

# Columbia County Charter Commission

March 18, 2002

5:30 P.M.

The Columbia County Charter Commission met in a regularly scheduled meeting at the Columbia County Courthouse.

The meeting came to order. Commissioner Tom Brown opened with prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America followed.

## **ROLL**

Deputy Clerk Sandy Markham took roll call.

### Commissioners Present:

Wilton Terrell, Richard Weizenecker, Ray Walker, Leandra Johnson (Chairperson), Mario Coppock, Ozell Graham, Edsel Parker, Tom Brown, David Rountree, Delton Turberville, Seeber Johnson, Emory Bailey and Mike Null.

### Commissioners Absent:

James Poole and Rick Bicknell.

## **MINUTES**

There were no minutes to be approved.

## **GUEST SPEAKERS**

The guest speakers for the evening were the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners. Chairperson Leandra Johnson advised she had asked each member to give approximately a five minute presentation.

### County Commissioner Ronald Williams:

County Commissioner Ron Williams thanked the Charter Commission for the job they are doing. He acknowledged that regardless of how the Charter Commission feels after doing all of their research, they are charged with developing a charter to submit to the citizens for a vote. He opened by saying, "If you have done what you have been asked to do by the charter, you have found that Columbia County is one of the most

financially sound and sovereign counties in the State of Florida, especially compared to charter counties." He advised that Columbia County, just four years ago was ranked as the 59<sup>th</sup> fastest growing county in the United States of America. He was of the opinion that the excellent financial status of the county as fast as it is growing is an indication that there is solid and sound leadership in our current county government. He assured all that when it comes to voting on issues pertaining to the best interest of the county, he votes his conviction as to what is best for the county. "It'd be easy to cast your vote depending on your emotions, or vote with those special interest groups being the most demanding, but I don't." He explained his charge is to look at Columbia County as a whole, and not at the desires of special interest groups.

A perfect example of voting a conviction, although unpopular, was the solid waste issue. He explained that the Board of County Commissioners saw fit, and found it to be in the best interest of the county, to move from the unsightly large green dumpsters, to curbside pickup. Although an unpopular vote, it was still a vote for the best interest of the county. "Today Charter Commission, it's cheaper today, to run curbside pickup, than it was eight to ten years ago to use the big green boxes. Plus, the rate for curbside pickup has not gone up since it's inception eight to ten years ago." He pointed out that leaders in the community do not look for the easy way out, but look at the best interest of the county. Columbia County is the only county that has been able to retire the debt by initiating a tippage fee. We are the only county making money at the landfill, which allows Columbia County to be able to open and close a land fill without having to borrow money. He contended that the commissioners of Columbia County have done an excellent job.

Another example used was the gas tax. He was of the opinion that the Commission voted for the tax based on needs of the majority in the community and what's best for the county, not the handful of people sitting in the audience at the County Commission meetings yelling "no". Instead the Commissioner considered the other 50-60,000 citizens who were not present. He reiterated that a "good" commissioner never takes the easy way out. He explained that many people say that the county spends too much money on recreation, while others say we don't spend enough. He stated his personal belief is that more recreation is needed, and that he stands by his votes regarding recreation. "It takes guts to stand up and vote for what isn't popular with a small group, but in the long run, it works."

He referenced the comments made by special interest groups that are promoting charter government with enhanced industrial development. He invited those groups to produce documentation that proves to the citizens, that this is beneficial. "The same people promoting this is the same group that criticized the Board of County Commissioners for giving Service Zone an incentive package." He told those in attendance that there is a sign in Georgia that says, "The best way to do business in Florida is in South Georgia." He advised Georgia has a one cent tax that goes into economic development, which gives them financial resources to bargain with industries looking to locate in their area. Columbia County tried to negotiate with Winn Dixie to locate in Columbia County, but they chose to go to Georgia. The Board negotiated

competitively, but Georgia's Workman's Compensation rates were more appealing to Winn Dixie than Florida's Workman's Compensation. Unfortunately, the Board has no control over those type of rates, nor does the County Commissioners control the strict Florida environmental protection laws that Winn Dixie was facing in Florida. He pointed out there is more to the equations than appears.

Ocala has over three million dollars in economic development, but they have the tax money to support it, because people pay the large taxes. Commissioner Williams agreed that more industry is needed, but stated it takes raising the revenue taxes to do that. Those wanting industry are the very ones complaining about the taxes.

Many have said that being a county commissioner is a part-time job. Commissioner Williams contended that it's a full time job for an effective commissioner. "I spend more time on county business than I do at Ron Williams Construction."

Regarding term limits, Commissioner Ronald Williams stated, "Longevity makes for good government." He was of the opinion that one of the main problems with the legislative branch in Tallahassee is term limits because legislatures are not able to stay long enough to get experience and make a difference. "It takes four years for a county commissioner to finally begin to figure out what's going on. Term limits will only keep uneducated commissioners in office." He stated in a sense, we now have term limits. You will be voted out when you are no longer wanted. The citizens will keep you as a commission as long as they want you, and get rid of you when they don't want you. Commissioner Ronald Williams feels he has been the most effective, and the best commissioner District I has ever had. He feels strongly that setting term limits would have a negative impact on the county. He offered that it should not change to term limits simply because special interest groups don't like a commissioner because they can't control him. In closing, he asked the Charter Commission to consider the stability and financial soundness of Columbia County, and then ask themselves why we are stable and financially sound, and to ask themselves what's going on. He contended "what's going on" is that there is a small group that are angry because they can't control the commissioners, and have set out to get rid of them.

County Commissioner Dewey Weaver:

Commissioner Dewey Weaver extended his thanks for the job the Charter Commission is doing and for their time and dedication to serve.

Commissioner Dewey Weaver explained that Commissioner Ronald Williams was able to speak on a historical basis, but that he would speak to the Charter Commission on current matters to be considered by the Charter Commission.

Regarding term limits, Commissioner Dewey Weaver explained he was once an avid supporter of term limits, but is no longer. He explained that when he sees the harm that is done by term limits with the state legislature, he is convinced term limits is not a good idea. North Florida has been especially hurt by term limits, because North Florida has no legislative experience or power. The previous legislators were long term and

knew the process. They were chairmen of influential committees. However, term limits has changed that and there is no political power in Tallahassee. Because of term limits, identical projects that are funded in South Florida are not funded in North Florida. There is now a situation where the state legislature looks to counties as a revenue source. They pass along state programs for the county to fund, which drastically harms small counties. Again, that comes from decisions being made by people with no experience.

Commissioner Dewey Weaver compared his district, which has historically changed commissioners regularly, and pointed out that one of the main reasons his district trails other districts in almost every category is because there is never years of experience on the County Commission. He pointed out that there is no school, or formal training a commissioner can take to prepare for the job. Everything that makes a good district comes with time and experience. He agreed that as a general rule, a commissioner is ineffective their first two years on the Board. Also, he added that by setting terms, a citizen is denied the right to vote for someone that they continue to be satisfied with. The current system obviously works well, as evidenced by the last two elections, which resulted in three new commissioners.

Regarding Salaries, Commission Weaver stated that whatever the Charter Commission decides, that he simply asks that they be fair. He indicated that many people say that a commissioner gets paid an outrageous salary for attending two meetings a month. Commissioner Weaver noted that last year, he attended forty-two joint meetings of the Board, twelve meetings with the Town of Ft. White, several constituents' meetings, civic meetings and meetings with other governmental representatives. He reminded the Charter Commission that for each member to seek office requires their personal funds and a significant amount of time. He expressed concern that cutting the salaries would force local elected officials to seek outside funding. He pointed out cutting his salary would not only affect him, but would hurt the people of his district. "You will hurt the young people in my district, because I will no longer be able to set up a scholarship with my salary. You will hurt the small rural churches you may never have heard of. Those churches are also able to benefit from my salary because I've given over \$10,000 of my salary over the past four years. You hurt the civic organizations in Fort White, where there is no large resources to draw from. I also help the youth groups in my district. So, you don't hurt me, personally, by reducing my salary. I still have a good job, but you will hurt the people of my district."

County Commissioner George Skinner

Commissioner George Skinner also thanked the Charter Commission for their time and efforts. He opened by saying, "You will never have an absolutely 'perfect' government, because there are no 'perfect' people, because as long as we are human, we will have shortcomings. But, if you listen to the voice of the people, be a good steward of the tax dollars, and try to run the county government like you would your own household, you will have a pretty good government." He also encouraged the Charter Commission to compare Columbia County to any other county in the state of Florida, and assured them, that they would find Columbia County is one of the best. He closed by

promising to be a good County Commissioner and a faithful servant of those who put him in office.

County Commissioner Kenneth Witt:

Commissioner Kenneth Witt thanked everyone on the Charter Commission for their service and asked that they create something that is fair and workable for the entire county.

Regarding term limits, Commissioner Witt advised that he has researched term limits and explained that though once a term limit supporter, he now believes term limits hurt a county. He agreed that first term commissioners are learners and voting in term limits will keep inexperienced people in office.

On the issue of nonpartisan elections, Commissioner Kenneth Witt indicated that nonpartisan elections would be much more cost efficient for the county.

As to salaries, Commissioner Witt asked that the salaries be set so that qualified people will run for the offices. He promised there are more hours in the job of a County Commissioner than two meetings per month. He offered there are many hours of the night and day he is called out to assist, and many times it involves matters unrelated to a commissioner's job, but, he explained that commissioners must do whatever it takes to help his people.

Regarding residency, Commissioner Witt stated he is of the opinion that a person should be required to live in the district they represent.

He closed by stating Columbia County is financially sound, and he would like to see more money put into economic development.

County Commissioner James Montgomery:

Commissioner Montgomery expressed appreciation for the Charter Commission's service.

He expressed his hopes that when the charter is developed, it will not change much about the county. "I ask myself, what would I change, if I could change something in relation to what we have? Columbia County is financially sound. We have one of the greatest recreation facilities of any county in the Southeastern United States, and it's because the City and the County have been able to work together. I don't think you will be able to find anywhere, where three governmental bodies (County Commission, City Council and School Board) work together as well as we do in Columbia County." He expanded by saying the three entities meet regularly for the good of the county and work very effectively together. He asked of the Charter Commission, "Do you want to change this? What is it that you want to change?"

Regarding salaries and term limits, Commissioner Montgomery asked that it be kept in mind that we no longer live in the 1950's. He was of the opinion that whereas

years ago it was possible to have a few volunteers to serve on a board, to make a few decisions now and then, it's not possible today. This is primarily because county government is much more complex now and requires many hours of attention.

He closed by cautioning the Charter Commission to, "Be very careful as to what you change, because we have something good in Columbia County."

### **Questions/Discussion**

The Chair opened the floor to the Charter Commissioners to ask questions of the County Commissioners.

Charter Commissioner Ozell Graham asked the County Commission what was being done to encourage economic growth in Columbia County. County Commissioner Ronald Williams responded that one of the things that has been done, and is continuing to be done, is that when a company is interested in locating in Columbia County, they meet the company to discuss what Columbia County has to offer. Normally, they want to know if the County has benefits, such as tax abatement, and water and sewer. Generally, these two things can be made available. Commissioner Ronald Williams advised that a diligent effort is being made to put in additional utilities, such as the twelve inch main being put in now, that should circle Lake City. He added that the Industrial Development Director, Jim Poole, responds to all requests showing interest in locating in Columbia County and he sends videos. If the County hears "scuttlebutt" that a company may be looking for a place to locate, or relocate, the Director will contact them to introduce Columbia County.

Charter Commissioner Ozell Graham offered that it appears to him that Columbia

and Mercedes slipped by Columbia County. County Commissioner Ronald Williams responded that the County pursued Mercedes and offered them incentives, but Columbia County could not compete when the legislature of Alabama stepped in and funded Mercedes Benz billions of dollars to locate. He added that despite the County's efforts, the State of Florida would not even consider looking at the Mercedes Project. He pointed out that many times, it goes farther than the Board of County Commissioners, when legislatures step up to the plate. Understandably, Winn Dixie went to Georgia, because it's cheaper. Ocala, as explained before, has a large industry tax that give them more bargaining power. Commissioner Wilton Terrell also commended the Board of County Commission for turning away Sikes.

Charter Commissioner Mario Coppock asked County Commissioner Ronald Williams and County Commissioner James Montgomery how many terms they had held office, and how many times they have run unopposed. County Commissioner Ronald Williams responded that he has served four and one half terms and has run unopposed once. County Commissioner James Montgomery responded that he has served twenty-eight years at the end of his current term, and has never run unopposed.

Charter Commissioner Mike Null asked County Commissioner James Montgomery if he has ever seen any partisan issue that had to be dealt with, specifically where major affiliations may have played a role in decision making, or influence in any type of decision that came before the Board of County Commissioners. The response was "no". County Commissioner James Montgomery added that he is in favor of non-partisan elections.

Charter Commissioner Ed Parker offered as an informational item, that three of the County Commissioners who were once for term limits, suddenly, tonight, changed their minds. County Commissioners, Kenneth Witt, George Skinner and Dewey Weaver expressed that they once believed term limits were a better choice. However, since conducting more research, they no longer believe term limits to be the best for the county. There was mention that a constant turnover in commissioners many times will result in a group of commissioners who are not independent thinkers, simply because they do not have the needed experience to be independent thinkers. Charter Commissioner Ed Parker added that in his opinion, the County Commissioners are overpaid for what they do. He recalled in years past that Commissioners served voluntarily and did a good job. Regarding the solid waste fees, he expressed that that the solid waste program should pay for itself because when enacted eight years ago the price was double the cost of the green boxes. Further, Mr. Parker added that Columbia County has the highest garbage rate in the State of Florida.

Charter Commissioner Seeber Johnson asked if the Board of County Commissioners feels a three term limit would be an acceptable term. He personally feels a commissioner should not get in office and be there from then on. He expressed that three terms would give a commissioner four years to learn the job, and eight years to get the job done. County Commissioner Ronald Williams responded that a charter shouldn't dictate how long a district is allowed to keep their commissioner and it should be left up

to the people he represents, not a charter. County Commissioner Dewey Weaver mentioned again that the election process works. He pointed out as an example, the districts of Commissioner Ronald Williams and Commissioner James Montgomery, which continue to re-elect their commissioners, while the district he (Commissioner Weaver) serves has elected different commissioners in each election in recent years.

Regarding the salary issues, Charter Commissioner Seeber Johnson asked the County Commissioners, "Do you believe your raises should come from Tallahassee or the people of Columbia County? Also, do you think you should get a higher raise than the employees of Columbia County?" Overall, the response indicated that the county commissioners feel they deserve their salary for working all hours of the night and day, the verbal abuse, the calls in the middle of the night and the assistance a commissioner gives to the constituents with unrelated county matters. County Commissioner Ronald Williams said, "We realize all of this comes with the job, and we took on the responsibility for the pay." He concluded that he personally feels the raises should continue per the statutory formula. County Commissioner Dewey Weaver advised that if anyone cared to check, they would find out that county employees received a higher percentage raise than the Board of County Commission members. Also, he stated that the County makes every effort to be fair with raises to their employees.

Charter Commissioner Dave Rountree asked County Commissioners Dewey Weaver and James Montgomery how they would summarize the working relationship between the County Coordinator and the County Commissioners. County Commissioner James Montgomery felt the two shared an excellent working relationship. He stated that the Board is very fortunate to have someone like Mr. Dale Williams serve in this position, and feels his position should be County Administrator instead of County Coordinator. County Commissioner Dewey Weaver agreed, and added that Mr. Dale Williams is under contract, and that his raises are based on individual assessment of each member of the Board. He added he also feels the relationship between the two works extremely well and is pleased they are able to have different opinions and ideas and still work together for the good of the county. County Commissioner Dewey Weaver stated that Mr. Dale Williams is always cognizant of the fact he works for the Board and the people of Columbia County. Finally, he voiced his appreciation for the time and effort Mr. Dale Williams puts into researching and producing all facts to be considered by the Board.

Charter Commissioner Dave Rountree asked County Commissioner Dewey Weaver if he feels the Coordinator's position should change to that of an Administrator. County Commissioner Dewey Weaver responded, "I would not be opposed to the setup at all. I think that all department heads should report to the County Administrator."

Charter Commissioner Delton Turberville stated it is his understanding that due to term limits, there is only one commissioner on the Board of County Commissioners in Suwannee County that has any longevity on the Board. He expressed concern that Suwannee County is on the verge of financial collapse and there is no significant amount



could provide additional information regarding Duval county and their two terms for all elected officials. The response was that Duval and Pinellas County have just began to operate with that system and he wasn't sure it would be possible to observe the effects thus far on a county level. However, on a state level, it has been observed that the House and the Senate simply do not operate as smoothly as they have in prior years. It is not certain whether or not that is due to term limits, single member districting, or some other factor, but obviously it is now a system that is not working as smoothly as it has in past years. He noted that last year sixty-two of the one hundred twenty members in the House of Representatives were freshmen.

Charter Commissioner Ray Walker asked, "Don't you think that almost every voter in New York and Jacksonville would give anything right now not to have ever had term limits?" He mentioned the wonderful job Jacksonville Sheriff Nat Glover has done and how the people of Jacksonville respect and admire him for the job he has done, and how New York citizens hated to see Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's term come to a close.

Charter Commissioner Tom Brown offered that he would be in favor of term limits in congressional districts in large areas where it's just about impossible for anyone to run against the person in office without raising two million dollars. However, he mentioned that careful consideration should be given because by imposing term limits a person's right to vote is taken away.

Charter Commissioner Wilton Terrell asked Mr. Kurt Spitzer if he had seen any type of survey reflecting why elected officials are opposed to term limits. He wondered if their reasons have anything to do with the retirement benefits. Mr. Kurt Spitzer responded that it may be, but with the changes in the Florida Retirement System, that may not be the factor that it once was.

Mr. Kurt Spitzer concluded this topic by advising that Volusia County has opted for a different length of term than the typical four year term that is paired with their districting system.

*Salaries:*

Mr. Spitzer explained that Intergovernmental Relations calculates the salary rate for all county elected officials in the state, according to the state salary system. All non-charter counties follow this system, and most charter counties follow this system for both commissioners and other elected county officials. The formula is population driven. The basic tenants of this system have been in place for almost thirty years. Prior to that, it was a system where salaries were set by special act, and there were great variations in terms of salaries. The charter can provide for a different type of system for county commissioners. If there is interest in doing something different with salaries, there are two general options. The charter could specify that the County Commission sets the salaries for themselves by ordinance. The other option is that the charter could provide for a specific mechanism embedded directly in the charter that the commissioners' salaries would be set at a certain amount. There could also be a provision for the salaries to be adjusted on an annual basis.

Polk County is the most recent county to adopt both charter limits and reduction in commissioners' salaries. Both of those amendments were done by petition. The salary amendment set the salaries for the commissioners at a base that was equal, at the time, to the salaries of the Polk County School Board. There is also a mechanism in place whereby the commissioners can increase their salaries on an annual basis. There is an amendment pending in the Polk Charter Review Commission to increase the salaries to \$49,500 per year, which is less than the state schedule of approximately \$71-\$73,000 per year. Recently, the Polk County Manager went to the Charter Review Commission in Polk County to ask that salaries increases be considered because the Commission has become "very" part-time. It is the opinion of some in the county that the charter has had a negative impact due to the difficulty in obtaining a consensus between entities.

Charter Commissioner Ray Walker expressed his opinion that by using the statutes, it keeps everyone's salaries on a "level playing field." He noted that many times salaries in the seventy thousand dollar range seem high, but not when compared to the responsibility of the job and the number of people in the county. Mr. Kurt Spitzer advised that the intent of the legislature was to create a uniform, statewide system.

Charter Commissioner Ed Parker reminded Charter Commissioner Ray Walker of a conversation between the two of them where Charter Commissioner Ray Walker stated he was overpaid, and so were the rest of the elected officials. Charter Commissioner Ray Walker indicated he had no recollection of the conversation.

Charter Commissioner Mario Coppock asked why it is that a supervisor of elections is paid less than other elected officials, and the County Sheriff is paid more than

other officials. Mr. Kurt Spitzer responded he wasn't certain but someone suggested it could be based upon the responsibility of the job.

Charter Commissioner Richard Weizenecker expressed concern that by reducing salaries, the higher income person would be favored and the lower income person would be hurt in the sense that the lower income person may not be able to afford to run for office. Mr. Kurt Spitzer concurred that it is a common argument against reducing salaries, and limits service opportunities to only those with financial means.

Charter Commissioner Seeber Johnson asked how salary cuts have affected the workability of the county commissioners and constitutional officers in charter counties. Mr. Spitzer responded that the Polk County Manager is of the opinion that the commissioners are simply not as involved, nor are they devoting the same amount of time as they once did prior to the reduction. He also mentioned that off the top of his head, he is not familiar with any county whose charter has reduced the salaries of their constitutional officers.

Charter Commissioner Delton Turberville asked how often salaries are an issue in the charter counties. Mr. Spitzer responded that the Brevard County Charter was amended in 1996, and the matter has not come back before the public since then. In Dade County, it has been in the charter for years, and it has never been changed. In Orange County, it is set by ordinance and there have been increases. He was not sure about Volusia County and Duval County.

In an effort to keep with the schedule, the Chair advised that the topics regarding residency requirements and vacancies will be discussed at the next meeting, but

this and expressed that the Charter Commission is not doing anything to try to get anything from the public. The Chair respectfully disagreed and thanked him for his comments. Mr. Sistrunk complained that the public has been cut off from getting the minutes or anything else, unless we pay for them. The response was any citizen can get the minutes off the website at the library, and if need be they may obtain assistance with using the computer. Moving on, Mr. Sistrunk complained that County Commissioner James Montgomery and County Commissioner Ronald Williams left before he could ask them questions. He expressed he wanted them to know that it was him that said the two of them run the county because of how long they have been in office. He offered that the way County Commissioner Ronald Williams stays in office is that he has approximately 4,000 people that have to vote for him, while County Commissioner Dewey Weaver has 8,000 vote for him. He asked, "Do you think that is fair? That answers your question as to how they are able to stay in office. Once you get into office, it takes you four years to learn how the office works. Then, when you learn how the office works, you begin to learn how to work the office when you are a politician. I'm just going on and on and not accomplishing anything. The same way it's been since I've been up here. You've had one up here that said to get away from the county commissioners. I'd like to ask Mr. Spitzer who in Polk County assigned these commissioners to the charter commission to begin with?" Mr. Kurt Spitzer responded that it was the County Commissioners who appointed the Charter Commissioners in Polk County. Regarding the Charter Review Commission, eleven commissioners were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, and two were appointed jointly by the five constitutional officers. Mr. Sistrunk stated, "The problem here is greed for the tax money. Now if we can get some answers from the County Commissioners of where our tax money is going, that's the problem right there. They don't want to be accountable for the tax money. It's the same way in Washington, it's just on a smaller scale here. If you look at the budget the auditor put out, it covers the year 2000, we're up here in 2002, you're two years behind. Look at

Mr. David Willis addressed the Commission and stated he was of the opinion that the Charter Commission should not consider who may be presently holding a particular position. He explained the charter should be written for the county to use in years to come, because nobody is indispensable or will stay in office forever. There are term limits every four years in place now, and the people will decide their term. He stated he was not certain how he felt about term limits, but feels it will be a Charter Commission decision. He expressed he feels the County Commissioners are administrators over the administrators over the County's budget. He also feels that County Commissioners are employees of the county, and therefore should have their salaries set by the citizens of the county.

Mr. Bruce Drawdy thanked the Charter Commission for their efforts. He mentioned that he was once a supporter of term limits and even voted for term limits. However, after gaining experience and looking back, he feels sure that it is not, and was not the right thing for Columbia County. He used as an example the campaign he and Delton Turberville were in against County Commissioner James Montgomery in 2000. He pointed out that although they ran a very hard race, County Commissioner James Montgomery won the election overwhelmingly, which proved that the people of District V are satisfied and they elected to bring him back. Mr. Drawdy acknowledged that if Commissioner James Montgomery had been forced to leave office after eight years due to term limits, the District would have suffered. He asked that the Board consider this carefully. He pointed out that Property Appraiser Doyle Crews and Tax Collector Ray Walker have been unopposed, which also reflects the county thinks they are doing a fine job. Therefore, term limits will probably not be a benefit. Regarding nonpartisan elections, he suggested it may save a little money, but he doesn't have a strong conviction either way.

The Chair called for additional input from the public. There being none, the meeting moved forward.

#### **Unfinished Business of the Commission**

Charter Commissioner Wilton Terrell expressed his appreciation to the Lake City Reporter for printing the topics to be discussed at the next meeting.

Charter Commissioner Delton Turberville feels the Commission may have made a mistake in appointing a citizen outside of the Commission to serve on the committee that was asked to look into methods of advertising. He was concerned that an appointee outside of the Commission may not have to abide by the rules and regulations of the Commission. He simply asked the Commission consider the matter. The Chair clarified that her intent was that he serve in an advisory position. Charter Commissioners Ed Parker, Seeber Johnson, and Wilton Terrell expressed they thought the Chair's action was totally in line. Charter Commissioner Mike Null was of the opinion that the Charter Commission should be careful not to cloud issues by the actions they take. He felt the fifteen member Charter Commission was appointed to do a certain task and in order to

keep matters clear of controversy, official appointments should be limited to the Charter Commission members. However, he stressed the public's input is still appreciated.

Charter Commissioner Ray Walker felt Mr. H.L. Sistrunk had an excellent idea in providing the charter meeting dates to the churches to post in the church bulletins. He asked if there was a method to circulate the dates. The Chair again clarified that the committee's purpose was to explore the methods of advertising, and report back to the Commission.

Charter Commissioner Ray Walker asked when the Charter Commission would begin their comprehensive study of the county. He expressed he didn't feel the "topics" should be discussed until the study was completed. The Chair responded that since the creation of the Commission, such a study has been conducted. She stated that the discussions and actions of the Commission at each past meeting has been a "study". Mr. Kurt Spitzer informed the Commission that Polk County prepared a final report of their findings and presented it with the proposed charter. A separate management study or management review was not conducted separate and apart from the general study of the Charter. Charter Commissioner Seeber Johnson advised he is interested in consolidating departments of the City and County. He asked how, without doing a thorough comprehensive study, the Charter Commission would be able to determine whether or not that is something they are interested in. Mr. Spitzer responded, "If you want to pursue that subject, we could do some work when we get to that point, but to do an efficiency study, time wise, is a limitation here."

Charter Commissioner Mike Null advised that the meeting dates for all upcoming meetings have been posted on the website. Provisions are being made so that reports can be added by the end of the week. The Charter Commission is now able to receive e-mail through the website. The first question that has come in via e-mail was a request for directions to get to a constitutional officer's office. He advised that he would print out all e-mails with specific questions and comments relating to the Charter Commission.

Charter Commissioner Tom Brown advised he spoke briefly with County Attorney Marlin Feagle regarding the federal court order discussed at the last meeting. He reported he has not had a lot of time to look at it, but in his opinion, that it would probably require a stipulation or an ...*(inaudible)*...order with the court ...*(inaudible)* to provide for any at large districts for areas at large. The way Mr. Marlin Feagle read it was that all...*(inaudible)*... elected by district. Therefore, it could be pursued with the court later on if interested. He also provided that as to whether the Charter Commission would come under financial disclosure, the answer is that the Commission is not required to come under financial disclosure. Finally, regarding voting conflicts, Charter Commissioner Tom Brown advised that according to the Ethics Commission, no appointed public officer shall participate in any matter which may result in their special or private gain or loss, per Florida Statutes 112.3143. He defined "participate" to mean discuss, persuade or vote. If there were such a conflict as defined within the statute, if known ahead of time, then a conflict statement would have to be filed in the beginning of the meeting. If it was not known ahead of time, then that person would abstain from

participating. If it were not discovered until during the meeting that there was a conflict, then you announce your conflict orally and file a written statement. The written statement is then read in full at the beginning of the next meeting. He used as an example the issue of salaries for constitutional officers, which would probably be a conflict for the constitutional officer serving on the Charter Commission. Persons who may be interested in running for an office should be able to participate fully. The written opinion of the Ethics Commission's findings were made a part of the minutes. (See Attached) Charter Commissioner Walker advised that it is his understanding he could discuss matters, but not vote on conflicting matters. Commissioner Brown indicated mere discussion may present a conflict.

Mario Coppock advised he had the opportunity to speak with Mike McKee of the Lake City Community College ("LCCC"), and was informed that the college audio department would be happy to announce meeting dates and topics to be discussed. He also stated that the college would like to have an opportunity to host a meeting of the Commission in the future and televise the meeting. Commissioner Coppock was authorized by the Chair to provide the agenda to the college to advertise.

Mr. Kurt Spitzer contended that the charter is not required to provide for a county administrator. Charter Commissioner Delton Turberville remained in disagreement. The matter will be discussed at the next meeting.

Charter Commissioner Rountree expressed concern that the minutes from the February 27, 2002 and March 11, 2002 Charter meetings are not ready for approval. He brought up for discussion the question as to whether or not the Commission should hire it's own secretary. He asked why the minutes were not ready. The Chair responded that she believes the Clerk's office is overwhelmed with work at the moment. Commissioner Rountree asked if it was known when they would be ready. The Clerk responded that there were eight working days between two of the meetings, and that it is impossible to generate such large detailed sets of minutes that quick without putting the Charter minutes ahead of the Board of County Commissioner's minutes and the S.H.I.P. minutes, not to mention job responsibilities. Charter Commissioner Turberville noted that there was also only one week between this meeting and the last meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Dave Rountree that the Charter Commission solicit the services of a secretary. Second by Commissioner Mario Coppock.

Commissioner Mario Coppock acknowledged that the minutes would have to be overwhelming, and to ask the Clerk to neglect her other responsibilities, and turn out minutes for the Charter is not fair. Additionally, he reminded the Commission that the Board was told clearly that they had money to spend in a prudent manner to accomplish the task set before them, and that a temporary service would be in line. He felt that the job needed someone to devote their time solely to the Commission. Charter Commissioner Ed Parker agreed. Charter Commissioner Tom Brown asked County Coordinator Dale Williams if there were any resources available to assist. Mr. Dale Williams suggested that he would meet with Clerk of Circuit Court DeWitt Cason to see

