

MEMORANDUM TO CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

DATE: January 7, 2020
FROM: Jennifer Merino, City Attorney
RE: Numbered Commission Seats

RELEVANT CHARTER PROVISIONS:

Sec. 3.05: - City commission; powers; composition.

There shall be a city commission with all legislative powers of the city vested therein, consisting of five (5) commissioners, one (1) of whom shall be mayor, who shall be elected at large by the qualified electors of the city as provided in sections 4.01 and 4.07. The remaining four (4) commissioners shall be elected to designated numbered commission seats.

ISSUE OR QUESTION:

Reverting to un-designated at-large commission system, i.e. no seat numbers or specific seats, top vote-getters get available seats. As proposed by Mr. Garson:

Sec 3.05 At the last Charter review, the method in electing Commissioners was changed. It went from an open voting where the top two vote getters became Commissioners to numbering seats and having candidates run for a specific seat. The stated purpose of this change was to increase the likelihood that a candidate from the west side of Hallandale Beach would get elected to the Commission. I said at the time that this change would have the exact opposite effect, and I think that has been borne out. I am wholeheartedly in favor of making it more likely that a candidate from the west side of Hallandale Beach is on the Commission, seat numbering is not the solution. I believe that a return to the old system of elected the Commission would give the best chance of someone from the west getting on the Commission. It has happened a few times in the past, and there is no reason to think it could not happen again. The other extremely negative effect of this change is the attacks on opponents. When you have one major opponent for the seat you are running for, attacking him/her would benefit you. If there are four or five strong candidates, attacking one would not be as helpful, and possibly would hurt because it could move supporters of the candidate you attack to the other candidates and not you. Increasing the chance of a Commissioner from the west and cutting down on negative campaigning are two great arguments, in my opinion, to go back to the old system.

Setting up districts would also accomplish this, but there are problems. Without adding to the number of Commissioners, the best way to set it up would be for three Commissioners by district and one at large if there is no change to the Mayor, or two at large if the Mayor becomes appointed. If we were to set up districts with equal number of residents, much of the east side would still be part of the 'West.' I know voting precincts 1 and 2 are on the beach, and 3 and 4 are Three Islands. I am guessing that precinct 5 is Golden Isles and the area west of Three Islands, either to Federal or E. 1st Ave. If we are trying to equal out the population, precinct 5

would have to be included in the west, thus defeating the purpose. I would assume we could draw boundaries for where a candidate had to reside, with one being west of Dixie highway, but that would guarantee for the people who live west of Dixie, more political representation than their numbers deserve.