

**Cecil County Charter Board  
Worksession Meeting Minutes**

**March 12, 2009**

**PRESENT:** Joyce Bowlsbey, Henry Burden, Ross Cameron, Jr., Robert Gell, Harland Graef, Nicholas Ricciuti, Daniel Schneckenburger, Chris Ann Szep, Commissioner Hodge, Administrator Al Wein, Executive Office Administrator Vicky Rinkerman; and Consultant Victor Tervalá, Esq.

**ABSENT:** John Burkley.

**OPEN SESSION called to order at 6:30 p.m.**

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

**Discussion of Charters and Charter-making process** – County charters define the rules of government and legislation is prohibited in the document. Dorchester County has been the only successful jurisdiction to adopt charter government in Maryland since 1973. Voter concerns usually center on money issues, and fear of an increase in expenses and taxes with the adoption of charter government. Public education is an important part of the process. Dorchester County had no opposition to the charter and it was publicized very little. On the other hand, Washington County very actively publicized their charter attempt last year, and it was rejected by the voters.

Charter government is the only form of local government where “the people” establish the rules of government. The Charter Board represents “the people” in developing the charter. Six of the nine charter counties have a tax cap provision. The current political climate within the county appears to be resentment toward the Delegation in Annapolis. Charter government cannot change any State laws.

Of the nine charters, seven have an elected county executive and two have an appointed county executive. The county executive is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the county. The council or commissioners establish policy and stay out of the day-to-day operation. Cecil County is the only county government where the officials have staggered terms of office.

**Discussion of Timetables** – The Charter Board has 18 months from their appointment to create the charter; however, there is a 60-day provision from the time of appointment for the public to petition the appointments to the Board. If there is a petition filed, the appointments to the Board will be decided by the voters through a special election.

The charter question can be sent to the voters via a special, primary, or general election. However, that does not need to be decided at this time. The election must be held 30 to 90 days after the last publication of the proposed charter.

**ACTION:** The Board concurred to eliminate requesting a special election for the charter question.

Discussion ensued regarding county voting districts and a timeline for implementation of the charter. New State legislative districts will be determined in the 2012 election; however, there may not be new Commissioner Districts. Commissioner districts will only be an issue if the Board decides to change from residency voting. The timeline for implementation can be outlined in the charter document.

**Discussion of public involvement** – The voters can petition to change the charter. The Board has an option to add a referendum process to the charter. If the voters are opposed to legislation, they can submit

a petition bearing a reasonable percentage of the voters' signatures to the legislative body. The legislation would then go before the voters for a decision.

**Selection of Chair and Vice Chair**

ACTION: Motion made by Mr. Gell, seconded by Mr. Ricciuti, to nominate Joyce Bowsbey as Chair.

VOTE: Approved unanimously.

ACTION: Motion made by Ms. Bowsbey, seconded by Mr. Ricciuti, to nominate Daniel Schneckeburger as Vice Chair.

VOTE: Approved unanimously.

**Discussion of rules of procedure** – The recommendation was for the Board to start with the proposed charter from 1996 and use the other charters as a guide. All Charter Board meetings are open to the public and meeting dates and minutes should be posted on the Cecil County website.

**Next Meeting Date** – The Board concurred to meet every two weeks starting on Monday, March 23, 2000 in the County Administration Building. A meeting schedule and the next meeting's agenda will be emailed to Board members and posted on the website. The Board will start with discussion on the county executive position and begin review of the legislative branch.

**Adjournment**

ACTION: Motion made by Mr. Graef, seconded by Mr. Cameron, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

The next meeting of the Charter Board is scheduled for Monday, March 23, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the Perryville Room of the County Administration Building, 200 Chesapeake Blvd., Elkton.

Approved:

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Joyce Bowsbey, Chair

Attest:

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Vicky Rinkerman.  
Executive Office Administrator