

FW: Oct 12 Meeting

Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>
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From: Jim Crawford <votejimcrawford@gmail.com>
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To: Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>
Subject: Oct 12 Meeting

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At the October 12 Charter Board meeting, there were a few issues raised that need serious review.

First, the proposed questionnaire is a great idea, but needs a lot more explanation and details for nearly all of the questions.

Secondly, the report/recommendation by the EMS/Fire sub-committee was excellent, except for one key point. It includes a built-in tax increase. Now, I fully agree more money is badly needed for our Fire and Rescue squads for their equipment and other necessities. However, if the proposed charter includes any tax increase, that will be a deal-breaker for many and give justification for rejecting the charter to those already categorically opposed to any charter.

Under charter, the small, but badly needed fire/rescue tax rate increase must be set by the county executive and approved by the council. The current commissioners could even do that now. I oppose tax increases as much as anyone, but citizens should ask their elected officials to do right by the fire/rescue public safety needs and slightly raise the rate, as the sub-committee recommends, since all of that designated tax money goes directly to fire/rescue. To bake any tax increase into the charter will make it DOA.

Next, the budget committee report was excellent, but any proposed office of inspector general should not rely on the Montgomery County model for Charles County.

Finally, the vice chair, Dottery Butler-Washington did verify that she learned the Board of Education legally cannot come under the authority of a county executive. Indeed no county elected official can be under the authority of any other elected official. While they must all cooperate, their individual accountability is only to the citizens who elect them. That is also the main reason for keeping only an elected sheriff and not allowing a county executive to appoint a police chief.

Moreover, Ms. Butler-Washington stated that her sub-committee on the county executive purposely avoided anything to do with the sheriff, police, or EMS/Fire/Rescue. By ducking that issue, it now puts the burden on the whole Board to determine the crucial, specific limits on the county executive's authority in the area of public safety. (Getting it wrong will be another potential deal-breaker for approving a charter.)

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Crawford
Charter Board, Alternate member