

**Cecil County Charter Board  
Worksession Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 2009**

**PRESENT:** Joyce Bowlsbey, Dan Schneckenburger, Robert Gell, Harland Graef, Chris Ann Szep, Ed Cole, Ross Cameron, and Barry Montgomery, Executive Office Administrator Vicky Rinkerman, Consultant Victor Tervalo, Esquire and members of the public.

**ABSENT:** Henry Burden

**GUESTS:** Delegate Richard Sossi, Delegate Michael Smigiel, Delegate Daniel Riley, and Senator E.J. Pipken

**OPEN SESSION called to order at 6:00 p.m.**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

**Approval of Minutes – October 5, 2009** – On motion by Ms. Szep, seconded by Mr. Graef, the minutes of the September 28, 2009 meeting

**Charter discussion with State Delegates**

**Update on Charter process** – Chair Bowlsbey briefed the Delegates on the charter proposal being created by the Board. The Board anticipates having a draft by January 2010, and they intend to conduct educational meetings for comment and input from the public. A Friends of Charter group has been formed to assist the Board with educating the public on the charter.

Vic Tervalo stated that the Board is responsible for writing the charter and sending it to the Commissioners by August 2010, and it will be on the ballot in the 2010 election. The charter draft must be published in its entirety in a local newspaper. He updated the group on charter government attempts throughout the State.

Delegate Riley explained the process that occurred in Harford County to change the council election from at large to elect by district. He feels that the time is right for charter government in Cecil County.

Discussion ensued regarding terms of office, finance department option, county police department, county executive position, cost of charter government, and the budget process.

Senator Pipkin discussed staggered terms of office v. same term of office. The initial discussion among the Board members for staggered terms was to keep continuity, and attempt to reduce the probability of all council members leaving office at the same time.

Mr. Tervalo stated that the Sheriff's position is under State jurisdiction. The Board can create a separate police department, but cannot eliminate the Sheriff's elected position, or the Sheriff's Office.

The Board intends to have the draft charter out to the public by January 2010, and they will take all comments from the public under consideration before the final draft.

Senator Pipkin stated that he feels that the budget process needs to be more balanced between the legislative and executive branch to ensure the public needs are heard. The budget process will have a significant impact on the day-to-day operation of the county.

Under charter government, the council must still go through the State Delegation for any new taxes or fees. A tax cap can be applied under charter.

The Board members agree that Cecil County needs charter government to separate the legislative and executive branch, which would provide accountability, and a check and balance process for local government. Local issues – local vote. Charter would give the council the authority to deal with issues that directly affect the county. The charter would not change the interaction between the delegation and county officials.

Discussion ensued regarding the reasons why the charter movement was initiated in Cecil County.

Delegate Riley is in favor of charter government for Cecil County to have one individual accountable and responsible for the operation of county government.

Senator Pipkin stated that from his experience in Cecil County, the people do not want more government, and they may not be in favor of charter.

The Board intends to educate the public and consider their comments before making a final decision on several components of the charter. Under charter, the public will have the option to petition for a change in the charter document.

#### **Old Business**

##### **Review of 2010 Charter draft – Version 8**

**Section 512 – Emergency Appropriations** – the section includes a provision for declaring an emergency before there can be an emergency ordinance and an emergency appropriation.

Discussion ensued regarding the process for an ordinance to allocate emergency appropriations. The Board agreed that they would like language added to define “emergency”. Mr. Tervalva will revise the language in this section.

**Section 601 Strategic Plan** – The new section was reviewed by the Board. A strategic plan is a year-by-year outline that sets the direction for the county. Theoretically, the County’s Comprehensive Plan should be aligned with the strategic plan; however, the strategic plan does not replace the comprehensive plan. A point was made that the most important part of a strategic plan is the process of developing the strategic plan, which brings all the officials together and promotes their “buy in” for the plan. The Board agreed to strike the last sentence from section (a) and (b).

#### **Adjournment**

On motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Graef, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Approved:

Attest:

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Joyce Bowsbey, Chair

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Vicky Rinkerman  
Executive Office Administrator