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# Commission has plenty of topics to tackle on charter

STORY UPDATED AT 12:25 AM ON FRIDAY, JUL. 3, 2009



I'm psyched by the Charter Revision Commission.

I know. I know. I get excited by what others might label boring.

But the commission, which officially began its work Tuesday, has the opportunity to help refine our government structure after 40 years of consolidation.

And I have the sense that the 15 members of the commission, appointed by Ronnie Fussell near the end of his term as City Council president, are up to the task.

Their work comes at a critical time when there's much debate about what the role of city government should be.

The city's charter doesn't define that role. Should it?

And how would a consensus be reached when there are widely divergent views?

Government's role is only protection, police and fire. No, government is also responsible for quality of life - parks, libraries, the arts, social services.

The commission might be able to find a way to have the charter ensure an ongoing discussion about government's role, although I think the only way to determine consensus in direction and how revenues should be spent is through the election of a mayor and City Council members.

The topics for the commission to discuss are myriad.

The charter could be amended to guide how our waterfront is developed and to ensure public access. A strengthened Jacksonville Waterways Commission could oversee that.

We have laws, such as our zero tolerance litter law, that aren't vigorously enforced, often because of a lack of money. The charter could demand adequate funding.

The subject of city elections undoubtedly will come up.

Should the City Council terms be staggered so the chance of a massive turnover on council would be less?

Should the city elections be changed from the spring to the fall? That would give newly elected council members more time to get up to speed before tackling difficult budget decisions.

Do term limits work?

There's also the debate about elected vs. appointed officials.

Should mainly administrative positions like the property appraiser, the tax collector and the supervisor of elections be appointed? Should School Board members? Or the sheriff?

Other suggestions for discussion made during Tuesday's meeting included examining the independent authorities, which some think have become too independent and forgetful that they report to the citizens of Jacksonville.

The role of the city's general counsel should be reviewed. Can the general counsel serve the mayor and the City Council without conflict?

Should JEA contribute revenue to the public school system as it does to the city's general fund?

Some want the charter amended to include a police review board.

The commission will have eight months to complete its work and make recommendations to the City Council for changes to the charter.

As I said, I'm psyched.

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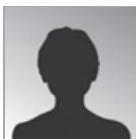
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### Charter Commission

Submitted by Snakepilot on Fri. 7/3/2009 at 8:14 am

I don't see how anyone can't be anything but fearful when a group of politicians meet to change something. There are some needed changes. By answering a few questions we will see the need for them. Why the inordinate growth in Public Safety Dept.? Why have four successive administrations ignored financial actuary reports in the funding of City pensions? Why does the City have to fund "Quality of Life" programs? Who defines them? Are there no alternatives? Why the public Authorities? These services can only be provided by the local government? The private sector has no role in economic development? Why the monopoly of primary and secondary education by the public sector? Why does the City government have to determine what services the free, competitive market gets to provide in public services sector? Why the monopoly of cable TV? Why is the City in the transportation business? Why does the City regulate the cab business? Why do we have a City Building Dept.?

I used to think that when an election was held was important. The solution to the ravages of democratically elected government was dilution of the vote, I thought. Now I know it's

the size of government and the extent of its power that really matter.

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**Thanks for the facts**

Submitted by [CheriCares](#) on Fri, 7/3/2009 at 10:10 am  
Once again, Ron Littlepage is providing information that we can use.

This is contrary to other T-U columnists who rant on and on about things they cannot change.

I appreciate the work (yes, I know that is a four-letter word to some) Ron has done to keep us informed.

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