

The 2021 Wicomico County Charter Review Committee met on March 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Flanders Room of the Civic Center, Salisbury, Maryland.

Members Present: Dallas Baker, Julie Bellamy, Robert Benson, Mike Dunn, Doug Gosnell, Katherine Jones, Sharon Morris, David Plotts, Michelle Chesnik, Anthony Sarbanes, Wayne Strausburg, Mat Tilghman, Philip Tilghman, Blair Todd, and Sonya Whited.

Staff Present: Laura Hurley, Recording Secretary, and Paul Wilber, County Attorney.

Mrs. Laura Hurley, Council Administrator for the Wicomico County Council, said this is the very first Charter Review Committee meeting for 2021. She then thanked the Committee members for volunteering to serve on this very important Committee, as well as the alternate members. She said, in accordance with Charter Section 1002, the Charter Review Committee is responsible for reviewing the Charter in full and submitting its' recommendation to the County Council. She said the County Council will then hold Work Sessions and a Public Hearing on any proposed recommendations. She explained, the Council may decide to take action on the proposed recommendations, make further changes, or do nothing. She said, if Council moves forward with any recommendations, they will approve them by Resolution, which will then be forwarded to the County Attorney to certify to the Election Board, which will then go on the ballot for the voters to decide.

Mrs. Hurley said the meeting tonight is more of an orientation meeting for the Committee members, and they will start by giving brief introductions. She said Mr. Wilber, the County Attorney, will then go over the roles of the Executive and Legislative Branches, and the Committee will then discuss selection of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. She said Mr. Wilber will then administer the Charter Review Committee pledge, and there will be discussion on an absenteeism policy, review of the Open Meetings Act, and then they will talk about future meeting dates and times.

Mrs. Hurley said they will begin with the introductions, stating their name and sharing a little bit about their background. She said she will start first and then they will just go around the table.

Mrs. Hurley said she started working in the Council Office in 2015, and before that she was working in the in-house Legal Department from 2008 to 2015. She said, prior to that, she worked for the County Attorney, who was Mr. Ed Baker at that time from 1999 to 2008.

Ms. Michelle Chesnik said she lives in the eastern part of Wicomico County. She said they moved to Wicomico in the 1980s and have been raising poultry since that time. She said currently she and her husband raise poultry fulltime, and she is very active in agriculture with both poultry and grain. She said she is a member of the DCA Board, and for the past several years has chaired the Maryland Agricultural Commission. She said she also serves on the NRCS State Technical Committee under Dr. Taryn Hillsman.

Mr. Phil Tilghman said he is a come-here, and has been here since 1964. He said he and his wife live in Centennial Village on the westside of the County, which is about six miles out. He said he had the pleasure of serving on the County Council for 16 years and is now retired from his heating oil business. He said he is looking forward to this Committee, and thanks everybody else for being willing to do it too.

Ms. Sharon Morris said she is retired from Wicomico County after 30 years. She said she is currently employed at First Shore Federal, and she sits on several community boards throughout the County. She said she is happy to sit on this side of the table for the Charter Review.

Mr. Tony Sarbanes said he is a retired educator, and was a principal at Parkside and Wi-Hi a long time ago. He said he has been a County resident all of his life except when he was in the Service and in college. He said he is retired Army Reservist and served 32 years in the Military. He said he also served on the County Council, and was President of the County Council for four years, but chose not to run for a second term. He said he is looking forward to doing good work here.

Mr. David Plotts said he is the Controller at the Community Foundation, and he is also the Chairman of the City of Salisbury's Parks and Recreation Committee.

Mr. Blair Todd said he has been a lifetime resident of Wicomico County. He said for the last 22 years he has been employed at the Board of Education for Wicomico County, and has had the pleasure of working in both the Construction and Planning Department, as well as the Maintenance Department as a construction manager and a project manager. He said he is thankful for being a part of this Committee.

Dr. Katherine Jones said she is the Executive Director for Bay Area Center for Independent Living, which is a large nonprofit in Salisbury. She said she is also an instructor at Salisbury University in their History Department. She said she started in Wicomico County at Pinehurst Elementary School, graduated from James M. Bennett, and graduated twice from Salisbury University. She said she has four children and all four have attended the public schools in Wicomico County. She said she serves on the City of Salisbury's Disability Advisory Council, and she serves their Governor in the State Rehabilitation Council. She said she also serves on the Executive Committee of the Greater Salisbury Committee.

Mr. Paul Wilber said he is the County Attorney. He said he has been a member of a law firm in Salisbury for the last 41 years and he is here to assist in any way he can with the group's deliberations.

Mr. Wayne Strausburg said he retired from Wicomico County in June 2020 as the Director of Administration from February 2012 until his retirement in June. He said he, too, appreciates the opportunity to be able to serve on this very important Committee.

Mr. Mike Dunn said he is the President and CEO of the Greater Salisbury Committee, and is also honored to be on this Committee with all of these people and sees a lot of familiar faces. He said, as he was telling Joe Holloway on the way in here, he grew up 200 yards that way. He said he hit a homerun down the left field line, which he could never do at Wi-Hi, and it would have landed in his backyard. He said he would have hit it pretty hard, however. He said he is the former President of the Salisbury City Council, and is engaged and involved in a lot of community activities. He said he has served honorably on the Coastal Hospice Board of Directors with his friend Tony Sarbanes. He said it is a pleasure to be here and see what kind of good work they can do.

Mr. Dallas Baker said he is a civil engineer here in Salisbury currently working for State Highway Administration, and is the former Director of Public Works for Wicomico County. He said he has also worked with Salisbury Public Works and several other local civil engineering firms here on Delmarva.

Mr. Doug Gosnell said he was born and raised in Sharptown and retired from Dupont after 38 years. He said he has been President of the Commission of Sharptown since 1998, and is looking forward to working with everybody.

Ms. Julie Bellamy said it is nice to see a lot of faces she knows from years ago. She said she has 17 years of work in Virginia, Delaware and Maryland Counties and local government. She said she is a born-here,

but is a come-back-here too, so that is two boxes checked off. She said she appreciates this opportunity. She said most of her background is in economic development. She said she likes the mix. She clarified, when volunteering for something, she does not know what is going to happen, and she feels privileged to be with this group.

Mr. Bob Benson said he is an attorney here in Salisbury with the law firm of Laws, Insley and Benson. He said among his clients he represents the Town of Delmar and the Town of Mardela Springs, so he has some familiarity with at least municipal Charters. He said he is married and has raised two kids in Wicomico County and lives in the metropolis of Siloam.

Mr. Mat Tilghman said he is a come-here, but he came here when he was a year old, so he considers himself a native. He said he went through the local school system and also graduated from James M. Bennett. He said he retired about nine years ago after 40 years in the independent insurance agency business. He said most was here in Salisbury, but he did a four year stint in college out of the area, and he did a seven or eight year stint in Pennsylvania with a large insurance agency. He said he is married and has two children and four grandchildren.

Ms. Sonya Whited said she is a come-here. She said she came in 2005, and works at Perdue as a Senior Director in the Innovation Center. She said most recently her involvement with the County has been as co-Chair of the Wicomico County-City of Salisbury Complete Count Committee for the Census, so she was very involved in that. She said she is involved in the community a lot as well including being a Board member for the United Way of the Lower Eastern Shore and the Salisbury University Foundation, and she is honored to be here.

Mrs. Hurley said she recognizes a couple alternate members in the audience. She then asked them to stand and introduce themselves as well.

Mr. Rick Pollitt said he had the honor of being Wicomico County's first County Executive. He said he served for two terms and then folks found out he was a democrat and he was invited to seek employment elsewhere, but it was a true honor to be the first. He said he thinks they did a lot of work. He said six of his eight years were taken over by the great recession, whereas, a lot since then has been building progress for the County, but they had to decide what they could do without for most of his term. He said the community came together and it was a real honor to lead at that time. He said he really appreciates being invited to be involved in this exercise. He said he is looking forward to it, so whatever he can do in the way of perspective or experience, he is very happy to share. He said he is a ninth generation resident of Allen, has been President of the Lion's Club five times, and is President of his church council this year, so he is still keeping busy.

Mr. Mark Tyler said he is an Assistant Attorney General, and is one of the two attorneys stationed at the Wicomico County Department of Social Services. He said he and his family are residents of the Tony Tank neighborhood and it is a pleasure to be here to be a part of this process.

Ms. Carol Zimmerman said she is the Director of Aging and Dementia Services at MAC, Inc, and is definitely a come-here, but has gotten to know a lot about this community over the last five years and loves it. She said she lives in Canal Woods and looks forward to one of the members leaving so she can maybe be on the Board.

Mr. David Mitchell said he and his wife moved here in 2006, and he is a retired Circuit Court Judge from Baltimore. He said he had the privilege of being designated to sit on the nine Eastern Shore Counties, and did so at all the District Courts and Circuit Courts for a number of years. He said he also had the pleasure of interpreting some of the provisions of the County Charter in his role as a judge. He said he also is the retired Executive Director of an organization in Reno Nevada, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Board Judges, and he served as the Dean of the National College of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He said both of those institutions are based at the University of Nevada at Reno. He said the University of Nevada at Reno is the University of Nevada, in fact, and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas is the pretender, and the University of Nevada is the land grant college in Reno, Nevada. He said he and his wife have three children and five grandchildren, they live in Hebron and enjoy their experience here. He said it is nice to see many faces that he has known. He said he has been active in the community here on the civic level and the religious level for a number of years and hopes to be able to be an active participant in these meetings. He thanked them for inviting him to participate.

Mr. Chris Eccleston said he is a local business owner, a Military veteran, and a product of the County school system, born and raised. He said he was gone for about ten years, and right after he came back they were in the height of the great recession. He said he has two children and lives in Tony Tank. He said he is honored to be an alternate and is looking forward to learning about the County.

Mrs. Hurley said she would like to recognize Councilmembers who are here tonight, Councilman Joe Holloway and Councilman John Cannon.

Mrs. Hurley said next on the Agenda they will discuss the roles of the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch, and Mr. Wilber is going to go over that with everyone.

Mr. Wilber said he can see there is a wealth of governmental experience on this Committee, and he thinks that is a great thing, and this is just going to be a brief overview. He said, in Maryland he believes there are 11 Counties that have Charters, and nine of those have an Executive and Council form of Government like Wicomico, and two of those have just a Council form of Government. He said, in the materials they will see many Charters, and they can always Google Charters and take a look at how other Counties are operating and addressing the issues that he thinks the Committee will be looking at.

Mr. Wilber said, very basically, the Legislative Branch is the County Council, and their job, as the title states, is to Legislate. He explained, that means they will pass Resolutions, they will pass Legislative Bills, and one of the most important jobs is to adopt the annual budget every year. He said they also adopt a capital improvement program every year, which controls the capital expenditures of the County during that year and for years to come. He said the Council confirms appointments that are offered by the County Executive, and the County Council adopts the personnel manual by law. He said that is a flavor of what the County Council does as the Legislative Branch.

Mr. Wilber said the Executive Branch is always considered to be the Administrative Branch of the Government. He said it will prepare a budget and present it to the County Council, and that is a big and important function of the Executive. He said, once the County Council passes the budget, the Executive administers that budget. He said the Executive Branch is in charge of the various Departments, and oversees the activities of the Departments, and they also oversee the personnel of the Departments. He said one of their significant functions is to direct the Purchasing of the County. He explained, the County

Executive is assisted by a Director of Administration, which is a position Wayne Strausburg filled for several years, and, when appropriate, an Assistant Director of Administration.

Mr. Wilber concluded, those are the basic differences. He said the primary function of the Legislature is to Legislate, and the primary function of the Executive is to administer the budget. He clarified, they will go into a lot more detail as they go through this process.

Mrs. Hurley said next is the presentation of the resource materials that she believes everyone picked up in a nice red binder from the Council Office this week, and she is just going to briefly touch on what is inside of it. She said she is not going to go into any detail, but, if they have questions, feel free to contact her and she will be glad to help them. She said, under the first tab they will see a copy of the existing County Charter, so this is what they are going to be reviewing section by section. She said, after that there are ballot samples and they will see ballot questions that were presented to the voters in 2012, 2016, and 2018. She said this is put in here primarily so they can see how the questions are formatted. She said next they will see the Resolutions the County Council adopted from 2012, 2016, and 2018. She said then they have the 2018 Council minutes, the 2016 Council minutes, and the 2012 Council minutes, which will show the Committee the discussion on how Council approved what they approved by that Resolution. She said then there are the Charter Review Committee minutes from the last Charter Review Committee from 2011 and 2012. She said they were also given a flash drive that has all the Charters from the Executive forms of Government. She said, again, if they have any follow-up questions on any of that information, feel free to reach out to her. She said there is also a list of Charter Sections that the County Council has put together for them to consider as they go through their review of the Charter, and that is in their binders as well. She said Mr. Taylor has put together some memos regarding some of those questions that were posed for the Committee's consideration, and that is also in the binder.

Mr. Wilber said they have prepared a pledge, which is an initial statement that they are organizing as a Charter Review Committee and understand their function. He said he is going to read it, and there is a signature line for everyone, so he will pass it around the tables so they can sign. He then read:

2021 Wicomico County Charter Review Committee Pledge: We believe that being selected to serve on the Charter Review Committee tasked to review the provisions for the Charter of Wicomico County is both a civic duty and an honor. We believe that placing this trust obligates us to act in the best interest of all the citizens of Wicomico County. We, therefore, willingly pledge to set aside our personal, professional, business, and political interests to the higher criterion of what would be best for Wicomico County and its people. To help achieve this, we will engage the public about their concerns as citizens. The final Charter revisions that will be placed before the Wicomico County Council will be the result of our best efforts to integrate and reach consensus on all of the viewpoints brought forward. We will seek to reach all voters so that they will be able to make a fully informed decision on the proposed Charter amendments. Signed this 10th day of March, 2021.

Mrs. Hurley said it mentions that the Committee will engage the public about the concerns of the citizens, and a thought on that would be to allow public comments at the Charter Review Committee meetings. She said that is something they can discuss, but that would be one way to reach the citizens.

Mrs. Hurley said next is discussion on an absenteeism policy. She explained, it is her understanding that there were concerns with the last Charter Review Committee in 2011 about the members attending on a regular basis. She said, in reviewing the minutes, it was discovered there was a member who attended

only two meetings. She then suggested the Committee may want to think about having an absenteeism policy, such as, if someone misses three consecutive meetings they would want to reach out to one of the alternate members. She said the Committee can either discuss that tonight or at a future meeting.

Mr. Phil Tilghman said some organizations he is a member of have a policy that if someone misses three consecutive meetings they are replaced. He said he does not know whether that is an arbitrary number, but they certainly have some qualified people as alternates, and he thinks, perhaps, if someone is not going to attend, and there might be very good reasons for that, but if there are, then a qualified person should take their place. He clarified, that is just his thought.

Mr. Sarbanes asked how many people who are sitting here work every day, to which the majority of Committee members raised their hands. Mr. Sarbanes said there is a pretty good number who work, but some of them are retired, so their schedules might be a little more flexible, but that does not mean they are not also restricted. He said for those who are working he guesses their best time to meet is in the evening, though maybe he should not assume that, but that may be the best time. He said he thinks something to look at is whether that is going to be a hinderance for others, or whether those who are working can get away from work without a problem.

Mr. Baker suggested they establish the schedule before figuring out the absentee policy. He said, if they are meeting every day, for example, and somebody misses three consecutive meetings, it is less detrimental than if they are meeting once a month and then somebody misses, so he would just suggest they develop the schedule first, and then establish the absentee policy.

Ms. Chesnik said she agrees with Mr. Baker.

Mr. Benson then asked, if they replace someone on the Committee, who makes the decision as to who gets replaced? He said the Committee did not appoint themselves, so does the Committee decide who the replacement is, or does the County Council decide that, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, that is a decision for the Committee to make. She clarified, the County Council's role was to make the appointments to the Charter Review Committee, and they have done that.

Mrs. Hurley suggested they move on to the next item, and then come back to this after they talk about the future meeting dates and times.

Mr. Wilber said the next item is review of the Open Meetings Act, which means, quite simply, they are doing the public's business, so State Law requires their meetings, if there is a quorum present, be open to the public so they can come in and observe their activities. He clarified, there are exceptions to the Open Meetings Act which allow meeting in Closed Session, but for this particular Committee he thinks that would be very unusual, so they should just plan that all of their meetings will be open to the public.

Mrs. Hurley said next they can talk about future meeting dates and times. She said this room is available in March, and she will give them some dates for the next meeting.

Mr. Benson then asked what the timeframes are for this Committee overall, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, again, that is up to the Committee itself. Mr. Benson asked if there is an end date, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, the idea was that the Committee would meet for 12 to 14 months. She said the Civic Center is only looking to make reservations 30 days out, and she has some meeting dates for the evening time slots. Mr. Benson said it just seems to him that the amount and number of times they are

going to meet has something to do with whether they are going to meet for 12 months, 6 months, or 14 months. He then asked if it is expected to last 12 to 14 months, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, it is expected to last 12 to 14 months, and the prior Committee met twice a month for most months. She clarified, she thinks during the holidays they dropped down to once a month, but then they picked it right back up again. She then suggested the Committee could try that format if they want and see how it works, and then if they need to meet more than that they could certainly do that.

Ms. Chesnik asked how many months the last group met, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, it was at least 12 months. Ms. Whited said it looks like it was October 24, 2011 through June 12, 2012.

Mr. Benson asked who the camera is from, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, it is PAC 14. Mr. Benson asked if the recordings are live or just taped, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, they are just being recorded. Mr. Benson asked if they have the ability to do Zoom if somebody was sick and could not be here, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she has Zoom, but she would have to work with the IT people for the Civic Center if this is where the Committee is going to want to meet. Mr. Benson clarified, he is not necessarily advocating for it because he is not real thrilled about it, but they are still in COVID and people could get sick, so if they are dealing with absenteeism, somebody might want to participate by electronic means.

Ms. Chesnik suggested they could do Zoom or conference call and it would still give somebody the ability to participate if they are sick or it is a COVID situation. She said she also thinks the Governor is loosening things up right now in the State, but, in light of what could come over the next six months, including what could happen during the Easter holiday, there might be a resurgence, and she thinks they need to have a contingency built in if they cannot meet in person. She said she knows the Maryland Ag Commission has been run by teleconference since last March, and the Delmarva Chicken Association has had only one live meeting since last February, and generally the meetings are either done on Zoom or teleconference for many organizations at this time. She clarified, that is just something to think about.

Mr. Benson asked if Mrs. Hurley can give them some details about whether that would be available, or is she not sure at this point if that is available, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she will have to contact the Civic Center staff just to confirm that they have that ability.

Ms. Chesnik asked if the last meetings were held at the Civic Center or elsewhere, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, Council Chambers. Ms. Chesnik asked if Council Chambers are an option, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, the reason they are meeting at the Civic Center is because of social distancing in order to make sure they are six feet apart. She said, if they release those restrictions they can certainly go to Council Chambers, but until then she thinks it is best to find some other location.

Mr. Strausburg said, for the group's benefit, having been on the last Charter Review Committee, he thinks meeting every two weeks is a good idea. He said, with meeting once a month they find that there is too much of a gap and they have to go back and cover discussion they had in the previous meeting, so he would suggest that it would be helpful in moving the process along to meet twice a month.

Mr. Baker said he agrees with Mr. Strausburg. He said right now Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. seems to work, as they are all here, and they can adjust it as needed if things go sideways, but he thinks every two weeks on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. tentatively here until they find out they cannot meet here. Mrs. Hurley clarified, she can only guarantee it through the end of April.

Mr. Sarbanes said he would like to suggest they also put a time limit on meetings because he has been in too many meetings where it just goes on item by item, and before he knows it he does not even know what he is thinking about or talking about. He then suggested two hours, to which Mr. Baker responded, that is a good idea.

Dr. Jones said, if the Committee is willing to re-look at the evening, some of them need to work two jobs, and Mondays and Wednesdays she teaches at the University and would hate to step aside already. She said she is very motivated to be a part of this Committee, or even alternate nights so it does not impede on anyone else who has nighttime obligations or works more than one job.

Mr. Benson said he has not read the minutes but he has glanced at them, and he noticed that there was a difference with regard to absenteeism between excused absences and unexcused absences. He then asked Mr. Strausburg to explain what the Committee did with regard to that, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, he is fuzzy on that, and will have to go back and revisit that. He said certainly they do not want to penalize someone who is ill or has a family issue, or someone who goes on vacation, so they may want to consider an excused absence as opposed to an unexcused absence. He said absences were an issue with that particular Committee and it caused problems with continuity of discussions and cohesion, so, to the extent that they can minimize absences, he thinks that is a good idea.

Mr. Baker suggested they do another Doodle Poll to figure out what day and time works best for people so they can see the results. Mr. Todd suggested they meet on Thursdays, to which Dr. Jones responded, Thursday would work for her. There was an overall consensus that Thursday was a good meeting day.

Mr. Dunn said today they are meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., but he is wondering if they could meet from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., or 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. if that is an option for those who work. There was overall agreement to meet from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Dunn said, to Mr. Sarbanes' point about the two hour limit, it would be best if they can start earlier. He clarified, he does not think they need to set everything in stone right at this moment in time, but if there is some flexibility on sometimes meeting at 4:00 p.m. and sometimes 5:00 p.m., or even 6:00 p.m., but he just thought he would throw that out there and see if there is potential to begin a little bit earlier when they are all a little bit fresher. Ms. Bellamy said she cannot attend a 4:00 p.m. meeting any day of the week, to which Mr. Dunn responded, 5:00 p.m. seems to be a possibility.

Mrs. Hurley said 5:00 p.m. would be fine for this month and April, but the concern is beyond that, as she knows this room is being taken by the Circuit Court for jury selection. She said it was going to be really tight for the Civic Center to set up this Committee meeting after the jury selection, so they would want to go back to 6:00 p.m. once they get into the month of May if that is a possibility. Mr. Baker asked if there are other rooms they could use, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, no because the State is doing their vaccination clinic, so they are using the entire Civic Center, and this is the only room that is left.

Mr. Sarbanes said there is a very nice jury room in the County Building that looks like it would be big enough for them all to fit. He then asked if Mrs. Hurley knows the room he is talking about, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, no, she does not. Mr. Sarbanes said it is downstairs in the County Court House. He said it is a new room and it is huge, and he thinks they could fit in there in this configuration, but he does not know about microphones because he is having trouble hearing half of the people in here.

Ms. Morris said the United Way also has a large meeting room. Mr. Baker said the Community Foundation also has one, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, he talked to someone about that and they did not feel they could socially distance in that room. He said, with regard to the room Mr. Sarbanes is speaking about, the concern there would be security. He clarified, if they are holding meetings in the evening, court is not in session and they will not have security there, but he can ask Ms. Melissa Batie.

Ms. Bellamy said she thinks it would be beneficial if they had a consistent place and time keeping in mind that every meeting should be open to the public.

Mr. Baker asked if there is a possible connection at Salisbury University or Wor-Wic to use a room, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she would have to reach out to them because she is not sure.

Mrs. Hurley asked if they want to try to meet here for the next meeting and then she can give them an update on a new location at the next meeting? She suggested Thursday, March 25 at 5:00 p.m., to which there was an overall consensus.

Mrs. Hurley said next they can go back to talk about the absenteeism policy if that is something the Committee wants to consider at this point, or would they like to talk about it at the next meeting?

Ms. Chesnik suggested they all think about it and discuss it at the next meeting and then decide how they are going to do it. She said she looks at it as they were appointed by Council, so, if they are going to be unappointed, should that be by the Council? She clarified, she is just asking.

Mr. Dunn responded, he thinks, as of signing the pledge, they are a Committee and the County Council, as Mrs. Hurley just said, has done their job and appointed folks. He said they have alternates, and he thinks they as a Committee can figure out how it is they are going to land on an alternate, but he is hesitant to throw it back to the County Council simply because they have done their job. He said appointments get confusing enough as it is, and they have alternates sitting out there, so he would just like this Body to make that decision. He clarified, he does not know how they would make that decision, but he would be more comfortable keeping it within this Body, and that is certainly allowable.

Mr. Todd asked if there were any people on the last Committee who had to be replaced due to absenteeism, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, he had to be replaced because he went to work for the County. Mr. Todd asked what process was implemented, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, he does not know because he did not follow it after that.

Mr. Dunn said part of the reason there might be alternates is because they did not have a process for when people did not show up, but he is sure it is in the minutes somewhere.

Mr. Sarbanes said, if it becomes a burden for someone they ought to just write a letter and say, due to unusual circumstances they have to drop off, and be pretty straightforward about it.

Mrs. Hurley asked if there is any more discussion on the absenteeism policy, to which Mr. Benson responded, personally he thinks they need to figure out whether or not somebody can participate through electronic means, or whether they even want to allow participation by electronics if that is possible before they make the final decision about the absenteeism. He then asked if the Committee wants to allow someone to participate electronically, to which Mr. Baker responded, that might be determined by their location as to whether or not they have the capability of supporting Zoom. Mr. Dunn said he would be comfortable allowing participation via a conference call or Zoom provided it was

not every single time. He said, if there is a reason, such as being sick, one time or maybe two times, but not as the default position of how it is that someone is going to participate on the Committee.

Mrs. Hurley said there is one more thing that she wants to talk about, and that is the selection of a Chair and Vice Chair. She said the Committee can decide that tonight if they want, or if they want to wait until the next meeting, but they will need to select a Chairperson and a Vice Chair. Mr. Baker asked what their responsibilities would be, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, the Chairperson would conduct the meetings, and then the Vice Chair would be the fill in if needed.

Mr. Strausburg asked if there are volunteers, to which Ms. Morris responded, she was going to volunteer Phil Tilghman, to which Mr. Phil Tilghman responded, no. He said, if nominations are in order, he would like to nominate Mr. Dunn to be the Chair, to which Mr. Sarbanes responded, he supports that. Ms. Morris also supported it.

Mr. Sarbanes asked Mr. Gosnell to be the Vice Chair because that gives them a County presence and a Greater Salisbury Committee presence. He clarified, he might be wrong because, if a lady is interested, maybe he jumped the gun, but Mr. Gosnell has been in government a long time and understands it, if he would be willing to do it. Mr. Gosnell said he really was not looking to do that.

Ms. Chesnik nominated Mr. Benson as the Vice Chair, to which Mr. Benson responded, he has given this some thought, and he apologizes, but he made some notes. He said everybody for the most part in their introductions mentioned that it was a privilege to serve on this Committee, and it really is. He said it is particularly a privilege when he looks around the room at who else is on this Committee. He said it is a wealth of experience on here, and it is just a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge on this Committee. He said they have been asked to volunteer to be on this Committee, and it is potentially going to be twice a month for 12 to 14 months, so it is a lot of time and people are volunteering.

Mr. Benson said he knows for himself that the idea is, when this Charter Committee makes recommendations, he wants those recommendations taken seriously, not just by the County Council, but by the citizens of the County at large, and he thinks the first process in doing that is deciding who the Chair of the Committee is going to be because, like it or not, the Committee Chair is going to be the face of the Committee. He said, if they are going to invest as much time as they are, he wants to make sure the Committee's recommendations, ultimately, are well received, not only by the County Council, but more importantly by the citizens of the County.

Mr. Benson said he noted in the pledge a word was used that he thought about, and that is the word "consensus." He said, to him, in order for this Committee to achieve a good result, as much as possible they are going to have to do that by consensus, and it seems to him that items that do not receive significant majority support are not things that should be considered to be submitted to the Council. He said he does not think things that are voted on 8 to 7 on this Committee are items that likely should be sent to the Council, and should require a stronger consensus before they do that.

Mr. Benson continued, with that in mind, as part of his thought process, it seems to him that the Committee Chairman is the first part of that consensus issue. He said, with all due respect, and he is not pointing out Mr. Dunn, and he was not going to mention his name, but he does not think the Chair should be a person who has already presented positions on this job. He said the Greater Salisbury Committee and Mr. Dunn have already gone out and taken positions, and he thinks the Chair needs to

be somebody who comes to this Committee with an open mind and is willing to sit and listen. He said, with all due respect, he is not sure Mr. Dunn is in that position, though he may be.

Mr. Dunn responded, he is definitely going to interrupt at this point because he is sitting here with an open mind, and he can very much appreciate what Mr. Benson is saying completely and respects that completely, but to infer or imply in any way that he is not sitting here with an open mind he takes, he will not say offense to that, but he is just going to stand up to that statement.

Mr. Benson said he has no doubt that there are many people on this Committee who are able to serve as Chair, but he believes the Committee probably should select someone who is not perceived to have a predisposition. He said, with all due respect to Mr. Phil Tilghman who has already respectfully declined, and other people who have worked for the County, he is not sure someone who has or has had a direct relationship with County Government is the best person to be the Chair in this case. He said he is afraid that person is going to be perceived to represent the existing power structure and he is not sure the citizens in the County are going to view that as an independent person. He said he would ask that the Committee, with regard to consensus, select someone who fits that bill more directly than that.

Mr. Phil Tilghman then asked if Mr. Benson is saying he would be willing to serve, to which Mr. Benson responded, it is not something he wants to do, and he is not asking for it, and he is not saying what he said for that reason. Mr. Phil Tilghman said he understands that, but would Mr. Benson be willing to serve, to which Mr. Benson responded, he would probably do it with great reluctance, but he probably would regret it in the long run. He clarified, that is not the reason he seriously thought about this. He said it just seems to him that, when they get done, they want to make a presentation, and that presentation should be something that the citizens of the County believe has been given the most thought possible and is not something that was done or decided before the Committee even started working, and he is afraid there is some basis to believe that the citizens might not believe that.

Mr. Baker said he agrees with Mr. Benson's comment about the consensus as far as what gets put forward, but he would just simply say, as far as a Chair and co-Chair, maybe they should have a show of hands as to who is actually interested in it. He clarified, he understands what Mr. Benson is saying, but if the type of person Mr. Benson is talking about is not available, then they do not want to force this on somebody who does not want it.

Mr. Sarbanes said the person sitting at this table who has the most experience when they went to a Charter form of government is Mr. Strausburg, as he worked in it for eight years. He clarified, that may be an issue in the same way Mr. Benson commented because Mr. Strausburg was in government. Mr. Strausburg responded, he is still consulting with the County, so he should not do it.

Ms. Jones said she would be interested in Vice Chair. She said, coming from a nonprofit angle and being a proud community member with a background in education and leadership, and being a female leader in this community, she would be interested in being Vice Chair.

Mr. Phil Tilghman said he nominates Mr. Benson again, to which Ms. Chesnik seconded the nomination. She said she just thinks he is someone who is not a great part of the County who might be perceived as any type of bias against any group or any community, and she thinks that is what they really need here because people will always point fingers and say it is because of Greater Salisbury, or this or that.

Ms. Bellamy said she had the privilege of working on the census with Sonya Whited, and she does not know if Ms. Whited would be interested or not, but she has seen her work miracles with bringing people together from across the board. She said she has seen Ms. Whited run meetings and get things done, and do it in a way that either everybody walked away happy or everybody walked away not happy, and that is usually the sign of a good leader when no one is 100 percent happy.

Ms. Whited responded, this is a new arena for her, and she would be interested in Vice Chair, but she does not know this arena, so the engineer in her needs to have a little more background in order to say yes.

Mrs. Hurley said, getting back to the nomination for Chair, she heard nominations for Mike Dunn and Bob Benson. She then asked if there were any other nominations, to which there were none. Mrs. Hurley said she will go around the table starting with a vote for Mike Dunn since his nomination was made first.

Votes for Mike Dunn were as follows: Dallas Baker, yes; Julie Bellamy, no; Bob Benson, no; Mike Dunn; abstain; Doug Gosnell, no; Katherine Jones, yes; Sharon Morris, yes; David Plotts, yes; Michelle Chesnik, no; Tony Sarbanes, yes; Wayne Strausburg, yes; Mat Tilghman, yes; Philip Tilghman said he nominated Mr. Dunn, but was really swayed by what Mr. Benson said about this. He clarified, he is swayed by the fact that perhaps the perception would be that they are a rubberstamp for the Greater Salisbury Committee, and he is a former member of the Greater Salisbury Committee and has great respect, but he would hate for that to somehow color their decisions and recommendations to the County Council, so he is going to vote no even though he nominated Mr. Dunn; Blair Todd, no; Sonya Whited, yes.

Ms. Whited said she understands that the Chair is the face of the Committee, but there are 15 of them who were put on this Committee, so it is not just purely one person's opinion. She clarified, she understands what was stated, and she agrees with that thought process, but it is not just that one person, and they are all going to be in here for two hours for 12 months.

Ms. Morris said she has a question about that because she understands the perception, but the County Council appointed the people who are here, and seven of them, she believes, are already in government or retired from government. She said the question becomes, if that was the perception, why would the County Council have selected all of these people with institutional knowledge of a form of government to serve on this Committee? She said certainly if there were seven people who were retired from County Government, somebody would have to be the Chair, and that could be a person who had retired from the County. She said, with respect to what Mr. Benson said, for some reason the County Council thought it important to have people who have experience in government serve on this Committee.

Mr. Benson said he did not keep a tally, but he thinks the votes are already in, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, the votes are in, and they have 8 yes votes, 6 no votes, and one person abstaining. Ms. Whited asked whether they decided a consensus was two-thirds, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, they have not decided on that yet. Mrs. Hurley said, based on that, she would say Mr. Dunn would be the Chairperson.

Mrs. Hurley asked if there are any nominations for Vice Chair, to which Ms. Whited responded, Dr. Jones said she would accept Vice Chair. Mr. Phil Tilghman said they considered Mr. Benson to be the Chairman, and he did not get the nod, but he thinks he should also be considered as either a co-Chair or

the Vice Chair. Mrs. Hurley asked if Mr. Benson is willing to accept that, to which Mr. Benson responded, yes. Mrs. Hurley asked for any other nominations, to which there were none.

Mrs. Hurley said they will use the same format and start with the vote for Dr. Jones. The vote for Dr. Jones was as follows: Mr. Baker, yes; Ms. Bellamy, yes; Mr. Benson, no; Mr. Dunn, yes; Mr. Gosnell, no. Dr. Jones, abstain; Ms. Morris, yes; Mr. Plotts, yes; Ms. Chesnik, no; Mr. Sarbanes, no; Mr. Strausburg, no; Mr. Mat Tilghman, yes; Mr. Philip Tilghman, no; Mr. Todd, no; Ms. Whited, yes.

Mrs. Hurley said they do not have a majority for Dr. Jones.

The vote for Mr. Benson was as follows: Mr. Baker, no; Ms. Bellamy, no; Mr. Benson, abstain; Mr. Dunn, no; Mr. Gosnell, yes; Dr. Jones, no; Ms. Morris, yes; Mr. Plotts, yes; Ms. Chesnik, yes; Mr. Sarbanes, yes; Mr. Strausburg, yes; Mr. Mat Tilghman, yes; Mr. Philip Tilghman, yes; Mr. Todd, yes; Ms. Whited, yes.

Mrs. Hurley said that is a majority for Mr. Benson as Vice Chair.

Mrs. Hurley then asked if there were any questions for her or Mr. Wilber.

Ms. Whited said there was a very good point made about consensus. She then asked if they want to decide that now, or is that something that is going to be discussed at the next meeting, or will they just continue with majority. She clarified, she just wanted to know. Mr. Phil Tilghman suggested that would be a good agenda item for their first meeting.

Mr. Strausburg said it was mentioned earlier that they want public input. He then asked if it would be advantageous to set up a County email address that citizens could send suggestions or questions to and the group could view those, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, there is one already on the County's website that was set up in 2011. She said she just had the email address changed so the questions come to her email, so that is available to the public to submit questions to the Charter Review Committee.

Mr. Dunn said he would like to make a statement as the newly elected Chair of this Body. He said he appreciates the healthy debate, and they now have himself and Mr. Benson in the Chair and Vice Chair Seats as a result of this healthy debate. He said he just wants everyone in this room and on this Committee to hear him reaffirm what he said earlier. He said, yes, he takes great pride in his daytime job as the President and CEO of the Greater Salisbury Committee, and the Greater Salisbury Committee since 1967 has been deeply engaged in doing extraordinary things for this community. He said they literally established Wor-Wic Community College, they literally established the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, they established the Office of Salisbury-Wicomico Economic Development, and they brought Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore to Delmarva. He continued, they recently created the Wicomico County Education Foundation, and they are in the process of bringing together a Women's Leadership Council. He said, while his daytime job and the Greater Salisbury Committee took a position on some of the points made here in forming the Committee, and some of the things they recommended have been put into place by both the Greater Salisbury Committee and the Chamber of Commerce, he absolutely guarantees positively that he will be running a meeting, first and foremost, as that is the job of the Chair. He said the second job of the Chair is to look for a consensus among the group, and they are going to try to define that, but the commonsense way he looks at consensus is whether there are a whole bunch more heads nodding than a simple majority of heads nodding, and this will be a full buy-in from this Committee. He said his job as much as anything is to be quiet and

recognize the other people in this room, listen to their thoughts and opinions, and guide forward a good process that the citizens of this County can be happy with when they are done.

Mr. Dunn said the other thing he is going to comment on is something Mr. Sarbanes said. He said he does not want people coming into this room wearing a hat that they live in Salisbury, or they live in Mardela, or they live in Sharptown, or they live in Delmar. He said, when they enter this room, they enter this room as citizens of Wicomico County, and it does not matter what their address is. He said, at the end of the day, he is going to ask everyone to leave whatever thoughts they might have about life in Willards, or life in Hebron, or life on Forest Lane in his case, or in Tony Tank. He said, when they come in here, as their charge says, they are here to try to move things forward for Wicomico County. He thanked them for the trust that has been placed in him, and looks forward, again, to just running a meeting. He said, with the help of Mr. Benson and the crew they will set agendas, and he promises they will get out of here within two hours. He concluded, he looks forward to working with each and every one of them.

Mrs. Hurley thanked everyone for coming out tonight and said they will meet again in two weeks. There was no further discussion.



Mike Dunn, Chairman



Laura Hurley, Recording Secretary