

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO  
CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION MINUTES  
FIRE STATION #5**

**MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2003 5:30 P.M.**

**MAYOR DON CARROLL**

**MAYOR PRO-TEM RON GRIGGS**

**COMMISSIONER INEZ MONCADA**

**COMMISSIONER DON COOPER**

**COMMISSIONER ED COLE**

**COMMISSIONER JOHN ROBERTSON**

**COMMISSIONER MARION LEDFORD**

**CITY MANAGER PAT MCCOURT**

**CITY ATTORNEY WILLIAM KIRSCHNER**

**CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK BETSY KIDWELL**

**Call Meeting to Order and Roll Call.**

**Mayor Carroll, Commissioner Moncada, and Mr. Kirschner were absent. Member Mike Leon of the City Charter Committee was absent and all others were present.**

**1. Discussion with the City Charter Committee regarding revisions to the City Charter.**

Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs turned the meeting over to Harold O'Dell, Chairman of the City Charter Committee. Chairman O'Dell reviewed the committee's recommendations to date. He stated that they recommend the City Commission go to five districts instead of seven at some point in the future, specifically in 2012, which would be after the next census. Discussion continued regarding what process would be used to accomplish this. Chairman O'Dell noted that the committee was not researching the logistics of implementing this recommendation. He added that the committee is also strongly recommending an increase in compensation to the Commission.

Commissioner Robertson asked why they suggested going to five districts. He said we just redistricted in the last couple of years. Chairman O'Dell replied that we went from four districts and three at-large to seven districts. Commissioner Robertson discussed the expense of redistricting. Chairman O'Dell said that you need to tie compensation to the districting. He said if you increase the compensation to a decent wage and reduce the number of commissioners you would cut down the expense. He added that this would assist in getting an adequate number of qualified candidates in every election. He said we are not doing that now. He stated that the committee felt that reducing the number of districts and increasing the compensation would assist in getting more candidates to run. He added that we do not want to increase the compensation so much that it becomes the reason people run. Commissioner Ledford questioned the reduction of representation for the people. Discussion continued regarding adequate candidates for elections and the expense of being a commissioner. Member Wilson said the idea is that we do not want people to decide against running for the Commission because they would lose income. He stated it should not cost someone income to serve the City. Commissioner

Robertson discussed how much time is required to be a City Commissioner. It was discussed that it takes a lot more time than the two regular meetings per month. Commissioner Ledford discussed why the compensation increase item had failed in the past. Chairman O'Dell said the local newspaper published a headline saying the "Commission wants a 700% increase", which tainted the public. He explained that this is the reason they are proposing the increase take affect in 2008. This way there is an election in all districts at least once before the increase takes affect. Commissioner Ledford said he thinks if the compensation was taken care of, more people would run. Member Baker explained that one of our reasons for tying it to the County's salary at a percentage is that their wage is set by the State. The serving Commission would automatically get an increase or decrease when the State passes a change.

John Garst, a member of the audience, said he sees two changes that could threaten this (he referred to the Charter). He suggested they take these items to the citizens before we do the whole Charter recommendations. Discussion continued regarding the way to put the items on the ballot for the citizens. Chairman O'Dell explained that you do not put it on the ballot as one issue, but you separate all the issues out individually.

Member Doughty discussed the way judiciary raises were initiated. He stated that they have to tell the people of Alamogordo about the amount of the increase. He added that he does not like tying it to the County Commission. He said they are two separate issues. He said that he does not think either the people of Alamogordo or the people of the County understand the importance of the two different commissions. He explained that the only way the judiciary got anything done was to have the legislature set a salary for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and then everybody else below it took a percentage of the income. He said that really reduced the amount of time they had to spend to get an adequate salary for those positions. He stressed that whether there is seven commissioners or five commissioners they need a raise.

Discussion continued regarding the amount of budget the City has, the size of the community, and where the City ranks compared to other communities regarding Commission size and compensation. It was the consensus that we were similar in number of commissioners, but next to last on compensation. Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs discussed the possibility of being a commissioner hurting someone's personal business interest.

Chairman O'Dell informed the Commission that the committee has discussed that the only way a compensation change would ever work is if the committee helps to market it in the community. Commissioner Cooper agreed. Commissioner Ledford asked if the committee supported it 100%. Vice-chairman Riordan replied affirmatively. Member Doughty stated that they want to sell a compensation package irrespective of what the Commission thinks the makeup

of the Commission ought to be. He said he thinks they are all vested in doing this.

Discussion continued regarding giving the voters options and letting them decide. For example, the ballot could ask if they think the Commission should receive an increase equal to 50% of the County Commission, 30% of the County Commission, or stay the same. Chairman O'Dell told the Commission that the committee also discussed the salary being the same no matter how many meetings they attended. He explained that the system would take care of itself if they did not show up for meetings. Member Doughty emphasized that somebody needs to convince the voting public that it is time to do something to compensate the commissioners. Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs noted that we need to be careful not to clutter the ballot. Member Doughty replied that the committee has considered this and compensation is what they all see as very important.

Mr. John Garst, a member of the public, stated that the newspaper does not cover the City. He said people do not read it. Discussion continued regarding how information disseminates through the town. Mr. Garst noted if they wanted to publish something, it should be done in the El Paso Times. Chairman O'Dell stated that if Ellis does not take a picture of what is going on, the newspaper does not know about it. Member Baker said it has been the committee's informal polling that the City population does not know what County Commissioners are paid. He added that they have no idea that they are paid significantly more than what our City Commissioners are paid. He said when you tell them, their mouths drop and they are speechless. Mr. Garst said he would be inclined to ask them if they know where the County courthouse is. He added that very few people know where it is.

Commissioner Cole said he thinks compensation does need to be looked at and there should be some options on the ballot. He indicated that he prefers the number of commissioners not be reduced, but does not have any heartburn with putting it on the ballot. He said the salesmanship by the committee would be important. Discussion continued regarding the committee selling the concept to the public through various contacts.

Chairman O'Dell noted that the other changes the committee discussed included language cleanup, such as removing the information about the election of 1998. Member Hunt said they were also going to recommend that the Charter Committee meet every 5 years instead of 10.

It was clarified that the committee suggests the Commission separate out each issue that goes on the ballot. Member Doughty said there is a logrolling issue by putting it all as one item. It was determined that the committee recommended four different issues. Those issues are 1. Language cleanup, 2. Compensation, 3. Number of Commissioners, and 4. Frequency of City Charter Committee review. Chairman O'Dell said there should be four issues with some options.

Commissioner Ledford said that he feels 100% of the committee needs to support whatever is done. He asked if you go 5 or 7 commissioners and go 30%, 50%, and no change as options, how are they going to tell the people what they support. Vice-chairman Riordan said he would push for the maximum amount. Member Doughty echoed the same comment. Member Brabson discussed the marketing techniques. Discussion continued regarding selling the issues. Member Baker noted that they wanted to getting the sitting commissioners off the hook. Member Coleman said the 700% newspaper headline was an embarrassment and an affront. Member Doughty replied the way to deal with it is to meet with the paper in advance and bring them on board. Commissioner Cooper said but by the time you get back to them, they forgot what you said.

Commissioner Ledford clarified that if the Commission chose to not put the number of Commissioners on the ballot as an issue, the committee would still support the compensation issue. Members of the committee responded they would support the compensation issue irregardless of any other issues. Commissioner Robertson discussed the expense of redistricting. There was a brief discussion regarding districts and recalls. Chairman O'Dell noted they did address the issue in the proposed revision. Member Doughty noted there are some issues that were considered, but they are not going to come up often enough to put them at a higher preference than the compensation issue. Commissioner Cole agreed it is important to not put to many questions on the ballot. He feels the two issues, compensation and number of commissioners, are the only ones that should go on the ballot. Member Doughty noted that the committee will give their recommendations and the Commission will decide what goes on the ballot.

Member Wheeler stated that we do not want to confuse the electors by having too many questions on the ballot. He said one problem he has thought of is if we put three or four compensation schemes on the ballot, then none of them will get enough votes to amend the Charter. He said he thinks we need an up or down vote. He added that we should dig in our feet, say 50%, and have a vote on it. He explained that if we split the votes between people who think they should get 30% and the ones who think they should get 50% we could end up with neither one getting a majority of the votes. Chairman O'Dell agreed. He asked the committee what they thought about changing the year to 2012.

Member Brabson moved to amend the recommendation to be effective in the year 2012. Member Doughty seconded the motion. All voted "aye." The motion carried by a vote of 13-0-0.

Mr. McCourt suggested the committee look at Article 11, Section 1 saying a majority of the Commissioners instead of saying three as the committee was proposing so that the number of commissioners becomes a mute point. Discussion continued regarding what would constitute a majority if there were six commissioners. It was resolved that four would be a majority.

Vice-chairman Riordan moved to approve this change. Member Caruso seconded the motion. All voted "aye." The motion carried by a vote of 13-0-0.

Chairman O'Dell asked what amount they wanted to present to the Commission as the recommended compensation amount. Member Baker said his recommendation as the subcommittee chair on the issue is 50% as in the current recommendation. Chairman O'Dell clarified that they are not going to offer options, but the Commission could opt to do so.

It was determined that the committee would go before the Commission on May 13, 2003 with their recommendations. Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs said the clean up language amendments need to be on there. Ms. Kidwell noted that the item on the ballot regarding redistricting would include something to the effect to change the applicable language in the Charter to make it compliant with five districts. Commissioner Ledford asked if anyone knew how long it would take them to read that in the poll. Chairman O'Dell said that is why you have to have it set before they walk in there that they are going to say yes, yes, yes. Commissioner Robertson asked if we were still confusing the public by saying 50% because like Member Baker said, most of the public do not have the slightest idea what the County Commissioners make. Chairman O'Dell replied we should not tell them. Member Caruso said we could tell them. Chairman O'Dell said you do not want to tell them dollar figures. Commissioner Robertson asked if it would be better to put a dollar figure. Chairman O'Dell replied negatively. He added the reason is that the Commission salary would change automatically when the State legislature changes the County Commission's. Commissioner Cooper asked what was wrong with that. Commissioner Robertson replied there is nothing wrong with it, but what he is afraid of is the 50% would confuse a lot of the voters even it was 5%. Chairman O'Dell responded that if you say \$10,000, which is about what we would be talking about, you are going to defeat it. Member Doughty said what Commissioner Robertson means is today it would be 50% of \$20,000, which would not mean it would change every time the legislature changes it. He said we are going to be asked that question. Commissioner Robertson replied that was right. Member Doughty said it is going to be public one way or another. Chairman O'Dell agreed. He asked Commissioner Robertson if he was saying to put the dollar figure in there too. Commissioner Robertson said he is asking if it would be better to. He said he knows they are going to confuse the public when you say 50%. He stated they are going to say 50% of what. He said they will say they do not know and then the next door neighbor will say, "Well I heard they were making \$50,000 a year." Commissioner Robertson said they are very confused people. Member Baker said that is why the marketing effort on the committee's part is vitally important. Commissioner Cooper said you will have to spell it out. Member Doughty said the City attorney will draft the ballot questions. Chairman O'Dell said you would have to get an attorney involved. Member Doughty asked if they are setting it at a number or a percentage or are they setting it to continuously build and telling the voting public what it is percentage wise at the time they vote. Commissioner

Robertson replied he thinks it would be a good idea because the mentality of most of the people that live here is not too high. He clarified that a lot of them do not understand. Chairman O'Dell said you want to tell them, but you do not want to put it in the Charter because then the only way it is ever changed is going back for another amendment. Commissioner Robertson said he did not say put it in the Charter that way. He said put it out that way so they know. Member Doughty agreed.

Chairman O'Dell said there are four issues. He said they would let the Commission prioritize them.

Discussion continued regarding selling compensation. Chairman O'Dell said it was frustrating when they went to sell the golf course expansion. He said they went to all the civic organizations in town. He said the ignorance they encountered by some people was amazing. He said they cannot understand that if a town does not grow, every person in that town who pays taxes ends up paying more every year because people want raises and things. He said they could not grasp this concept on taxes.

Discussion returned to selling the compensation issue. Chairman O'Dell noted that one thing that would quickly ruin this whole thing would be if the newspaper went to any City commissioner individually and said, "What do you think about this 50%?" He said if that commissioner said it was too much we would lose the whole thing. He told them if they believe it is too much they should not say so.

It was determined that the committee would not meet again and the proposed changes would be emailed or faxed to the members. Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs suggested they just list the recommended changes.

Commissioner Cooper moved to adjourn the Commission meeting. Commissioner Robertson seconded the motion. All voted "aye." The motion carried by a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

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Mayor Donald E. Carroll

ATTEST:

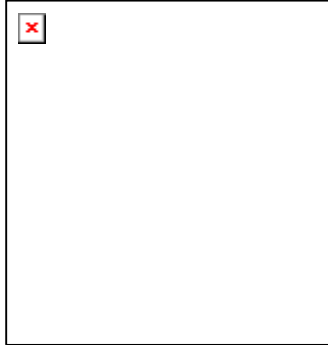
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Chief Deputy Clerk Betsy C. Kidwell

(SEAL)

(Prepared by Chief Deputy Clerk Betsy C. Kidwell)

Approved at the City Commission Regular Meeting of May 13, 2003



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