

MINUTES OF THE ELECTION REVIEW PLANNING COMMISSION
COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATED REMOTELY VIA ZOOM VIDEO
CONFERENCE
CITY STAFF PARTICIPATED FROM THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
June 10, 2020 @ 4:00 PM

Committee Members present electronically via Zoom:

Councilor Crystal Paradis, Chair
Councilor David A. Witham, Vice-Chair
Councilor Nancie Cameron
Councilor Matt Gerding
Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr.

Administration/Staff present:

Dana S. Hilliard, Mayor (left @ 4:05)
Bob Belmore, City Manager
Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk
Scott Smith, Director of Finance & Administration

Other:

Mayor Hilliard thanked the members for being on this Commission and exploring this venture. He was on a call with the Governor and other Cities this morning to explore some election options. The Governor stated he will have a discussion with the Secretary of the State regarding the discussion. He explained what we are only able to do what the State will allow us to do provided by State Law.. What do we want to suggest to the public as what is their safest means of voting. Do we want to encourage the route of absentee ballots? He encouraged the Commission to look at every avenue and ask the hard questions. Know what we want but remember we are at the mercy of what the State says.

The meeting called to order by Chair Paradis at 4:00pm.

Manager Belmore announced:

Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Commission is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and although the meeting is open to the public, the public was encouraged not to attend. The public was encouraged to offer written comment by email, via USPS, or by drop-off at the City Hall Tax Collector drive-thru window.

Manager Belmore announced that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Attendance was taken by roll call vote; all members were present and all Committee members had no one in the room with them.

REVIEW COMMISSION SCOPE & GOALS

Important to note that we have to look at what the State laws and what our community challenges are.

IDENTIFY INITIAL AREAS OF CONCERN FOR 2020 ELECTIONS

Councilor Dumont stated that he has experience with this. Our wards that we use are not conducive to the safety of social distancing. You have to provide a voting place in the ward that people live in.

Councilor Witham stated that he was on the Charter Review Commission back in 2009 as the chair. The point is well made our polling locations have a number of issues that would not allow for social distancing. The waivers that the State may allow for us to use larger facilities would be helpful. We should continue to suggest alternate means and encourage people to vote using absentee ballots. We need to push information using social media, City website etc.

Councilor Cameron stated that as someone who has previously worked at the polls before and most recently working at Ward 2, we need to push absentee ballots to lessen the crowds on Election Day.

Councilor Gerding shared that he reached out to a friend of his on voting rights and access. One of the questions was how can we streamline our elections. Can we streamline or condense our locations, no not currently, but hearing the Mayor today it may be possible. Councilor Gerding spoke of adding more locations in wards if having one location isn't sufficient or making different entrances for each ward. It would require more people to work. Thinking about current locations they are not cohesive to social distancing. Ward 4 could possibly be held at Idlehurst School and he would be in favor of moving it to Idelhurst.

Councilor Witham noted that was a great observation by Councilor Gerding. At least with Ward 4 we can go to Idlehurst. Having elections held in school would require schools closing on those days, so the School Board would have to look into it. Additional polling places to spread it out would be an issue as far as enough people and enough equipment.

Councilor Paradis asked what the timeline is for notifying moving the Election poll and if we could get an answer to that. Also, can we raise the price of pay for Election workers were just a couple of her ideas.

Councilor Dumont stated that the issue of workers is a concern because it requires training and the use of equipment. We have a very good counting process, which has been proven in the past with recounts. With absentee ballots being processed at 1:00pm, if we get the same turnout as the last Presidential Election we will be there until after 7:00pm. As far as increasing the poll workers compensation for the November Election he would sponsor a Resolution for that.

Councilor Cameron asked about thoughts on opening absentee ballots at 1:00 pm and if we could have people opening absentee ballots marking them and also have the checklist at the door.

Councilor Witham stated that timing is of the essence, we need to have our Council create a letter to allow for a waiver to move polling locations and send to the Secretary of State. He asked the City Manager communicate with the schools regarding holding Ward 4 at Idlehurst.

Manager Belmore spoke of the absentee application informational flyer that will be sent out with the water bills in July. He spoke of some items we are researching to purchase. Director Smith reached out to the Executive Director at SHA and she has no issues still using the wards 3 & 4.

Councilor Gerding suggested replacing the golf pencils with “I voted” pens instead of using stickers, that way the person can use the pen to vote and then take it with them.

Paradis – stated perhaps we could provide transportation and said we could inquire what the costs for Coast Bus. She also inquired if we could send out absentee ballots with prepaid postage on the return envelopes to encourage voting with absentee ballots and what the postage costs for that would be.

DISCUSS SIMILAR MUNICIPAL/STATE 2020 ELECTION WORKING

GROUPS FOR POTENTIAL COLLABORATION / INFORMATION

Councilor Gerding stated the only group he knows of is party specific and not sure if he can use that or not.

REVIEW RELEVANT COVID FUNDING SOURCES & TIMELINES

Getting this info out as it stands with dates. Send information out with water/sewer bills in July.

Councilor Gerding asked if there are public places that it can be posted. Manager Belmore stated we can post on the windows of the City Hall and the Library.

Councilor Witham noted that we need to keep track of costs. City staff has been good and hope we do that now through this.

ESTABLISH RECURRING FUTURE MEETING DATE/TIME

The Committee consensus is to meet every other Wednesday at 4:00pm.

SET NEXT ACTION ITEMS FOR THE COMMISSION

Councilor Paradis summarized the questions from the meeting:

- Place an item on the next Council agenda regarding the request of a waiver to the State to use alternative polling locations such as the schools that may be outside of specific wards.
- Can we use the schools?
- Does our City Charter currently list our polling locations?
- Consider election worker payment increase?
- How many people are interested in working and what training is being provided?

ADJOURNMENT

*Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Cameron made a motion to adjourn at 5:00 pm.
Motion passed by roll call vote 4-0.*

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk