

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

MINUTES

January 5, 2021

The Committee on Committee was called to order by Mayor Robert A. B. Reichert

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Lester Miller
Mayor Pro Tem Seth Clark

OTHERS PRESENT:

Commissioner Valerie Wynn
Commissioner Paul Bronson
Commissioner Elaine Lucas
Commissioner Mallory Jones
Commissioner Raymond Wilder
Commissioner Bill Howell
Commissioner Virgil Watkins
Commissioner Al Tillman

NEWS MEDIA:

OTHERS PRESENT:

Duke Groover, County Attorney
Michael McNeal, Sr. Assistant County Attorney
Chris Floore, Public Affairs
Rachel Gambill, Public Affairs
Julie Moore, Budget and Strategic Planning

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lester M. Miller.

1. Consideration to appoint a third member of the Committee on Committees

ACTION

On motion of Mayor Pro Tem Clark, seconded by Mayor Miller and carried unanimously, Commissioner Paul Bronson was appointed as the third member of Committee on Committees.

- Commissioner Lucas asked the County Attorney, Duke Groover, to explain the role of the Committee on the Committees. Mr. Groover read from the Charter Section 17 (a):

The committee on committees shall create, abolish, and appoint all committees and the membership thereof. The mayor and the mayor pro tempore shall not be a voting member of any committee established by the committee or committees. At this meeting, the newly organized commission shall make any appointments and selections as may be required by this charter.

- Mayor Pro Tem Clark made a motion in the spirit of fairness and to make sure that every Commissioner has a voice at every point of the legislative process, that we abolish Committees and only have a Committee of the Whole. Attorney Groover then restated the motion to confirm that the standing four committees would be demolished and only have the Committee of the Whole. Commissioner Bronson seconded the motion.

Commissioner Tillman asked if they were suppose to ratify the Mayor Pro Tem at another meeting. Mr. Groover begin explaining the Committee on Committees action. Commissioner Tillman asked again if the Mayor Pro Tem had to be ratified. Mr. Groover stated no that the election today was ratified.

Commissioner Wynn stated that she had suggested doing away with Committees previously and the idea was not met with any enthusiasm. She stated that she thought it was an excellent idea when she brought it up and still believes that having only one committee gives everyone an opportunity to voice their support or concerns.

Commissioner Lucas asked for more clarification on how this system would work.

Mayor Pro Tem Clark stated that it really came to be at the ACCG training regarding different counties and how they pass ordinances or resolutions. He continued that he does not see this body does not have a large members numbers but the small number would make passing legislation work better. He continued that "we" are the policy body and the Mayor is administration of the government and he is the tie breaker on committee. Mr. Groover concurred that the Commission was the legislative body. A committee that has a membership of four. When a Committee wants to do something but someone who wants to amend the Resolution or change it does not get an opportunity until it comes out on the floor. But if three people vote it down it dies right in committee and no one else has an opportunity to say anything about it even if it was a good idea. If we work as a Committee of the Whole, since we all have equal input and I mean all have equal input, There would be no Chairmanship and everyone would be equal members in all way. It incentives us to get to six votes. He continued that it allows the Commission to work together twice to pass a legislation with a vote of six so that the Mayor cannot veto it. He stated that it is equitable and his voice was just as important as his colleagues.

Commissioner Watkins stated that one thing he has noticed during the year, that when it comes to things that are non interest to all members there is a problem of getting three people to attend. He continued that he thought it might be a problem to get six members. He also stated that he sees a problem with the Mayor Pro Tem voting in the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Groover stated that the Mayor Pro Tem would be able to vote in Committee of the Whole but would have no more authority than other members.

Commissioner Watkins stated that there are some things he has no interest in and which means studying everything with high intensity. While he understood that if it gets the votes there are some things that hold special interest to him and he believes being on a committee allows specialization. While he believes that it is good to have Committees and then vote in Committee and vote again on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday, it would appear that if this passes there would be no reason to meet and vote on an item twice.

Mayor Miller responded that the Committee of the Whole will meet on the same schedule. He continued that although you may not have a special interest in an item it is important that all members review the legislation and be prepared to discuss during Committee of the Whole since that is where the work gets done, working through the questions, receiving materials.

Commissioner Lucas wanted to know who would precede over the Committee of the Whole. Mayor Miller stated that he would precede over the Committee. She asked where the separation would come. She asked how long would the Commission have to go through the items on the agenda.

Mayor Miller stated that he would present information items which would give the Commission as much time as possible to review. It would also give them time to call him and ask questions. He continued that if the item does not pass in Committee it would give them two weeks to review it.

Mr. Groover stated that the Charter does give the Mayor the authority to decide over the Committee of the Whole.

Commissioner Lucas stated that she is concerned because the Charter does make the Commissioners a weak body.

Commissioner Bronson wants to make sure there are checks and balances. He asked that if this does not work, are the Commissioners allowed to change the process.

Mayor Pro Tem Clark stated that if it does not work and it falls flat, he also stated that this was a very common practice and they are not making this up, he does that that what this does is incentives this body that when legislation comes to the body and they get six votes then with due respect, Mr. Mayor that is it. It incentivizes us to work together as a whole where now if three agree then it can be stopped by the full Commission.

Commissioner Jones stated that he likes the idea because everyone has an equal vote.

Commissioner Tillman stated that someone could change their mind and decide to have a different vote. He was concerned that all Committees were being dissolved on day one. He continued that Commissioners would not have influence on what they want to add to their own personal agendas and we think that is o.k. He stated that was not the process, that had never been the process in this new consolidated government. He asked who had been included and again he stated he wanted to go back to the trust factor which trusting your fellow Commissioners to say this is my thought, this is my idea. This is what we are hearing for the first time and the public is hearing for the first time. He stated that people are smiling in your face.... He stated that he had always worked to move the community and he does not yield if he gives someone his support and he does not backtrack. He said if it is to make the process easier then just say that. If we are only going to come in and vote and get six votes; the Mayor sits the agenda; the Mayor runs the agenda so how is the Commissioners going to get what they want and this now gives the Mayor all the power. This says we are all just symbolic features and if the Commission is saying Mr. Mayor lead us, guide us and if that is the desire of this Commission then he will follow along. He stated that he told Ben Hubbard sitting in the audience exactly what was going to happen. He stated that he does not support it and that it does not make sense to give up the power and authority.

Commissioner Lucas stated that she employed the three to take a little more time on this. She believes that what is a good idea on theory and first blush. She believes the Commissioners are losing more of their power. She really believes that they should not give up the committee structure. She believed that she was taking away a step that was needed. She stated that she needs the extra step. She does not need to be the Chair of anything. She feels the Commission is losing more and more authority.

Commissioner Watkins stated that the idea came from ACCG so he asked that the community that use this idea. He stated that it is in the ACCG handbook and David Wills, President of ACCG, spoke to him a good amount of time regarding this.

Mayor Miller stated that this is a new administration, a new day and a new way of doing things. He believed that this would bring about consensus.

Mayor Miller called for the vote to abolish all standing Committees and only have a Committee of the Whole. The motion carried three to zero.

There being no further business and on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:

Janice S. Ross
Clerk of the Commission