

Comments

Jim Crawford <[REDACTED]>

Thu 12/14/2023 12:13 PM

To: Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>

[External Content Warning] This message is from an external sender. Please exercise caution when opening attachments and hover over any links before clicking.

IF this 2024 proposed Charter is to pass by the voting public, it must adequately address the issues which caused the 2014 failure. **Plus**, the benefits must outweigh the cost and changes.

The Basics: The Charter must be adequate for now and allow for future growth.

- A.** Checks and Balances between the County Executive, County Council, and the Public.
- B.** Balanced power between the Executive and Council, esp. for Budget, Taxes, and Hiring.
- C.** Create an independent Office of Inspector General with appropriate powers.

The 2024 Charter must include at least these **10 Key Points**.

- 1.** Incorporate appropriate **limits of the power** of the County Executive, especially denying the power to appoint a county police force separate from the duly elected County Sheriff, or appoint a county fire chief over the local volunteer squads.
- 2.** Establish **Term Limits** and qualifications for the Executive and Council members.
- 3.** Define a clear, simple, and reasonable method for a **public referendum** on unpopular actions. Signature requirements should not be more than 5% of registered voters and open for 120 days.
- 4.** Maintain the current four voting districts with **8 Council Members** elected **by district** and **1 elected at-large Member**.
 - ▶ To give citizens more local representation, each of the 4 current Districts should be divided into two, i.e., 1A, 1B, 2A 2B, etc. This can be determined by using the precinct census figures for easily establishing the 4 split/sub districts, which would then make a total of 8, with 1 council member elected from each. Members should be elected by district voting for each with term limits of 2 Council terms total for each, regardless of whether district or at-large.
- 5.** Elect a **County Council** designed for adequate accessibility and input by the public including:
 - a. **9 Part-time Council Members** with a limited, shared Full-time staff;
 - b. The **School Board** receives nearly 50% of the county budget, and as such its operating model should be the **model** for the County Council;
 - c. The **chair** to be elected annually by the Council (same procedure as the School Board);
 - d. **Non-partisan** elected members, same as for the School Board;
 - e. Four year **terms** with a **limit** of 2 terms;
 - f. **Meetings** in public, "Robert's Rules of Order" with frequency defined in the Charter, and
 - g. **Super majority** required for **major actions** and defined as requiring **six (6) votes** for over-riding county executive veto, county executive appointments and removals, etc.
- 6.** Establish **transition procedures** and timing for implementing the offices.
- 7.** **Salaries and Benefits**, including **perks**, of the Executive and Council are defined.
- 8.** Define a periodic charter **Review Committee** to make suggestions and amendments.
- 9.** Clearly **define** Authority and Responsibilities of the Executive and the Council.
- 10.** Determine procedure for **filling vacancy** of county Executive and Council members.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Crawford0