

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Afton Charter Commission**  
**February 28, 2008**

**PRESENT:** John Barclay, Anthony Berg, Julianne Berg, Bonnie Blackley, Mark Borgwardt, Michael Frichol, Rock Gjerme, Thomas Giannetti, Kenn Kopitzke, Kathleen McGinn, Deborah Nelson, and Patricia Snyder.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

**2. ROLL CALL:** Snyder performed roll call.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Barclay moved to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Kopitzke. Motion passed (12-0).

**4. TREASURER REPORT:** Barclay reported that he has not yet approached the city council with our request for \$100.00 but that he will do so prior to our next meeting. Everyone incurring expenses should keep their receipts and submit them to him for reimbursement. It was decided to hold off on opening up a checking account until a decision is made on whether or not the committee will move forward with drafting a charter.

**5. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Public communication system** – Nelson reported that she contacted Mayor Welter with regard to putting a link or a page on the city's website. Welter responded by email dated 2-20-08 that the earliest she could place our request on the agenda is March 18<sup>th</sup> saying "While we can give the authority to add you to our website, as this is not a council-driven initiative, I believe it would be best for the Charter Commission to establish its own site."

Discussion followed and A. Berg agreed to attend that meeting and present our request for a link to the city council. Frichol volunteered to obtain a domain and to do the site design work. Postings to the site will include general information such as names of officers, limited contact info, meeting agendas, approved minutes and various submissions such governing statutes and a model charter.

**Other old business** included an email from LMC attorney Rachel Carlson to Bonnie Blackley concerning the League and the Charter Service's neutral stance towards charter adoption, that there is no inherent conflict in the city attorney advising the charter commission, and that cost/attorney fees are an issue to be worked out with the city.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Brief presentation of City Government History** - Kopitzke spoke to the commission about the transition of Afton from a township to a city in the early 1970s, changes in minimum lot sizes over the years, the formation of wards and the current weak mayor system, construction of city hall in the early 1980's, council duties, paid consultants, and the four primary functions of city government (police, fire, roads and zoning/licensing), three of which we contract out.

He also spoke of the various volunteer committees and commissions, the hiring of an administrator in 1990, budget funding through property taxes, non-eligibility for LGA (local government aid), state aid monies for roads, and the uniqueness in being a city of only 3,000 residents. Problems include the conflicts that came with the merging of the old village and the township, too much dependence upon city manager/administrator, the lack of communication since the demise of the Afton Citizens Forum, and the recent loss of resident volunteers.

**B. Charter discussion/pros and cons** - Discussion included the parameters of a charter which does not include licensing, ordinances, and zoning; what we hope to accomplish with a charter, associated costs with special elections and attorneys, what's eligible for initiative and referendum, conflict surrounding recent zoning and ordinance changes, mandates, temporary ordinances, the process involved with petition-driven initiatives, and the ability of referendum to avoid future lawsuits and allow the majority of residents to decide on key issues.

Additional discussion included whether an attempt should be made to put a proposed charter on the ballot for this November, the importance of solid drafting, concern about what will not change with the adoption of a charter, downsides to charters and why various cities our size have chosen to disband or not approve charters, who is responsible for disseminating information, bonding/road paving, budget capping, the ability of the current council to initiate an advisory initiative/referendum and whether or not there is sufficient benefit to the city to proceed with a charter.

Several members stated that changes on the city council may not have as dramatic an effect on city policies and ordinances if there is a voter-approved directive in place.

**C. Vote on whether to proceed with drafting a charter** – none taken.

**7. Wrap Up** - McGinn suggested that we end the discussion due to time, that more discussion is needed, and that we start where we left off at the next meeting.

**A. Next meeting** – 7:00 Thursday, March 27, 2008 at St. Peter's.

**B. Agenda items** – More discussion and possible vote on whether or not to proceed with charter.

**C. Assignments** – Snyder will confirm that the church is available for the next meeting and A. Berg will present a request for a link to the city's website to the CC at their 3-18-08 regular meeting. Barclay will present a request for \$100.00 in operating expenses. Frichol will begin work on website. Commission members are encouraged to review the materials and prepare a list of pros and cons to bring to the next discussion.

**8. ADJOURN:** Motion to adjourn by Kopitzke. Seconded by J. Berg. Motion passed (12-0). Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

**SUBMISSIONS:**

- Eighth Edition Model City Charter, a publication of the National Civic League
- Email from Mayor Julia Welter dated 2-20-08, regarding link to city website
- Email from LMC attorney Rachel Carlson dated 2-26-08, regarding charter questions

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Snyder, Secretary