
METROPOLITAN CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING

March 11, 2024

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The Metropolitan Charter Revision Commission met in Council Committee Room 1 of the Metropolitan Historic Courthouse on March 11, 2024. The following members of the Commission were present: Dewey Branstetter, Chairman; Hal Hardin, Vice Chairman; Eileen Beehan, Susan Short Jones, Lorinda McLaughlin, Jim Murphy, and Joy Sims. Staff members present were Legal Counsel, Nicki Eke and Metropolitan Clerk, Austin Kyle.

Chairman Branstetter began the meeting with some general comments and proceeded to open the public comment period. Three individuals were heard in opposition and one individual was heard in favor of the subject matter of the proposed Charter revision petition. Chairman Branstetter recognized Ms. Heidi Basgall, who filed the proposed petition, to offer some brief comments. Chairman Branstetter closed the public comment period.

The next order of business was the Commission's consideration of the minutes of the February 22, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Jones moved to approve the minutes, which motion was seconded by Commissioner Beehan and approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission (7-0).

The Metropolitan Clerk announced certain appeal rights as required by Metropolitan Code of Laws Section 2.68.030.

Chairman Branstetter called for consideration by the Commission of the proposed procedures for petition-initiated Charter amendments drafted by the Department of Law. Legal Counsel Eke provided a summary of the proposed procedures. After discussion, Commissioner Murphy moved to adopt the procedures, which motion was seconded by Commissioner McLaughlin and approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission (7-0).

Chairman Branstetter opened deliberation on the proposed petition as revised on March 4, 2024. Legal Counsel Eke confirmed that the revised form of the petition complies with the requirements of the Charter. After some discussion, Commissioner Hardin moved to certify the revised petition, which motion was seconded by Commissioner Jones and approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission (7-0).

Commissioner Murphy moved to include a letter submitted by Jasper Hendricks, Chair of the Board of Fair Commissioners, and printed materials provided by Mr. Shane Smiley into the official record of the meeting as written comments, which motion was seconded by Commissioner Sims and approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission (7-0). Both documents will be recorded in these minutes.

There being no further business before the Charter Revision Commission, the meeting was adjourned by motion properly seconded and unanimously approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission (7-0).

Respectfully Submitted,

AUSTIN KYLE, SECRETARY

March 8, 2024

Mr. Dewey Branstetter
Chair, Charter Revision Commission
1 Public Square, Suite 205
Nashville, TN 37201
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Dear Chairman Branstetter,

I am writing to express concerns about the proposed Charter amendment that would remove Auto Racing and add Affordable Housing to the Fairgrounds campus. As Chair of the Board of Fair Commissioners, I am concerned about its financial and operational implications.

Firstly, the petition filed with the Commission contains inaccurate information that could mislead the Commission and the public. The statement that there will be no financial impact on the Metropolitan Government because affordable housing units are already being built at the Fairgrounds is erroneous and may mislead voters.

Additionally, the proposed amendment creates a future obligation on the Fairgrounds to build affordable housing units, threatening our ability to meet other Charter obligations. No housing units are being built on the Fairgrounds under the control of any department of the Metropolitan Government. Privately owned affordable units may satisfy the requirements of this proposed amendment in the near term, but there are no guarantees in place that those units will remain affordable indefinitely. Unless such a guarantee can be obtained, a future Fair Board will be required to build housing units to meet this Charter mandate. Hence, I request an analysis to assess the future obligation of building Metro-owned affordable housing to meet this proposed charter requirement. Before approval, this analysis should be included in the proposed petition's fiscal impact statement.

Furthermore, the Fairgrounds currently receive revenue from racing operations at the speedway and the parking revenues from that site for other events held on the Fairgrounds property. The speedway requires significant capital improvements to remain operational. Removing Auto Racing from the Charter could jeopardize Metro's ability to find a suitable industry partner with the financial means to make those necessary repairs. Without a partner, Metro will be financially responsible for capital improvements. The racing and event parking revenues could be at risk if no investment is made. Therefore, I request an analysis of this financial impact to be conducted and included in the proposed petition's fiscal impact statement before approval.

With the recent additions to the Fairgrounds campus, once the proposed mixed-use developments have completed construction, the speedway infield and concourse become the only practical site to stage a fair, which is our obligation under the Charter. Further efforts to repurpose the Fairgrounds into new developments threaten the ability to meet all the Charter obligations—even if auto racing is no longer one of them.

In conclusion, amending the Metropolitan Charter is a serious proposition. I urge the Commission to thoroughly study and consider the proposed amendment's financial and operational impacts on the Fairgrounds. I also request that those impacts and a good faith statement of economic impact be included in the proposed petition before it is presented to Davidson County Voters for their support. Therefore, I request that the Commission only approve the petition once an accurate financial impact statement is provided.

Sincerely,
-Jasper

Jasper Hendricks, III
Chair, Nashville Fair Board of Commissioners

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Background: The founders of the new nonprofit, Fairground Preservation Partners, began meeting late this summer to put together a three-part redevelopment plan that they say honors the site's history and makes the area more desirable.

- Those founders include singer-songwriter Ruby Amanfu, artist Carrie Tillis, attorney and former fair board member Kenny Byrd and music licensing executive Josh Collum.

Metro Legal / Nashville Soccer Club submission to chancery court assuring adequate parking for charter protected events.



A rendering of the proposed fairgrounds redevelopment proposal.

Image: Courtesy of Fairgrounds Preservation Partners

