

**Leon County  
2009-2010 Citizens Charter Review (CRC)  
Committee  
December 17, 2009**

Attending: Chris Holley (Chair), Marilyn Wills, David Jacobsen, Linda Nichol森 Donna Harper, Jon Ausman, Ralph Mason, Catherine Jones, Lester Abberger, Lance deHaven-Smith, Sue Dick and Larry Simpson. Absent were Chuck Hobbs, Tom Napier, and Rick Bateman. Also attending were Herb Thiele, Patrick Kinni, Kurt Spitzer, Shington Lamy and Rebecca Vause

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Holley called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

**II. Invocation and Pledge**

The invocation was provided by Ralph Mason. Chairman Holley then led the Pledge of Allegiance

**III. Roll Call**

The roll was conducted by Shington Lamy; who confirmed a quorum was present.

**IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

*Lester Abberger moved, duly seconded by Lance de Haven Smith, to approve the December 10, 2009 minutes. The motion carried unanimously.*

**V. Reports of Chairperson**

Chairman Holley shared that, in an attempt to receive more public participation into the process, letters were mailed to various neighborhood associations to make them aware of the January 7, 2010 CRC meeting. He noted that he had held a meeting with the City Manager and a copy of the County's Issue Agenda, as it currently exists, was shared. An invitation was extended for her to attend the January 7 (and any other) meeting. He is hopeful that City participation will occur.

**VI. Presentations by Invited Guests/Consultant**

1. Presentation by Constitutional Officers

a. **Property Appraiser:**

Leon County Property Appraiser Bert Hartsfield utilized a power point presentation to share information regarding his office. Highlights of his presentation included:

- First County to develop a searchable database ([www.leonpa.org](http://www.leonpa.org));
- Breakdown of 2009 Just and Taxable Values:
  - \$25.8 billion (100% Just Value)
  - \$11.2 billion (43% Exempt Value)
  - \$14.6 billion (57% Taxable Value)
- Average home price \$214,000 in 2006 compared to \$187,000 in 2009;
- Qualified sales have decreased from 15,000 in 2005 to 2,212 in 2009;
- State Oversight includes: Roll Approval; Auditing and Budget Approval;
- Budget can be appealed to Governor and Cabinet;

- Duties include – locate, identify and appraise all property in Leon County; administer all exemptions and classifications; provide assessment roll and taxable value, and files with the Dept. of Revenue (DOR) three times yearly for roll approval and audits;
- Utilizes technology to provide better customer service;
- Established partnerships with City and County resulting in improved relationships and efficiencies, and
- External audits are conducted annually as required by Florida law.

He concluded that the existing Charter is operating effectively with regard to his office and the continuation of a separate elected property appraiser for Leon County will ensure excellent customer service, as well as fair, accurate and unbiased determination of taxable values.

Chairman Holley established with Mr. Hartsfield that he favored non-partisan elections.

Jon Ausman inquired of any issue he would like to see addressed in the Charter. Mr. Hartsfield responded that any effort to make the ad valorem process easier to understand would be appreciated.

b. **Sheriff:**

Leon County Sheriff Larry Campbell provided an overview on the mission, scope and organization of his office. A summary of his presentation follows:

- Constitutional Officers are independent and are directly accountable to the people;
- Functions include: law enforcement, judicial/court services, and jail;
- Special functions include: emergency management, homeland security and enhanced 9-1-1;
- Serves as chief law enforcement officer in Leon County and provides a wide array of services to citizens and the judicial system, in addition to operation of County Jail;
- Accredited Law Enforcement & Corrections Sections;
- Numerous community partnerships established;
- Core Values;
- Patrol Zones;
- Jail: average daily population of 1,050 inmates and 12,000 monthly visitors;
- Sheriff's Work Camp: inmates worked a total of 1,221,330 (2004-2009) hours for a total savings of \$9.5 million to the community;
- 14 total new employees added since 2000;
- Approved 2009/2010 approved budget of \$60.5 million (\$31.1 million law enforcement and \$29.4 million corrections), and
- Employs 630 full time employees.

Sheriff Campbell asserted the importance of independence and reminded the Committee that upon development of the original Charter constitutional officers were assured they would not be affected. He affirmed his support for consolidation of law enforcement agency.

Mr. Ausman inquired if the Charter should address the management of the jail and annexation. Sheriff Campbell responded that jail management has been outsourced in other areas with little success and would like to make it where annexation is not necessary. Sheriff Campbell cited areas of jurisdictional difference between the LCSO and TPD.

Mr. Lance deHaven Smith asked if MSTUs are lost when annexation occurs and learned that law enforcement does not utilize MSTUs.

Chairman Holley asked Sheriff Campbell's opinion on partisan vs. non-partisan elections and established that the Sheriff favored that the elections process remain in its current form.

**c. Supervisor of Elections**

Leon County Supervisor of Elections Ion Sancho indicated that a copy of his presentation had been provided to the Committee.

Mr. Sancho opined that the cost of elections is "sky rocketing" due primarily to state and federal mandates. He shared that in 2007 the State banned the types of voting systems used for disability voters and directed that these units be replaced by 2012 at a cost to Leon County of \$1-3 million dollars. His office in conjunction with the Florida Association of Supervisor of Elections, the Florida Association of Counties and other municipal groups are working to convince the State that the change is not necessary. He reported that his office is recognized nationally as one of the best offices in the nation.

Mr. Sancho noted that his office attempts to minimize their costs by utilizing County and Clerk resources; resulting in the elimination of four positions within his office. He mentioned that his office is in need of additional office, training and warehouse space and the County has agreed to budget for a facility after the 2010 elections cycle.

Mr. Sancho informed the Committee that the 2002 Charter created a non partisan Supervisor of Elections Office. Chairman Holley confirmed with Mr. Sancho that the current election process designates a party affiliation for other Constitutional Officers, but does not for County Commission races. Mr. Sancho stated that he favored partisan elections for the County Commission and offered that party affiliation contains information about policies, practices and behaviors of candidates and added that his offices fields hundreds of calls asking the party affiliation of candidates of non-partisan elections. In summary, Mr. Sancho stated that citizens should access to all information pertinent to a candidate.

At this time, Chairman Holley asked Mr. Sancho to remain for questions by the Committee.

Mr. Ausman opined that an electoral system should: 1) result in higher voter turnout per 1,000 votes; 2) lower campaign costs; 3) increase electoral competition, and 4) ensure representation of all elements of the community. Mr. Sancho commented that the four criteria were very appropriate and suggested that access to the system should not be difficult, confusing or put legal or administrative barriers that are unnecessary for civic participation also be considered.

Mr. Ausman distributed four handouts to Mr. Sancho and the Committee entitled: 1) Leon County Election Turnout Statistics ('00-'08); General Election Roll Off Differences Between Partisan and Non-Partisan (96-08); County Commission Campaign expenditure data, and 4) Peer City Review of Legislative Governments. Considerable dialogue ensued between Mr. Ausman and Mr. Sancho on this information, which included the electoral process, partisan vs. partisan elections, and district sizing.

In response to Mr. Ausman's request for a recommendation on district size and the number of seats on the Commission, Mr. Sancho indicated that he was hesitant to make such a statement; however, did acknowledge that small jurisdictions/districts does reduce the cost of an election campaign.

Mr. Lance deHaven Smith requested a point of order and expressed frustration by the presentation by Mr. Ausman. He asked for the consideration of the Committee that members reserve themselves so that other members are allowed to ask questions and comment on issues.

Mr. deHaven Smith established with Mr. Sancho that Florida elections are not audited and that Florida Law, after 2006, presumes that all machine read ballots are correct and thus cannot be recounted.

In response to Dave Jacobsen's inquiry, Mr. Sancho offered that he favored a five percent petition threshold.

#### **VII. Remarks of Interested Citizens**

- Alan Rollins, 2833 Green Forest Lane, requested that the fair elections campaign process be agendaed and discussed at a future CRC meeting.
- Samuel Neimeiser, 3518 Lands End Lane, student at FAMU, advocated for more districts and identification of party affiliations; with the exception of the Supervisor of Elections.
- Jacob Eaton, 2626 E. Park Avenue, student at FAMU, requested that the system be changed to allow the identification of party affiliations. He also expressed concern over the lack of minority representation on the County Commission.

Ms. Donna Harper asked for a Point of Order wanting to make certain that rules adopted by the CRC are followed.

#### **VIII. Unfinished Business**

#### **IX. New Business**

1. Charter Issues
  - a. Petition Threshold: deferred until January 14, 2010 meeting.
  - b. Non-Partisan Elections: Mr. Spitzer mentioned that an alternative was to keep the same non partisan system, but identify party affiliations on the ballot. He offered that non partisan elections typically preclude a second primary, thus reducing the cost. Mr. Spitzer added that this process would not preclude voters from voting for any candidate as voters would not have to vote within their registered party affiliation.

Mr. Sancho provided that that for party affiliations are not allowed to be listed on the ballot and candidates are prohibited from indicating party affiliation on campaign literature. Mr. Spitzer articulated that Duval

County lists party affiliations on their ballots utilizing a non-partisan system.

Mr. Ralph Mason expressed concern over the August primaries as the student population is lessened during this time. He pointed out that voter turn out is higher in the General Elections and favored the closing of August primaries. Mr. Mason expressed support for partisan elections.

Ms. Harper suggested that an attorney who specializes in election law be present during these discussions. Mr. Kinni remarked that staff be directed to review an issue on a case by case basis to provide input and recommendations. Chairman Holley pointed out the inconsistency whereby a Florida County (Duval) places party affiliation without it being a partisan election.

Chairman Holley remarked that a lot of information had been shared and suggested that the issue be deferred until the January 14, 2010 meeting. This suggestion was accepted by the Committee.

- c. Board of County Commission Chairman Position: deferred until January 14, 2010 meeting.
- d. County Commission Districting Scheme: deferred until January 14, 2010 meeting.

Mr. Mason suggested that, in the future, materials to be shared with the Committee be e-mailed to Shington Lamy for distribution prior to a meeting to allow time for review. Chairman Holley accepted the recommendation and asked that members comply.

Chairman Holley recapped the upcoming meeting schedules:

- 1 January 7, 2010 - Full/Functional Consolidation, Countywide Stormwater Standards/  
Environmental Ordinances, Annexation, and Charter Officers/Constitutional Officers
- 2 January 14, 2010 - Petition Threshold, County Commission Chairman Position, Districting Scheme and Non Partisan Elections.

Ms. Harper clarified the procedure to be used for information gathering, general discussion and debate of items. Chairman Holley indicated that he intended for each issue to be addressed, questioned, debated and a decision made at that time on moving the issue forward to the next agenda. Ms. Harper remarked that more time may be needed to address the issues thoroughly.

There was discussion on the length, time and structure of the meetings.

2. Staff/Consultant Discussion (Pertinent Updates)

Mr. Spitzer shared that information requested as a result of the Clerk's presentation (audit) can be scheduled for January 7, 2010 meeting. He also mentioned that there some outstanding administrative items, such as the non interference clause, etc. Chairman Holley asked that these issues be summarized for the next meeting. Mr. Spitzer indicated that this would be

provided.

Mr. Jacobsen established that public comment on the January 7 meeting would not be limited to agendaed items.

Ms. Dick mentioned that any information that can be provided to the Committee on redistricting prior to the January 14 meeting would be beneficial. Chairman Holley indicated that the issue of redistricting (from 5-2 to 4-3) has not been completed vetted and is open to other concepts.

**d. Adjournment with Day Fixed for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Citizen Charter Review Committee is scheduled for Thursday, January 7, 2010 at 5:30 p.m.

There being no further business, Chairman Holley adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

LEON COUNTY:

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Holley, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Inzer, Clerk of Court