



City of Grover Beach

PRESS RELEASE
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GROVER BEACH COUNCIL SEEKS CITIZEN INTEREST IN DRAFTING CHARTER MEASURE FOR A VOTE

GROVER BEACH, CALIFORNIA - On Monday night, December 16, 2013, the Grover Beach City Council opted to move forward with drafting a City Charter. Once drafted, the Council will need to review and approve the draft and then the Charter would need to be submitted to voters for approval. Following the decision to move forward with a Charter Measure, the Council decided to solicit citizen interest in assisting the Council with the drafting of the Measure. This will be the City's second attempt to become a "charter city". A similar effort was narrowly defeated at the ballot box by a mere 4 votes during the last general election in November 2012.

Currently Grover Beach is a "general law" city and is subject to the general laws of the State of California. In the case of a general law city, state law serves as a city's constitution. Once approved by the voters, a locally developed charter would become a city's constitution. A charter provides a city with greater control over the government matters that are considered to be municipal affairs. Bottom line, becoming a charter city would mean that Grover Beach would have greater independence and flexibility from Sacramento.

The Council's decision to move forward with the Measure followed a presentation from a volunteer citizens committee chaired by local resident and former Council Member/Mayor Steve Lieberman. The citizens committee recommended the Council move forward with a Charter Ballot Measure. Last spring, Lieberman and current Council Member Bill Nicolls volunteered to form a citizens committee to independently review the issue and report their findings to the Council. Lieberman told the Council it was his plan to "assemble a diverse and representative cross section of our community to discuss, debate, and deliberate the pros and cons of placing a Charter City initiative on a future election ballot".

He noted, "At times our discussions were heated and emotional. I am proud of the fact that we were able to have open and honest debate and remained respectful, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with this group of neighbors and business owners." Membership in the citizens committee was broad based, consisting of 9 individuals with strong ties to the community, including:

Rob Ehlers - Construction Trades,
Linda Fielder - Local Business Owner,
John Laferriere - Resident,

Steve Lieberman - Resident,
Bill Nicolls - Council Member,
Louis Robles - Construction Trades,

Michael Ross - Contractor,
Mariam Shah - Resident, and
Bob Perrault - City Staff Liaison

In addition to recommending that the Measure come to the voters, the Committee made several other key recommendations to be incorporated into a draft charter:

- The charter should emphasize the separation and independence of the City from the State as it relates to Home Rule, (the authority of a local government to prevent state government intervention with municipal operations) and the charter should provide the City with full authority over municipal affairs.
- The charter should provide for the City's ability to refuse to implement state-mandated and unfunded programs.
- The charter should include provisions that will permit the City to establish its own purchasing and bidding procedures when it is in the City's best interest to do so.
- "Think First" provisions need to be included in the charter that would provide for incentives to "local businesses "and encourage the hiring of local employees".

In concluding his presentation to the Council, Lieberman indicated, "This is all about providing the right tool to move the City of Grover Beach forward while increasing the City's ability to manage its own affairs with increased independence from the State."

During the public discussion, some individuals indicated a concern that a charter could allow a City the authority to exempt locally-funded projects from paying workers a prevailing wage. Citizen Committee members and City staff were quick to assure the Council that with the enactment of recent state law, charter cities that use the prevailing wage exemption would lose all state financial and grant funding assistance. According to City Manager Perrault, "Given recent state law, the City would be restricted from using the prevailing wage exemption. For us the issue is moot".

The Council is now seeking the assistance of residents in taking the recommendations of the committee and creating a draft charter. The Council indicated the "drafting committee" should consist of five individuals, including a Council Member. The Council is establishing the committee to ensure the community is actively involved in the creation of the charter document. As Mayor Peterson noted, "The Charter, if successful, will become the City's constitution and citizen participation in its development is absolutely essential".

Members interested in serving on the Committee should submit a letter of interest to the City Management Office at Grover Beach City Hall, 154 South 8th Street, Grover Beach, CA 93433 by no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 15th. The Council is expected to review the letters and appoint the committee during the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 21, 2014. The Citizen Committee report and recommendations presented to the Grover Beach City Council is available during regular business hours at City Hall or on the City website at: <http://www.grover.org/DocumentCenter/View/4131>. For additional information, interested citizens may contact the City Management Office at (805) 473-4567.

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