



MINUTES

Citizens' Budget Review Commission meeting
Wednesday, October 9, 2013 at 3 p.m.

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m.

PRESENT:

Willie Price
Gregory Olma
Edward Kumrow
Joseph Winter
Michael Otto
Scott Bylewski
Michael McFarlane
Thomas Earl Webb
Laythanette Shine
Jennifer Diagostino
Robert Mueller
Timothy Callan, Budget Office
Jeremy Toth, County Attorney's Office
Paul Stachnik, Comptroller's Office

II. Approval of minutes from Meeting #3

Motion was made by Joseph Winter to approve minutes, seconded by Michael Otto. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Discussion of annual report due by October 15

Scott Bylewski: On page 4, change to report by adding charter citation.

Greg Olma: Insert the local law that establishes the deadline on page 2, number 1.

Tim Callan: If the Commission wants the budget deadline to be pushed back, it's too late, the budget books have already been sent to the print shop. If you move the deadline, as a corollary, we didn't talk about at the last meeting, but for your consideration, one of the other requirements of the Charter Revision Commission, was the October 1 deadline when the budget director has to submit revenue and expense to the Comptroller. If you push back budget submission deadline, it

wouldn't make sense to still have October 1 deadline. It would change the budget.

Greg Olma: I think we should eliminate the revenue and expenditure submission to the Comptroller altogether. I don't think it's important to have it in there at all.

Scott Bylewski: In any normal budget process, a month is reasonable.

Tim Callan: From a practical standpoint, from 2006, the Budget Office clocks in budget on October 15 and until November, the Legislature doesn't do anything with it. The practical import of October 1 revenue and expenditure deadline is odd to me. The Comptroller does a major review of the budget. The document is normally published around October 30.

Michael Otto: I like eliminate October 1. Let's say move budget submission to November 10.

Edward Kumrow: I'd go along with that. If you're a typical voter and you're seeing a Commission is waiting until after an election, the whole point is sales tax and you want a more reliable figure.

Greg Olma: We want a budget that's more insulated from the extreme partisanship these days. I don't think policy-wise it works.

Scott Bylewski: Maybe we toss the recommendation to the Legislature without putting a date in there. Maybe they hold hearings and get feedback.

Michael Otto: Are we eliminating the October 1 deadline?

Tim Callan: We have to prepare an eight-page document given to the Comptroller on October 1. It's six expenditure estimates. Then we're required to provide every other revenue line. By October 1, the Comptroller must opine on those estimates by October 15. Two weeks later, we release the whole budget. Then the Comptroller issues a major report detailing the whole budget. The Comptroller does a limited analysis on the October 1 document, then another analysis of the whole budget by October 31.

Edward Kumrow: I don't think we should eliminate it.

Laythanette Shine: At the end of the day, the Legislature is going to do what needs to be done.

Michael McFarlane: If we propose to eliminate, they may disregard that altogether.

Scott Bylewski: Moving on to Section 2

Tim Callan: ECC and library unions don't come out of county budget. ECC and the library are responsible for those revenues.

Greg Olma: But ECC and library budgets are related to county budget, so it does count.

Scott Bylewski: Those contracts may impact the budget, correct?

Tim Callan: In theory, sure.

Scott Bylewski: We're saying if there's uncertainty in the budget, it's a concern. We identify that they're expired and that they could potentially impact the budget. Moving on to section 3.

Michael Otto: They could explain after the fact, but it would be better for them to explain during the budget process.

Scott Bylewski: The intent was that it would be part of the consideration of the Legislature before they make their decision. Should the Legislature have it prior to the vote?

Michael McFarlane: We were talking last time about portions of budget that were pie in the sky numbers.

Michael Otto: Budget Office has this going in.

Tim Callan: We provide explanations through executive message and testimony at the Legislature. For instance, Legislature cut Safety Net last year.

Scott Bylewski: What language would you propose?

Michael McFarlane: What about percentage of discrepancy? That's the variance we're worried about when the Legislature does something different than the budget?

Michael Otto: The initial point is that Legislature should justify any line item they increase or decrease.

Greg Olma: Proposed adding last sentence to section 3 and changing language to first sentence.

Michael McFarlane: Are we concerned with a dollar amount for a variance?

Tim Callan: \$100,000 would be reasonable.

Scott Bylewski: We're talking about variances from the prior budget by the executive. Let's move on to Section 4 for BMRs.

Jeremy Toth: Introduced language for first two sentences for section 3.

Scott Bylewski: Moving on to Section 5.

Joseph Winter: Can this recommendation be realistically achieved?

Scott Bylewski: Some of the information can be difficult, but some could be found. Moving on to Section 6.

Thomas Earl Webb: While these commercial property owners are contesting, no revenue is paid in. They'll pay the lump when it's settled. A lot of them try to settle before the end of the year.

Greg Olma: Proposed clarifying the first sentence in Section 6.

Tim Callan: The rating agencies don't like our dependence on sales tax.

Scott Bylewski: Moving on to Section 7. Pop that out to a new number 7.

Michael McFarlane: Move 7 to a higher spot, make it 3.

Scott Bylewski: Moving on to "Other Commission Concerns."

Michael Otto: Should we reference Martin v. Weiner lawsuit?

Joseph Winter: For Section 8b, do we ask for specific recommendations?

Margaret Hamilton from New Life Residential Center spoke about the programs they provide. Expressed concerns for the women that they serve because of recent budget cuts, effective November 1, cutting their budget from \$664 per person per month, cutting it to \$169 per person per month. Last year, they served 42 women. They simply can't function. They can't keep the doors open with this cut. Money comes from Department of Social Services.

Scott Bylewski: Any other thoughts?

Greg Olma moved to approve the annual report with the changes discussed. Thomas Earl Webb seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the report was approved unanimously.

IV. Adjournment

Greg Olma motioned to adjourn, seconded by Willie Price. All members were in favor.