

Answers and Suggestions for the University Heights Charter Review Commission

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I enjoyed my session with the Commission. I appreciated the opportunity as I am dedicated to making municipal government both more professional and effective by involving citizens in the governing of the community. I commend, and admire, your willingness to tackle the issues and problems confronting our inner suburbs. As a committed resident of Lakewood, I understand how difficult the issues are and how time consuming it is to deal with them effectively.

I decided to answer the three questions that the Commission had in this semi-formal manner. I think this will be easier to distribute than an E-Mail message. Furthermore, I had some thoughts and suggestions I would like to share. These are the result of my experiences with and as a member of Charter Review Commissions and my analysis of the problems and potentials of inner suburbs in Greater Cleveland. I hope these are useful to you.

I will first answer the three questions and then present my thoughts and suggestions.

First, the salary of a city manager for University Heights would likely be in the range of \$80,000 to \$120,000. The amount depends upon the qualifications and experiences of the candidate. Even if the office is named City Administrator, the pool of qualified candidates would be the same as for city manager. Thus, the salary for a City Administrator would be in the same range.

Note that this is not too different from school superintendents. An effective way to educate citizens about the desirability of professional chief executives is to note school boards and superintendents. This arrangement provides for professional administration and local control. The Council-Manager system is very similar to the School Board-Superintendent system in Ohio. If the schools demand professional administration to be effective than the need for the city is even moreso in these times and with the problems facing inner suburbs in particular.

Second, Mayfield Village did put training into their charter. The provision is:

Mayfield Village Charter

ARTICLE XII MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

SECTION 2. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION FOR MAYOR AND COUNCIL.

Council may require first time newly elected members of Council and Mayors to attend courses or seminars relating to municipal government at the Village's cost. Council shall choose the courses or

seminars to be attended.

(Amended 11-8-05.)

Third, I could find no written source about city managers noting they save the municipality their salary or more each year. I did contact a few managers who confirmed that this is a goal for many managers. It is, they noted, informal as conditions may not permit it. But they see such a perspective useful as it keeps them focused on reducing costs whenever possible and which do not decrease the quality of life for citizens or which do not reduce the capacity of government to deal with both short-term and long-term issues and problems.

There is never sufficient time to talk about all that is useful and perhaps necessary when dealing with Charter reform. I would like to share some observations, thoughts and suggestions that hopefully will be helpful in your most crucial task of preparing the city for a better future. You are dealing with the future and in spite of the possible conflicts never forget you have an opportunity to make the city a better place and better governed.

First, the National Civic League has created a **Model City Charter**. The current Model is the 8th edition and following the previous editions advocates the Council-Manager plan. However, the most useful aspect of the **Model Charter** is the commentary on each provision. For each provision the commentary talks about the available options and the advantages and disadvantages of each. The **Model Charter** is relatively inexpensive and available through the website of the League. The address is:

<http://ncl.org/publications/>

Second, city government is not the same as a private business. It is not desirable to run a city as a business as politics is a process by which a community determines its future. This requires as open a process as possible and that involves all citizens who want to contribute. There are also legal requirements, such as due process, which complicate how government is performed. A well governed city does the politics well, minimizing distractions such as partisanship, ideology and individual ambition, that may get in the way of citizens fully participating.

Third, a municipality is a corporation and does have business to conduct. This business should be professionally performed, focused on quality, effectiveness and efficiency. The business should not diminish the quality of the politics. The need to be professional in both the business and politics of municipal governance is a strong argument for appointed executives trained, experienced and dedicated to both efficient business and democratic politics.

Fourth, any system that has an appointed chief executive no matter what the title of the appointed executive is, is different in kind from a system with an elected chief executive. A system with an appointed executive does not have separation of powers. The appointed executive should always be directly accountable to the representatives of the people. Thus, be careful in the provisions around such an office. Don't borrow provisions from systems with separation of powers as they tend to reduce the effectiveness of both the appointed executive and the accountability to the people's representatives.

The accountability is one the most desirable features as the actions of the executive are closely watched and monitored, making sure the representatives are served appropriately. This also requires the executive to be responsive to the needs of the community rather than be concerned with maintaining popularity for a future election.

Fifth, write a report that details what you decided, and most importantly, why you made the decision. I have provided copies of the report and accompanying documents from the Lakewood Charter Review Commission of 2004. These are not templates; they are only examples of possible ways to report to the community. You are accountable not just to those who appointed you but to the community. You have the opportunity to look into and prepare for the future. The community needs to learn what you found and how you incorporated your learning into your recommendations. An honest and well written report is the best way to inform and educate the community.

You may want to post the report to a website. In Lakewood, we posted on both the city and library websites. In all this staff work, the Council should provide the reasonable expenses. You can only discharge your duties and obligations to the Council and community by the quality and depth of your report.

Finally, be honest, consistent and value driven in your work and your report. Honesty is required to educate the community. Many citizens may be unaware of the issues and problems that cloud the future and of alternatives for dealing with them. Your report is one of the most potent tools for community education.

Consistency means that you act in a responsible manner treating all, from the lowest citizen to the highest public official, with respect, attention and concern. You don't have to accept all that is offered but you do need to hear and process it.

Value driven means you are focused on providing for the most effective government possible for the future of the community. All of your recommendations should reflect that concern and focus on making it happen. Avoid being drawn into political and other distractions not directly concerned with your mission. Your report will be evaluated not just on its content but how you reached your conclusions.

I wish you the best in your deliberations and actions. You are certainly concerned with your community and have demonstrated an admirable willingness to tackle head-on the issues and needs. You are to be commended and no matter the outcome, proud of such community service regardless of the obstacles.