

Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: March 18, 2026

Location: Council Chambers

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chair.

2. Roll Call

Members Present:

Decker, McMillen, Morris, Park, Roberts, Tisher, Weirick, Williams, Copley

Members Absent:

None noted

Others Present:

Law Director – Matt Simpson, City Manager – Bobbie Beshara, Clerk – Joan Challinor

3. Old Business

A. General Charter Updates

Topics Discussed:

- Gender-neutral language throughout the Charter
- Adjustment of Council and Mayor term start dates to **January 1**

Action:

- Law Director to draft appropriate language updates.
-

B. Article I – Name and Boundaries

Motion: To remove Article I from the table

Vote: Passed unanimously

Discussion Summary:

- Consideration of changing “Village of Rittman” to “City of Rittman”
- Recognition that classification (village vs. city) is determined by population under state law
- Concern about unnecessary ballot language and voter confusion

Motion: To leave Section 1.01 unchanged

Vote: Passed

C. Article III – Council

Section 3.01 – Number and Terms

Discussion Summary:

- Adjusting term start dates to January 1
- Addressing transition timing for currently seated members
- Possibility of extending current terms by one month
- Need for clarification from Board of Elections

Action:

- Law Director to draft transition language
-

Section 3.02 – Vacancies / Removal for Absence

Discussion Summary:

- Need for a process to address prolonged absences by Council members
- Example cited of extended illness preventing attendance
- Review of sample language (City of Aurora) including:
 - Removal for misconduct or absence
 - Threshold (e.g., 3 consecutive meetings)
 - Due process protections

Motion: To draft new removal language
Vote: Passed

Section 3.03 – Powers of Council (Employee Evaluations)

Discussion Summary:

- Proposal to require annual evaluations of:
 - City Manager
 - Finance Director
 - Clerk
- Benefits include accountability and consistency

Motion: To draft language requiring evaluations
Vote: Passed

Section 3.06 – Meetings

Motion: To remove from table
Vote: Passed

Discussion Summary:

- Organizational meeting date flexibility
- Replace fixed date with “first regular meeting in January”
- Avoid conflicts with holidays and scheduling

Motion: To draft updated language with flexible wording
Vote: Passed

Executive Session Language Update:

Discussion Summary:

- Replace detailed Charter language with reference to **Ohio Revised Code**

Motion: To revise language accordingly
Vote: Passed

Section 3.08 – Quorum and Voting

Discussion Summary:

- Clarification of Mayor’s voting role (tie-breaker only)
- No conflict identified requiring change

Motion: To leave unchanged

Vote: Passed

D. Article IV – Mayor

Section 4.03 – Legislative Powers

Discussion Summary:

- Update term-related language to align with January 1 start date
 - Desire to consolidate related Charter amendments into a single ballot issue
-

Executive Session Participation

Discussion Summary:

- Change wording from “preside” to “attend”
- Debate over whether Mayor should be automatically included
- Legal clarification needed

Motion: To change “preside” to “attend”

Vote: Passed

Action: Law Director to research mandatory inclusion of Mayor

Section 4.04 – Other Powers

Discussion Summary:

- Proposal to clarify Mayor’s interaction with staff
- Reinforce that authority flows through City Manager

Motion: To make no changes

Vote: Passed

Section 4.05 – Vacancies

Discussion Summary:

- Clarify that Council President may decline appointment to Mayor
- Avoid confusion about dual roles

Action: Language to be drafted

5. New Business

Article VI – Administrative Officers

Section 6.01 – General Provisions

- No changes recommended
-

Section 6.02 – Division of Safety

Discussion Summary:

- Fire and EMS departments have been combined

Motion: To update Charter language to reflect combined department

Vote: Passed

Section 6.03 – Division of Utilities

- No changes proposed
-

Section 6.04 – Division of Service

Discussion Summary:

- Code enforcement responsibilities
- Consideration of zoning inspector role

Conclusion:

- No Charter change required; handled administratively
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Section 6.05 – Law Director

Discussion Summary:

- Current language too restrictive (requires Law Director to handle all cases)
- Need to allow outside counsel

Motion: To revise language to allow outside legal representation

Vote: Passed

Additional Motion: To include “good standing” language for attorney qualifications

Vote: Passed

Conflict Resolution Update:

Motion: To revise language so “majority of Council” applies consistently (removing “members elected to Council”)

Vote: Passed

Article VII – Municipal Planning Commission

Section 7.01 & 7.02 – Terms and Appointments

Discussion Summary:

- The Commission reviewed language regarding the start date for committee and commission terms.
- A correction was identified to change the term start reference to **January 1**.
- Members discussed whether committee appointments should:
 - Be made by the **incoming Council** (after elections), or
 - Remain with the **outgoing Council** in December.

- Concerns were raised about newly elected Council members lacking sufficient time to evaluate candidates for appointments.
- Alternatives considered:
 - Delaying start dates (e.g., April or July)
 - Keeping current structure but clarifying timing and responsibility
- General consensus leaned toward maintaining consistency and avoiding staggered or confusing timelines.

Motion:

A motion was made to **retain Sections 7.01 and 7.02 as written**, with the correction to reflect the appropriate **January start date language**.

Vote:

- Motion carried unanimously.
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Article VIII – Board of Zoning and Building Appeals

Sections 8.01 & 8.02

Discussion:

- No substantive changes were proposed.
- Members agreed the current language remains appropriate.
- Clarification noted that appointment timing aligns with broader Council term adjustments.

Action:

- No changes recommended.
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Article IX – Civil Service Commission

Section 9.01 – Civil Service Commission and System

Discussion:

- Language referencing establishment “upon becoming a city” was identified as outdated.
- The municipality is already a city; however, removing the language may unnecessarily complicate ballot issues.
- Commission agreed to **leave language unchanged** to avoid cluttering the ballot.

Section 9.02 – Composition and Terms

Discussion:

- Current term length of **six (6) years** was discussed.
- Members noted:
 - Six years is longer than other boards/commissions (typically three years)
 - Long terms may discourage participation
 - Shorter terms could increase civic engagement

Motion:

A motion was made to **reduce Civil Service Commission terms from six (6) years to three (3) years**.

Vote:

- Motion carried unanimously.

Additional Clarification:

- Current members will **complete their existing terms** before the new term length applies.
-

Section 9.04 – Police, Fire, and EMS Chiefs

Discussion:

- Language referencing pre–civil service employees was identified as **obsolete**.
 - Determined to be no longer applicable.
-

Section 9.05 – Employees with Prior Service

Motion:

A motion was made to **strike Section 9.05** as outdated and no longer relevant.

Vote:

- Motion carried.
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Section 9.06 – Ohio Law

Discussion:

- Section aligns with state law requirements.

Motion:

A motion was made to **retain Section 9.06 without changes.**

Vote:

- Motion carried.
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Article X– Recreation Board

Discussion:

- Article previously repealed.
 - Clarification provided:
 - Recreation oversight is handled by a **nonprofit board structure**
 - Maintaining governance via ordinance is preferable to Charter inclusion
 - No further action required.
-

Article XI – Cemetery Board

Sections 11.01 & 11.02

Discussion:

- Identified inconsistencies with other boards:
 - No clear **term start date**
 - Unique inclusion of **compensation language**
- Discussion regarding adding a **Council representative** to improve communication and oversight.
- Consideration of meeting logistics (daytime meetings) and feasibility for Council participation.

Motion:

A motion was made to:

- Align Cemetery Board structure with other boards
- Add **one Council member appointment**

- Standardize term language (including January 1 start)
- Remove redundant compensation language if covered elsewhere

Vote:

- Motion carried.
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Article XII – Finance

Section 12.02 – Preparation and Budget Submission

Discussion:

- Current language requires submission “by January 1”
- In practice, budgets are submitted in **December**
- Clarification needed to align Charter language with actual operations

Motion:

A motion was made to revise language to require submission **by December 31 of each year.**

Vote:

- Motion carried.
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Section 12.03 – Salaries and Bonds

Discussion:

- Clarified that Council sets compensation by ordinance
 - Changes do not take effect until the **next elected term**
 - Discussion included pension/OPERS implications and historical context
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Section 12.04 – Contracts and Purchasing

Discussion:

- Governed by **Ohio Revised Code**
 - No changes recommended
-

Section 12.05 – Debt and Tax Limitations

Discussion:

- Section was repealed in 1970
 - Likely replaced by state law
 - No further action taken
-

Section 12.06 – Finance Director

Discussion:

- Clarified appointment authority lies with Council
- Discussion on whether performance reviews are necessary

Determined annual appointment process serves as implicit review

APPROVAL / CONTINUED REVIEW OF CHARTER ARTICLES

The Commission continued its detailed review of the Charter, resuming discussion with **Articles 15 through 17**, identified as the remaining balance of the Charter for review.

Discussion focused on language consistency, prior amendments, and statutory references.

DISCUSSION – SECTION 12.05

A commissioner inquired about the elimination of **Section 12.05** and requested clarification as to why the section had been removed in its entirety.

Discussion followed regarding the historical basis for the deletion. It was noted that the section had been removed in **1970**. Members discussed the possibility that the deletion may have been related to changes in **state law** or provisions now governed by the **Ohio Revised Code** and municipal office code.

The Commission further discussed whether archived ballot language or historical charter records could be reviewed for clarification. It was noted that such records may exist but may require additional time to obtain.

After discussion, the Commission agreed to proceed without tabling the item, recognizing that current law governs where the Charter is silent.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Charter Review Commission was scheduled for:

April 1, 2026

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion: To adjourn the meeting AT 8:13 P.M.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.