



2020 ORANGE COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION (CRC)

December 18, 2019

Committee Recommendation

Number and Composition of County Commission Districts, and Full Time/Part Time Commissioners

Committee Members:

Jack Douglas, Chair
Russell Drake
Matthew Klein
Anthony (Tony) Suarez
Dotti Wynn

Summary of Recommendation

Beginning on July 24, 2019, the Number and Composition of County Commission Districts Committee (the "Committee") held five public meetings to hear public input and consider proposals relating to expanding the membership of the Orange County Commission. Additionally, on November 6, 2019, with the approval of the 2020 Orange County Charter Review Commission, the Committee's area of inquiry expanded to include analyzing whether the charter should be amended to expressly provide that county commissioners are full-time county officials. The Committee reviewed the work of a similarly-tasked committee of the 2016 CRC, historical population information, and anticipated costs of implementing proposals for expansion. The Committee further heard from county officials in writing and as invited guests, including Mayor Jerry L. Demings, Commissioners Betsy VanderLey, Maribel Gomez Cordero, Christine Moore, Emily Bonilla, and Mayra Uribe, County Administrator Byron W. Brooks, Supervisor of Elections Bill Cowles, Orange County Chief of Staff Roseann Harrington, and Office of Management and Budget Manager Kurt N. Petersen. The Committee also heard from members of public as to their respective concerns relating to the responsibilities, representativeness and responsiveness of current county commission districts.

Although some members of the public expressed concerns regarding the ability of Commissioners to perform their work with the growing population of Orange County, none of the Commissioners reported that they had difficulty or were unable to fulfill their duties. Mayor Jerry L. Demings also reported that he was unaware of any Commissioner being unable to manage their present duties and he advised the Committee that pursuant to Section 202 of the charter the County is required to reconsider and adjust its districts in response to the 2020 census. In response to Committee questions regarding whether Commissioners had the appropriate number of staff, Mayor Demings reported that they did, but if additional staff are needed, those issues may be addressed through the normal budgetary process. Thus, although the population of Orange County continues to grow, the vast majority of the evidence reviewed by the Committee does not indicate that there is an immediate need for additional districts or to expressly designate the Commissioners as full or part time County officers.

Committee Recommendation

After careful consideration of the information presented, Member Dotti Wynn made a motion that the Committee recommend no amendments to the Orange County Charter be made with respect to the number and composition of Orange County Districts. The motion was seconded by Member Matthew Klein. The Committee voted 5 to 0 in favor of the motion. Member Dotti Wynn also made a motion that the Committee recommend no amendments to the Orange County Charter be made with respect to whether the Board of County Commissioners are full or part-time officers. The motion was seconded by Member Russell Drake. The Committee voted 5 to 0 in favor of the motion.

While the population of Orange County may be growing by as many as 1,000 people per week, and there are a large number of residents per district, the majority of the evidence received by the Committee demonstrates that the growing population has not negatively impacted the ability of the Commissioners to perform their duties nor resulted in racial or demographic underrepresentation. Thus, having carefully considered the comments of current Commissioners, Mayor Demings, other county officials, members of the public, and the estimated cost of increasing the number and composition of districts in 2020, as well as other data presented, **the Committee recommends that no amendments to the County Charter be made with respect to the number and composition of commission districts or to the Commissioners' full or part time status.**