that this was at our regular meeting so we do not have a verbatim transcript of what was discussed. He said we got documents such as the attendance records we requested. He said the Elections Commission wants to do a more clear version of the after-action report, itemizing the problems and solutions with the last election. He said he doesn't have any more motions to make, but suggested inviting them back for our March and April meetings.

Discussion turned to Paper **24-024**, pro-democracy reforms referred to this committee, and also prioritizing the salary discussion previously raised during debate on compensation for the School Committee.

Councillor Callahan said that these pro-democracy reforms would ideally lead to more people in Medford voting and would allow those who are underserved and underrepresented to be better represented and better served. She said that there is no rush on any of these reforms; no timeline.

Councillor Callahan asked if we would be disposing of the paper by voting to receive and place on file. The Clerk said that the Committee could be disposing of it, but that would be the will of the Committee. President Bears said that the intent would be to review the document in a period of time but that he didn't want to continue to leave it hanging on the agenda.

President Bears moved to receive **24-006**, place it on file, and to adjourn at 7:42 p.m. (Councillor Lazzaro second)--approved on a roll call vote of four in favor, zero opposed, and Councillor Scarpelli absent.

Chair Tseng adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.