



AS WE SEE IT, the global coronavirus pandemic that has claimed so many lives and threatens our economy continues to overwhelm our thoughts and actions. It is not surprising that this year's review and revision of our City Charter has fallen off the radar for many of us.

Paradoxically it should be right under social distancing as a focus. Our current Charter is a relatively weak document and has been so since the 1990's when language protective of low densities was removed by ordinance. In the absence of language that guided our elected officials in the way growth in our city should be managed we have experienced development projects that have exceeded our infrastructure. This cannot continue without our risking destroying those very attributes of our city that drive our unique economic engine. Each of us has a vested interest in having a Charter that is protective of the qualities that create our special sense of place.

To date, the Charter Review committee has been devoted to "housekeeping" or operational issues. Addressing these sections in a responsible manner will result in a more user-friendly Charter and were an important part of the review mandate to the committee from the City Commission. Additionally, the Charter Review Committee is also dedicated to strengthening our Charter by adding sections that are specific to maintaining our sense of place.

Sections to be added to the Charter that provide guidelines for achieving that vision are currently under consideration and were inspired by a Preamble that was added to the City Charter at the beginning of discussions by the committee. The Preamble expresses eloquently the commitment of the citizens of New Smyrna Beach to maintain and preserve our unique city as it grows and changes in a manner consistent with its history and environment.

The Residents' Coalition has summarized the discussion and changes made at each meeting to date ([March 12](#), [February 27](#), [February 13](#), [January 23](#), [January 9](#), [December 19, 2019](#), [November 7, 2019](#)) and will continue to keep you updated as these final chapters are written. We hope that by the time the revised Charter is submitted to you for a vote in November 2020, you will be fully informed as to its content. The Charter is our local constitution and making certain that its language will be protective of the city through times of crisis as well as times of plenty is the responsibility of each of us.