

# Minutes

Local Governance Study Commission  
November 5, 2019 - 6:00 pm  
Public Works Conference Room (Room #352), 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor City Hall

## CALL TO ORDER

Committee Members Present: Dr. David Branch (Co-Chair), Steve Berlin (Co-Chair), Gayle Anderson, Kismet Loftin Bell, John Cocklereece, Dr. Jack Fleeer, Katie Hall, Ed Hanes, Cynthia W. Jeffries, Jeannie Metcalf; Absent: Rev. Alvin Carlisle

City Staff Present: Lee Garrity, City Manager; Angela Carmon, City Attorney; Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager; Meridith Martin, Assistant to the City Manager; Scott Tesh, Office of Performance and Accountability Director; Frank Elliott, Deputy Marketing and Communications Director

Others Present: Jim Westmoreland, Retired City Manager; Roger Stancil, Retired City Manager; Mr. Metcalf

### 1. Approval of Minutes from Prior Meeting

*Co-Chair David Branch asked if any members of the committee had proposed changes to the October 1, 2019 minutes. Ms. Kismet Loftin Bell made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was duly seconded by Ms. Cynthia Jeffries. The members present unanimously approved the minutes*

### 2. Presentations from Former City Managers in Other Jurisdictions

- a. Jim Westmoreland (Greensboro)
- b. Roger Stancil (Chapel Hill & Fayetteville)

*Mr. Scott Tesh introduced retired City Managers, Mr. Jim Westmoreland and Mr. Roger Stancil. Mr. Westmoreland worked in Greensboro and Mr. Stancil worked in Chapel Hill and Fayetteville.*

*Mr. Westmoreland spoke to his experience in 2015 when Greensboro was the target of a bill from General Assembly proposing a scenario that Winston-Salem currently has in place now. The structure of Greensboro is eight council members, three at-large and five from districts, with an at-large mayor. The bill would alter the structure to eight council members, all from districts, and an at-large mayor. Greensboro's original structure stayed in place. The City holds elections every four-years on odd years (2021 being the next election). The elected body is non-partisan.*

*Mr. Westmoreland noted that citizens appreciated the opportunity of voting for more representation because with the structure in place, one citizen was able to vote for the mayor, three at-large council members, and their district council member. The proposed bill would only allow the citizen to vote for the mayor and their district representative.*

*Mr. Westmoreland continued with a discussion on other representation topics. He stated that non-staggered elections have a risk of major turnover following any one election. Mr. Westmoreland noted that four-year terms allow elected officials a better opportunity to focus on*

*strategic City goals and priorities. Four-year terms also allow more opportunities to complete the designated goals. He noted that odd year elections have lighter citizen turnout. Mr. Westmoreland's key note from the process he experienced was to obtain as much community input as possible because of the importance in determining the best option for Winston-Salem.*

*Co-Chair Steve Berlin asked Mr. Westmoreland to discuss the roles of at-large members. Mr. Westmoreland stated the at-large council members were more representative of the entire city rather than one specific area. All the members had one equal vote. The process of how each council member conducted business was not different.*

*Mr. John Cocklereece asked if anything related to elections changed in 2015. Mr. Westmoreland noted that elections moved to four-year terms.*

*Ms. Katie Hall asked if at-large campaigns are more expensive. Mr. Westmoreland noted the longer an individual has served on the City Council, the more name recognition the individual has within the community. This would allow the campaign to be less expensive.*

*Ms. Jeffries inquired if it is harder for a new representative to be elected. Mr. Westmoreland stated that candidates can be elected and if they are able to make an immediate impact, their name recognition grows.*

*Ms. Gayle Anderson asked if a sufficient number of candidates were available for at-large and district representation. Mr. Westmoreland noted that enough candidates were available for all the elections he experienced.*

*Co-Chair Branch asked if the non-staggered system caused any dysfunction due to the lack of continuity. Mr. Westmoreland answered noting the importance of city functions on the elected body for continuity. Anytime a change occurs to the elected body, the dynamic also changes. Co-Chair Branch also inquired if a light turnout for elections illustrated a less involved community. Mr. Westmoreland explained that with a smaller turnout, fewer votes were required to make change. Ten votes could determine a district's representation.*

*Co-Chair Berlin requested Mr. Westmoreland expand on the dynamic of the Mayor voting. Mr. Westmoreland responded that all members have an equal voice with the opportunity to vote. He also remarked that the Greensboro community liked the Mayor having a vote.*

*Ms. Anderson asked if a commission was formed to improve the system in Greensboro, what the commission should review. Mr. Westmoreland answered that a commission should evaluate staggered versus non-staggered terms because Greensboro experienced major turnover.*

*Mr. Stancil spoke to his experience in Fayetteville and Chapel Hill. Mr. Stancil noted a city/town manager's role in preserving and protecting the role of the elected body as a whole. In Fayetteville, the elected body consisted of an at-large council with a mayor that could not vote. The City transitioned to six districts, three at-large representatives, and a mayor that could not vote. Mr. Stancil noted that the mayor in this city preferred not being able to vote. With annexation, Fayetteville added three additional districts. At this time the elected body totaled thirteen members.*

*Fayetteville created a taskforce, which was initiated locally, to discuss how representation should occur. Following the evaluation, the City changed to nine total districts, no at-large representatives, and a mayor that votes. Mr. Stancil noted that the members held two-year terms, which felt like the representatives were constantly running for re-election.*

*Mr. Stancil continued with information regarding Chapel Hill, which has eight at-large elected officials and a mayor. He noted that the representation was equitable of different populations in the town.*

*Mr. Stancil closed by providing a few more viewpoints from his experiences. He stated that he had not seen an elected official use district representation as a progression to an at-large position. He noted that a candidate typically would choose the type of position (at-large versus district) with their mindset for representing the community. Mr. Stancil continued noting that district candidates have specific interests, which is illustrated by their focus on the district and at times missing the larger picture for the community as a whole. He stated that concerns could exist relating to underrepresented populations having a more difficult time being elected at-large. Mr. Stancil stated that an eight to nine member board felt sufficient. As more members are added, staff can struggle providing equitable time to all members.*

*Ms. Loftin Bell provided a few thoughts for the group of items to consider moving forward. She noted that the Commission should think about the Voting Rights Act and its impact on Winston-Salem history. How should the Commission approach at-large representation to protect the diversity of the City.*

*Ms. Jeffries asked the former managers about citizen engagement. Mr. Stancil responded that opportunities are provided through social media outlets and regular citizen surveys. He noted that meetings should be held in the community rather than at City Hall. He added that input should be received early in a process and feedback should be provided on how the input was utilized. Mr. Westmoreland answered that Greensboro used similar strategies.*

### 3. Review of Research – Charter Changes in Other Municipalities

*Mr. Tesh led the Commission through recent charter changes in other municipalities. Co-Chair Branch noted that this information provided the Commission with a good idea of the recent trend changes.*

### 4. Discussion on Dates, Times, and Format for Public Input Sessions

*Co-Chair Branch started discussion for public input sessions. Mr. Tesh provided ideas for the sessions, which included hosting one large public hearing in City Hall and/or multiple meetings in various locations within the City. Staff would need a month to adequately advertise the session(s). Ms. Loftin Bell stated that sessions throughout the community would likely be best noting that local churches could serve as hosts. She asked if a survey with a video explanation could be used.*

*Co-Chair Branch stated that receiving direction and interests from the community is important in an effort to make a recommendation for their representation. Ms. Anderson expressed concern if the input is open-ended format, few responses will be received.*

*Co-Chair Berlin asked how the Commission should educate citizens for better public input sessions. Mr. Tesh noted the use of the resident survey. Ms. Meridith Martin provided information on the bond education sessions held throughout the community in 2014 and 2018.*

*Mr. Hanes noted that current elected officials host meetings within their wards throughout the year and asked if these could be used for community input. Ms. Jeannie Metcalf noted the importance of a uniform message as the Commission moves forward. Mr. Cocklereece suggested that the input sessions provide options for community reactions.*

5. Speakers for Next Meeting
  - a. Current and/or former elected officials from other municipalities in NC

*Mr. Tesh noted that the next meeting would host speakers including the former Mayor of Durham and the former Mayor of Greensboro. Ms. Jeffries requested to hear from a representative from Asheville, if possible.*

6. Ethics Training
  - a. Angela Carmon, City Attorney

*Due to time constraints, ethics training was held until December. Mr. Tesh reminded the Commission to complete the Diversity and Sexual Harassment training.*

7. Adjourn

*The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 6:00 pm in the Public Works Conference Room on the third floor of City Hall.*

*The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm with a motion by Ms. Loftin Bell and seconded by Mr. Hanes. The motion was unanimous.*

The next scheduled meeting of the Commission is Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 6:00 in the Public Works Conference Room located in City Hall.