

**CHARLOTTE REVIEW COMMISSION
CHARLOTTE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION CENTER
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE
PORT CHARLOTTE, FLORIDA 33948**



Other Boards and Agencies Subcommittee

**FINAL REPORT
December 8, 2021**

Committee Members:

Theresa Murtha, Chairperson
James Adam Riley
Steve Drake
James Coalwell, Alternate

The Other Board and Agencies Sub-committee (OBA) was established at the Charter Review Commission meeting of May 12, 2021. It was chartered to interact with civic entities not covered by other sub-committees but involved in public policy that could be affected by changes to the Charter. Assigned to the initial subcommittee were Theresa Murtha, Joyce Cream, Adam Riley, and Coleen C. Palinski-Ferrara. Theresa Murtha was elected Chair of the sub-committee. Joyce Cream resigned from the Committee on August 11, 2021. Coleen C. Palinski-Ferrara resigned August 17, 2021. Steve Drake was subsequently appointed to the sub-committee and joined at the meeting of August 31, 2021. James Coalwell was appointed to the Charter Review Commission on September 27, 2021 and was assigned to the OBA by Chairman Bill Dryburgh on October 5, 2021.

Introduction:

The OAB held 12 meetings. Four organizational meetings took place in June and July to establish an "Operating Plan" {appended}, a list of boards and agencies to question, and questions to ask. Seven interview sessions were conducted from August 3rd through October 11, 2021. In total, 19 interviews were conducted, representing 15 entities. A complete schedule of interviews and questions from those interviews is appended.

Charlotte County Other Boards and Agencies interviewed:

Representative of the following Agencies, Boards that were invited for interviews:

- The Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce
- The Englewood Chamber of Commerce
- The Charlotte County Chamber
- The City of Punta Gorda
- The Charlotte County School Board and the Charlotte County School System
- Economic Development Partnership
- Charlotte County Airport Authority
- Veterans Organization
- Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte Board of Realtors
- Beaches and Shores Advisory Board
- Charlotte County Tourism Bureau
- Charlotte Desoto Building Industry Association
- Charlotte County Zoning Advisory Board
- Rotunda West Civic Association
- Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association

Representatives of all the above organizations consented and came for interviews except for the Charlotte County Chamber, who was invited but did not come for an interview.

Meetings with individuals from these groups ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. Questions were submitted to each interviewee in advance. Each meeting was publicly noticed, and four citizens from the public did attend offering comments.

The final questionnaire is appended.

After establishing the question list, it was amended based on comments received from interviewees and members of the public attending sub-committee and full commission meetings. Persons that were interviewed prior to changes in the questionnaire were sent the added questions for comment and five out of the seven sent the questions responded with additional comments. Topics covered during the interviews included:

- Term Limits
- Number of Commissioners
- Single District Voting for Commissioner position
- County Administrator Appointment or Elected
- Signature Percentage Required for Ordinance Change Petition
- Casino Gambling Provision
- One Percent Sales Tax
- Business Climate in the County
- County Leadership Forum
- Campaign Financing

- Age and Time Living in County to Run for Office
- Airport Management
- Water Quality Issues

In addition to some entity specific question, each interviewee responded to a general set of questions and a brief summary of our findings follows. Full interview responses can be obtained by reading the posted meeting minutes of the interviews on the Charlotte County Charter Review Commission webpage.

Findings:

Below is a summary of some of the major findings based on the discussions outlined above.

- There was a general consensus that no changes were needed with respect to number of Commissioners, election of Commissioners, election of Constitutional Officers and appointment of the County Administrator.
- There is concern about how the one percent sales tax allocation is administered especially from the Punta Gorda area and the School System. This was not universal. It was recommended that members of the one-percent tax committee should be able to be part of the presentation to the County Commissioners.
- There is interest in a forum for Charlotte County leadership from public and private organizations, although this is not agreed upon universally.
- There is concern that the citizens of Charlotte County be given an opportunity to give input on casino gambling even if legal in the State. Though again, this was not a universal opinion and some agency representatives felt strongly that it was not necessary, if determined at the state level. In addition, it was noted that it may not be an appropriate item for the Charter.
- There were mixed opinions on term limits for Commissioners. Several interviewees thought this should be done, others thought that elections took care of this concern.
- Some interviewees thought age restrictions should be introduced for elected office.
- Some interviewees thought that County Department Heads should be County residents, others disagreed strongly.
- Some interviewees thought that the County should play a role in the composition of the Airport Authority. While the Airport Commission is not under the purview of the Charter, there may be a role on how the Airport is administrated.
- Some interviewees thought that the required percentage of signatures to propose change or new ordinance should be reduced, although most thought 10 percent was about right.

End Narrative:

Recommendations for The Charlotte County Charter

1. Term limits for County Commissioners: Insert after 2.2. "staggered terms of four years" No county commissioner shall serve more than two consecutive terms.

2. Referendum on Casino Gambling: See Sample below of Potential Language:

Casino Gambling Provision Based on Osceola County, Florida

A. Reservation of Power by the Electorate. The citizens of Charlotte County reserve to themselves the power to approve or disapprove casino gambling of any nature within the boundaries of the County. Therefore, if and when casino gambling becomes lawful under the Constitution and Laws of the State of Florida, no action may be taken by the Board of County Commissioners, by the governing body of any municipality, or by any elected or appointed official or employee of either the County or any municipality the effect of which is to authorize, to approve, or in any manner to allow casino gambling to occur anywhere in the County unless and until casino gambling in the County is first authorized by an approving vote of a majority of the qualified electors residing in the County and voting on the question at referendum, and such referendum must be separate and apart from any Statewide or multi-County referendum on the question.

B. Definition. For purposes of this section, "casino gambling" means playing or engaging in any game of skill or chance for money or any other thing of value, regardless of how such game is named, labeled, or otherwise characterized, which game of skill or chance, when played for money or other thing of value, is unlawful under the Constitution or Laws of the State of Florida as of ...

C. Referendum. If and when casino gambling becomes lawful under the Constitution and Laws of Florida, the Board of County Commissioners may offer to the electorate at any primary, special, or general election, and upon petition from the governing body of a municipality in the County, the Board Charlotte County shall offer as soon as practicable to the electorate, the question of whether casino gambling shall be authorized in the County. Upon approval of the question at referendum, the County and any municipality may thereafter allow casino gambling to the extent lawful under the Constitution and Laws of the State of Florida, and at the option of the Board of County Commissioners, this section may then be deleted from this Charter. If the question is disapproved at referendum, it may be offered to the electorate again from time to time, but in no case more frequently than once in any period of 24 months.

D. Enforcement. The restrictions of this section may be enforced by the County, by a municipality in the County, or by any person substantially affected by any violation thereof. E. Municipal Referenda Not Prohibited. Nothing in this section prohibits any municipality in the County, whether by Charter or municipal ordinance, from likewise requiring approval by its voters at referendum before casino gambling may be allowed within the boundaries of the municipality, but any such referendum requirement shall be in addition to, not in substitution of, the referendum approval required by Subsection A above.

3. Balancing of the Composition of the Charter Review Commission to ensure equal representation across Charlotte County.

Recommendations for Future Charter Review Commissions

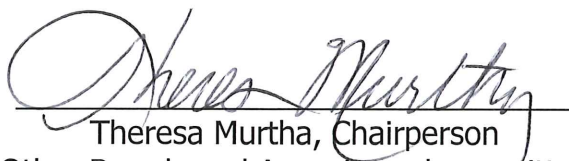
- To make more efficient use of time and encourage participation, there is a need for the ability to conduct interviews using Zoom, Facetime, or other appropriate technology. All sub-committee members could be present at physical meeting and public able to witness interviews conducted on a screen.
- Improvement needed in public awareness of the Charter Review Commission and encouragement to attend meetings and voice opinions.
- Recommend consider making the Commission a Standing Commission between required time for changes to be submitted to the electorate. During the early part of the timeframe, meetings could be less frequent, but would encourage recommendations and study recommendations from the public for consideration. The Commission could also be available as an enforcement watchdog of the Charter.

Recommendations (Other)

- The County should work with a partner to establish a forum/conference for interaction and planning with the leadership of public and private entities in the County to discuss and plan for core issues facing the County, for instance, water quality and quantity.
- Given concerns regarding the one-percent tax administration, it is recommended that procedures be reviewed by a Citizens Committee prior to the next One-Percent Sales Tax Committee start-up and recommendations for changes be evaluated and voted on by the County Commissioners. It is also recommended that a table of future costs associated with each project be used in deciding on projects to select. In addition, we recommend that there be an effort to balance proposed expenditures on projects across the County.
- The Charter is silent on balancing of memberships on the various advisory committees and boards to be reflective of the County as a whole. It is recommended that the selection process for committees and boards consider balancing with members from different areas of the County.

In closing, we want to commend our Administrative Assistant, Andrea Yerger, for her outstanding job in scheduling, recording, and helping to guide the work of our sub-committee.

Submitted by:



Theresa Murtha, Chairperson

Other Boards and Agencies subcommittee

Other Boards and Agencies Sub-Committee

2021-22 Operating Plan

(Adopted 7/28/21)

Scope:

The group will interview civic groups/boards not being covered by other committees within the Charter Review Board. Groups to include the following (may be extended):

- Chamber of Commerce's for Charlotte County, Punta Gorda and Englewood
- Charlotte/ DeSoto Building Industry Association
- Board of Realtors for Charlotte and Englewood
- Enterprise Charlotte Economic Council
- City Manager for Punta Gorda
- Charlotte County Airport Authority
- Superintendent of Charlotte County Schools
- The Charlotte County School Board
- Marine Advisory Committee
- Planning & Zoning Board.

Objectives:

To identify and evaluate potential changes to the Charlotte County Charter that would provide benefit to Charlotte County residents and/or help the focus groups identified in this process.

To obtain insights and suggestions for other key issues facing the County now and in the future.

Strategy:

Hold public hearings with representatives from each of the focus groups with general questions regarding what might be included or not included in the charter and specific questions for their agency as appropriate.

Below are General and Specific Group Questions:

Do you think we should introduce Term Limits in the Charter for our Legislators?

Do you think there should be fewer or more Commissioners on the Board of Commissioners?

Should County Department Heads and members of Administration be required to be county residents?

Should Constitutional Officers be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners or elected?

Should the County Administrator be appointed or elected?

Should the percentage of the required signatures for the public to propose a change or a new ordinance be reduced or increased from 10 percent to another number?

Should the State of Florida pass Casino Gambling, should there be a provision in the Charter for allowing Charlotte County citizens to give input to the County on Casino Gambling?

Should the Charter Review Commission recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help in business development efforts or to improve the business climate in Charlotte County? What changes would you recommend in that regard?

Do you think the County should have a requirement by the Charter to update their comprehensive plan on a specific schedule? Should the Charter require specific elements to be within that plan? For instance, water resources.

Are there any other changes to the County Home Charter that should be considered?

Specific Questions to Organizations:

Punta Gorda City Council – Are there any issues such as Charlotte County geographic jurisdiction for water resources that might be addressed by the CRC?

Airport Authority: Business development is of primary importance at present. Should the CRC recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help the airport in business development efforts?

Water Districts: Do you see a need for desalinization in the future?

Other Boards and Agencies \ Subcommittee Interview Schedule

Interview Date	Time	Interviewee
Tuesday, August 3, 2021	2:15 p.m.	
	3:00 p.m.	John Wright, Director, PG Chamber
	3:45 p.m.	Doug Izzo, Director, Englewood Chamber
Tuesday, August 17, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Bob White, Director, CC Chamber- cancelled
	3:00 p.m.	Gregory Murray, City Manager, PG
	3:45 p.m.	Stephen Dionisio, Sup School Board
Tuesday, August 31, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Lynne Matthews, Mayor, PG
	3:00 p.m.	Robert Hancik, Airport Authority
	3:45 p.m.	Arthur McGinnis, Veterans
Monday, September 13, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Paul Andrews, Airport Authority-cancelled
	3:00 p.m.	Joan LeBeau, Director, Urban Design, PG
	3:45 p.m.	Sharon Neuhofer, Bd of Realtors
Wednesday, September 22, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Suzanne Graham, CD/BA
	3:00 p.m.	Sean Doherty, Tourism Director, PG
	3:45 p.m.	Don McCormick, Beaches & Shores
Tuesday, October 5, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Wendy Atkinson - School Board Chair
	3:00 p.m.	Michael Gravenson, P & Zoning Bd
	3:45 p.m.	Eric Loche, EDP- V-President
	4:30 p.m.	Danny Nix, EDP - President
Monday, October 11, 2021	2:15 p.m.	Pattie Aho, Rotunda West
	3:00 p.m.	John Welsh, PGICA
	3:45 p.m.	Vanessa Oliver, Esq. Airport Authority

**2021 Charter Review Commission
Other Boards and Agencies Subcommittee**

Interview Questions

1. Do you think we should introduce Term Limits in the Charter for our Legislators?
2. Do you think there should be fewer or more Commissioners on the Board of Commissioners?
3. Should County Department Heads and members of Administration be required to be county residents?
4. Should Constitutional Officers be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners or elected?
5. Should the County Administrator be appointed or elected?
6. Should the percentage of the required signatures for the public to propose a change or a new ordinance be reduced or increased from 10 percent to another number?
7. If the State of Florida passes Casino Gambling, should there be a provision in the Charter for allowing Charlotte County to decide on whether to allow it within the County?
8. Should the Charter Review Commission recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help in business development efforts or to improve the business climate in Charlotte County? What changes would you recommend in that regard?
9. Is the project selection allocation process for the One Percent Sales Tax in the best interest of the overall County and fair to every region of the County?
10. Should there be a continuing oversight advisory committee dedicated to this tax?
11. Should there be a need for a Congress or Forum for County Leadership to discuss major long-range planning?
12. Should there be restrictions on the amounts of money raised for financing local campaigns?
13. Should there be a minimum age to serve in a local elected position?
14. Should the county via a referendum or commission vote have a say on any major changes to the airport management? (Currently state law prevails)
15. Should residency requirements to qualify for positions such as commissioner, sheriff, supervisor of elections be longer than the current six months?
16. Should voting for commissioner be restricted to residents within the district the commissioner represents?

17. Are there any other changes to the County Home Charter that should be considered?

Specific Questions to Organizations:

Punta Gorda City Council – Are there any issues such as Charlotte County geographic jurisdiction for water resources that might be addressed by the CRC?

Airport Authority: Business development is of primary importance at present. Should the CRC recommend changes to the Home Rule Charter that would help the airport in business development efforts?

Water Districts: Do you see a need for desalinization in the future?