

New Smyrna Beach City Commission Special Meeting August 27, 2019

All Commissioners were present. The purpose of this special meeting was to hear a presentation by an expert from the Florida League of Cities about the charter review process. Since it is time for New Smyrna Beach to go through this process, it was very helpful.

The main points emphasized were as follows:

1. The purpose of the charter is to provide a general framework for the structure and operation of the city government but should not include specific details that might change in the future that would be managed through the ordinance process. The review generally takes place every 7-10 years.
2. The charter can include a preamble which would be where the city could include a vision statement about the desired environment and character of the city that the citizens want to preserve.
3. The City Commission should appoint a Charter Review Committee consisting of up to 15 members to bring recommendations for charter changes to the Commission for review. Most of these committees will last 9-12 months. The City Commission will then decide what they want to include on the ballot.
4. Multiple public forums should be held over a period of months to allow for citizen education and input. The timing of these forums is important since New Smyrna Beach has many part-time citizens who still vote here.
5. Consideration of the timing necessary to complete all these steps of review is important so the Commission can decide which election should include these items for a vote. In reality, it can be an 18-24 month process from start to finish.
6. The Review Committee as well as the City Commission should remember that generally “less is more” – they should not include too many specifics in the charter so that it will stand the test of time until the next review.
7. No state review or approval of the charter is required.