

Tucson Charter Change Coalition, (TC³)

3497 N. Campbell Ave., Suite 703
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July 2014

New Hope for Improving City Government

Dear Tucson Charter Change Coalition (TC3) Members:

We're writing today with encouraging news: **Improving the quality of Tucson city government through charter change is back on the city's agenda.**

WHY WE'RE HOPEFUL

- On June 3, the mayor and city council created a committee to review Tucson's city charter and recommend needed changes to it.
- Also on June 3, the mayor and council accepted a 3-1 matching grant from the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona to hire an expert consultant to work with the committee from its first meeting through completion of its work in the spring of 2015.
- Last night, the mayor and council on a unanimous vote chose Dr. Raphael Sonenshein to be the consultant to the charter review committee. **This is the first time the council has hired an expert consultant to work with a charter review committee.** That alone is reason for hope, but in addition, Sonenshein is especially well qualified.

WHY WE'RE CONTACTING YOU NOW

SALC continues to view structural changes in city government as being critical to the city's living up to its potential as a dynamic, economically solid, magnificent city where we and our children can thrive.

Consequently, we believe it is important for the community to show immediate and sustained support for the charter review committee:

- First, it is essential that the members of the charter review committee feel they are engaged in important work, as we believe they are.
- Second, it is important to make the committee's work well known and transparent in the community, giving the committee a life of its own, and increasing the likelihood that the mayor and council will want to place the committee's recommendations on the November 2015 ballot for voter approval.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME THAN IN PREVIOUS EFFORTS

As you will remember, the voters in 2010 turned down the four charter change propositions our coalition asked the city to place on the ballot. And in two charter change efforts before that, the previous city councils ignored recommendations from the very charter review committees they had appointed. So the history of Tucson charter change efforts is not encouraging.

Even so, we believe this effort is significantly different and has a better chance of succeeding. That is because this time the mayor and council members have created the conditions that can lead to a successful committee. To summarize, they have:

- Appointed highly qualified people to the committee (their names are listed below);

- Provided the committee with the flexibility to study and recommend any charter changes the committee members deem to be important;
- Instructed city staff to support the committee;
- Ensured the committee will be independent;
- Accepted the matching grant from the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona;
- Hired an expert consultant to advise the committee; and
- Set a nine-to-twelve month deadline for the committee to complete its work and bring charter change recommendations to them.

The hiring of a consultant is especially important, and Raphael Sonenshein has an impressive background:

- He is the Executive Director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State Los Angeles.
- He served for two years as executive director of the City of Los Angeles Appointed Charter Reform Commission, and he subsequently wrote a book about the effort that was published by Princeton University. At the beginning of their work, the committee was warned that the city council would not approve any charter changes. Despite that warning, the committee’s work was accepted – which resulted in the first significant reworking of the L.A. charter in 75 years.
- He has served as a consultant to charter reform committees for five other California cities: Glendale, Burbank, Culver City, Huntington Beach, and Anaheim.
- He has a BA degree from Princeton and an MA and Ph.D. in political science from Yale University.

Sonenshein’s job will include helping the committee leadership and city staff to plan the committee’s schedule, explore the most relevant charter issues, develop necessary research, deliberate openly and collegially, and to present a final report to the city council with recommended charter changes for the November 2015 ballot.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP ENSURE THE COMMITTEE’S SUCCESS

- Use your organizations’ newsletters as well as social media to inform your employees, friends and associates of the charter review committee’s work and progress. Help make sure the public is aware of the committee and has high expectations for it.
- Speak positively about the opportunity for Tucson that the mayor and council are providing by impaneling a charter review committee, and give credit to the people on the committee who are serving.
- Attend at least one of the committee’s meetings and actively participate at public forums conducted by the committee.
- Attend and express your opinions at any TC3 meetings and encourage others to become members of the TC3 coalition.

NAMES OF APPOINTED MEMBERS

Here are the names of the charter review committee members appointed to date. One more member will be appointed by the city manager.

- Jeremy Christopher
- Randi Dorman
- Chuck Ford
- Tannya Gaxiola
- Stephanie Healy
- John Hinderaker
- Edna Meza-Aguirre
- Kasey Nye
- Lenny Porges
- Bonnie Poulos

- Tom Prezelski
- Diana Rhoades
- D. Grady Scott
- Joe Yee

ONE LAST ITEM

Obviously, the charter review committee's success is not guaranteed. But here is one thing we can say with certainty: If the leadership of this community does not participate, if we don't act on this opportunity to improve city government, if we don't vote with our time, energy and resources, then improvement will not be as likely – not in 2015, and not thereafter.

We will update you periodically, and we welcome your input – about anything we are doing or plan to do. Please let us know what you think.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lovallo, Si Schorr, Sarah Smallhouse
Co-chairs, SALC Good Governance Focus Area Committee