

City of Brookings, South Dakota
City Charter Commission Meeting 1
July 11, 2024
Community Room 300, City and County Government Center

Meeting Notes

Commissioners Present: Tom Yseth, Roger Solum, Lisa Hager, Keith Corbett, Jeanne Manzer, Gail Robertson, Dianne Nagy, David Gilbertson, Bob Burns, Ashley Ragsdale

Brookings Staff Present: Jake Meshke, Sam Beckman, Paul Briseno, Bonnie Foster

Public: Tim Reed

National Civic League: Derek Okubo

I. Welcome

Derek Okubo, National Civic League, opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m., welcoming the Brookings City Charter Commission members.

Paul Briseno noted that the first Brookings City Charter was written and adopted 20 years ago. It was recommended that the Charter be reviewed every 10 years.

II. Charter Revision Process Review

Derek reviewed the Charter Revision Process with commission members. He addressed the charge of the commission and roles and responsibilities of the city staff, National Civic League, and community.

Charge of the City Charter Commission:

- Review and become familiar with the existing Brookings City Charter and its government structure.
- Understand the procedures and interrelations of the different parts of the government and its relationship with the city charter.
- Through study and discussion, ensure the desired principles of local government are built into the proposed charter amendments.
- Identify areas in the charter for review and share why it should be reviewed.
- When working on revisions, identify the desired outcome that the charter change would strive to achieve.
- Review and edit the draft charter amendments to ensure the language is clear and understandable.
- Conduct the commission work with integrity so that residents view the outcomes as credible.

- Act as ambassadors of the process, assist with community outreach, and encourage adoption of the charter or its amendments.

Commission Role and Responsibilities:

- Attend all charter commission meetings
- Complete any assignments should any arise in between commission meetings
- Assist with community outreach
- Bring your personal lens with a focus on what's best for the City of Brookings and the community it serves
- Participate, offer your opinions. You were selected for a reason!

City Staff Role and Responsibilities:

- Provide process, information, and logistic support
- City Attorney
 - Act as a legal resource where needed
 - Assist with the processes when the amendments go to ballot
- City Clerk
 - Assist with the election processes when amendments go to ballot
- City Council
 - Provide preliminary insight into charter areas for review
 - Help identify outreach targets in the community

National Civic League Role and Responsibilities:

- National Civic League
- Neutral Guide
- Facilitate all commission meetings
- Research and provide initial amendment drafts
- Community Outreach
- Work with City staff in preparation for the ballot

III. Outreach Targets

Community outreach will be key to the success of this Charter Revision Project. It will be crucial to receive community input, feedback, and share information on the charter areas being revised for approval by the voters to occur in spring 2025. Commission members brainstormed the following groups:

Business

Downtown Association
 Brookings Economic Development Corporation
 Chamber of Commerce
 East Brookings Business Association
 Visit Brookings

Education

South Dakota State University (SDSU)
Student Associations at SDSU
Brookings Education Association
School Board
Jackrabbit Club

Government

County Commission
City Employees
Brookings Activity Center
Hospital
Utilities
Human Rights Commission

Civic Orgs/Community

Veterans Groups: VFW, DAV, American Legion
Media (Print, Radio)
Optimists, Rotary, Elks
United Way
Ministerial Alliance
Interfaith Council

- Derek will be needing the contact information of those outreach targets listed.

IV. Set Project Calendar

The meeting calendar was set. All meetings will be at the City and County Government Building, from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Schedule

Thursday, August 8, 2024
Monday, August 26, 2024
Thursday, September 19, 2024
Monday, October 7, 2024
Thursday, October 31, 2024

Community Outreach and Other Process Logistics

July/Aug	Public Meeting (Targeted Invite)
July	Work with staff on Digital Outreach Platform
Aug/Sept	Community Outreach with Target Groups with Charter Commission
Nov/Dec	Online Outreach to Target Groups
Dec/Jan	Wrap Up any loose ends; Design outreach strategy with City

Jan-Feb Work with City Attorney, staff, get ready for April vote

V. Select City Charter Commission Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Derek reviewed the responsibilities and desired characteristics of the Commission Chairperson:

Role

- Open and close Charter Commission meetings
- Act as the local “face” of the project
- Be a secondary “facilitator” of the process with NCL
- Help mediate conflicts among the commission should they arise
- Assist with troubleshooting any issues that may occur with the process

Characteristics

- Integrity
- A good process mind
- Problem-Solver
- Neutral and Fair – has integrity and ability hear all views
- Credible with the community

The Vice Chairperson will fill in and act as a thought partner with the Chair. After discussion and persuasion, David Gilbertson agreed to serve as Chair and Lisa Hager agreed to serve as Vice Chair.

VI. Commission Operation Agreements

Derek reviewed the Operation Agreements for the Charter Commission. Operating Agreements are the norms that commissioners agree to abide by so that the process has integrity and functions at an optimal level. The commissioners agreed to the agreements.

- Start and end meetings on time
- Avoid personal attacks
- Avoid interrupting one another
- Stay on topic/task
- Offer alternatives
- Decisions are made here
- Everyone participates!
- Have FUN!

VIII. City Charter Orientation and Discussion

The orientation was moved to the August 8 meeting due to Doug Linkhart being ill and unable to make the first meeting.

IX. Desired Principles of City Government Discussion

Derek led a discussion among the commissioners on the Principles of Local Government – those basic beliefs/truths which guides how we practice within government and externally with the community.

The purpose of having this discussion was to identify those principles to ensure those qualities are embedded in the City Charter. We will be visiting these themes regularly throughout the process to ensure they are a part of the City Charter.

Internally as a Government

- Operational efficiency with procedures and how government operates
- Fiscally responsible in how dollars are spent and used
- Responsive to community interests
- Act as attentive public servants
- Representative of community interests
- Department Heads are visible, credible, have integrity and are showing the community they're honest
- Elections are easy, accessible, and convenient

Externally in Working with Community

- Fairness exists – various interests are being treated in a non-arbitrary manner and are receiving their fair hearing
- Citizen recommendations are heard and utilized
- Has direct citizen involvement through commissions, committees
- Minimal bureaucracy and jumping through hoops – ease and responsiveness with requests – e.g., stop signs on streets
- Transparency exists – the community is informed and know what is happening
- Engage the public (will likely be a topic in future discussions)

X. Next Steps – Assignment

Derek requested the commission do the following before the August 8 meeting:

- Review and become very familiar with the existing City Charter
 - Derek noted topics that should be in the charter are those things that will not change over time or circumstance
 - Examples: Staff positions under Department heads may change over time depending on circumstances and should be left to the discretion of the city; salaries will change over time and should not be included – currently the charter has salaries listed for council and it isn't up to date.
 - Commission Chair David Gilbertson accurately noted that a City Charter is the local government constitution.
- Identify areas for review or addition

- Is something out of date or unclear? Bring that up.
- Is something currently included that would be more appropriate as a statute, ordinance, or local law?
- Is something missing that should be discussed? Bring it up.
- Prepare a rationale for WHY the area should be reviewed or addition
- Be prepared as a commission to identify areas for review at the next meeting
- Contact Derek with any questions or concerns at dpokubo13@gmail.com or 303-949-8323.
- David Gilbertson asked: How many municipalities in SD which are Home Rule? There are 11: Aberdeen, Beresford, Brookings, Elk Point, Faith, Fort Pierre, Pierre, Sioux Falls, Springfield, Vermillion and Watertown.
- City Attorney Steve Britzman will be at the next Commission meeting to answer any specific questions regarding state powers that pre-empt Brookings powers.

XI. Adjourn

Next Meeting: August 8, 2024, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., Brookings City and County Government Building

Meeting Focus: Charter Orientation and Identification of areas in review and addition