

**CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
CITY OF MARTINSVILLE, VIRGINIA**

Thursday, April 3, 2025

MINUTES

5:00 PM

Room 208, Municipal Building

Committee Present: Jennifer Bowles, Kimble Reynolds, Barbara Seymour, Gene Teague

Staff Present: Eric Payne, Kaylin Hernandez, Patricia Hairston

Absent: Andy Hall

1. Call to Order

2. Regular Agenda or New Business

a) Introduction of Charter Review Committee Members

- Committee members shared their career backgrounds, encompassing City Council, legal, and healthcare experience.
- Present staff shared their names and titles and offered to assist the committee during the Charter review process.

b) Review of the Purpose and Charge of the Committee

- Members agreed that the Charter Review Committee's primary objective is to modernize, clarify, and strengthen the City Charter while ensuring transparency and broad community input.
- The committee emphasized the importance of:
 - Focusing on low-resistance, high-impact revisions.
 - Ensuring all proposed changes are understandable, non-disruptive to Martinsville's city status, and easy to articulate to the public.
 - Avoiding any perception of behind-the-scenes policymaking by prioritizing openness and inclusivity.
- Committee members supported a phased approach, beginning with readability improvements and progressing to structural recommendations over time.

c) Discussion of City of Danville Charter Review Process

- Members reviewed House Bill 1971 (2025 Session), which repealed and replaced Danville's 1982 Charter.
- Committee members expressed interest in obtaining a copy of Danville's revised Charter and exploring changes made in other

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cities such as Virginia Beach, Roanoke, Charlottesville, Arlington (City and County), and Newport News.

- The group discussed reaching out to VML (Virginia Municipal League) and Virginia First Cities to survey peer localities about their Charter revision experiences.

d) Consideration of the City Charter Revision Process

- The committee outlined a working timeline from April through August 2025, with the following proposed process:
 - Understand the committee's charge and set expectations.
 - Quick Win #1 – Readability & Clarity Review
 - Manual: grammar, syntax, structure, simplification
 - AI-assisted: paragraph rewrites, reorganization
 - Touchpoint with City Council
 - Input solicitation by June 15
 - Stakeholders: department heads, constitutional officers, community survey responses, comprehensive plan, EDA Summit, precinct meetings, etc.
 - Consolidate recommendations by July 15
 - Present to the Council (tentatively August 7)
 - Coordination based on Council meeting schedule
 - Council feedback & incorporation
 - Submit final report by August 22
- Members discussed potential “quick wins” for readability and cosmetic updates in the current session, while reserving deeper structural or controversial changes for future sessions.
- The committee expressed interest in returning for a second phase of work in future years as part of a multi-year effort.
- To enhance transparency and community engagement, the committee proposed creating a short informational video or podcast snippet explaining what the Charter is, what the committee is doing, and how the public can get involved. (Suggested contact: Kendall).
- The next meeting is scheduled for April 10 at 5:00 PM, with a focus on readability strategies.

3. Adjournment