Sullivan County Charter Commission | Meeting Minutes

Date: October 7, 2026
Location: Government Center, Legislative Hearing Room
Call to Order: 4:02 pm by Co-Chair Bill Liblick

I. Attendance & Administration

- **Members Present:** Bill Liblick (Co-Chair), John Conway (Co-Chair), George Rose, Paul Barnett, Moreen Lerner, Camille Johnston, Ken Walter, William Chellis and Mark McLewin
- **Members Absent:** None
- **Recording:** It was noted that the proceedings were recorded for the public record.
- **Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve previous minutes by Moreen Lerner; Seconded by Camille Johnston. **Motion Carried.**

II. Operational Discussions

The meeting commenced with the introduction of new members, William Chellis and Mark McLewin. Mr. Chellis is an attorney, is from Jeffersonville, and is also a Pastor in White Lake. He is interested in Constitutional Law and related matters.

Mr. McLewin is a business owner who has had rental apartments, a real estate agency, and the Neversink General Store. He moved to Sullivan County in 1993, and has said that Sullivan County has survived in spite of itself. He feels it's moving in the right direction, a good direction, ad wanted to participate in that.

At this time, Mr. Conway gave a short reiteration of the history of Sullivan County for the new members, to wit, going back 100 years to a Board of Supervisors form of government until 1995, with the legislature coming into effect in 1996. The current Charter Review Commission is the third such commission, with few substantive changes having been made. The questions we're facing today are not new…they date back to more than 100 years and are repeating time after time. We shoot ourselves in the foot a lot.

Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission, in the past, had read the Charter, and then the County Codes. For the new members, Co-Chairman Liblick stated that the Commission can only make recommendations to the Legislature, and they vote to adopt the recommendations.

Mr. Liblick stated that the last Commission got the insertion of the Sheriff's Patrol into the Charter. Two (2) other items recommended at that time was staggered terms, which the Legislature was for, but it could not be done because the Governor, Senate, and Assembly had even/odd election years 3-year terms and 4-year cycle. **Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission needs to look at this again once it has gone through the Charter, and make another recommendation because everyone should not be up at the same time, and everyone was unanimous last time.** Another item that was voted on at that time was County Executive, after discussions with various guest speakers from other counties, with the exception of Mr. Walter. The Legislature did

not act on it. **Need to discuss and look at putting in an amendment to the Charter saying that people can go and get petitions.**

Mr. Liblick further stated that considering what's happened with the nursing home, after speaking with elected officials and members of the public, they feel it's important that the Commission focus on the County Executive issue again after the Commission gets through the other stuff. The nursing home issue has pressed it from a lot of people, and the feeling is that if Sullivan County had an elected leader, maybe things would have been different. It's always 9 votes, one person gets one vote, and it's always politics. You're listening to the County Manager and the various department heads for the day-to-day operation, hired by the Legislature. The Ulster County Charter Review Commission was mandated to do the work on bringing the County Executive to the voters. **Mr. Liblick believes that is a model that needs to be looked at, and reminded the Members that he will email everyone the Ulster County information that he's received.** The person behind that in Ulster is willing to speak with the Commission, and Nadia Rajsz had spoken to some people. It is an education process for the Commission.

Moving back to the Charter issue, Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission needs to bring in guests for feedback. We need input from our elected officials about what's working, and not working for their offices. For example, the County Clerk, County Treasurer, District Attorney, Town Supervisors, and members of local Villages who are elected, to see how the Legislature and Charter works well with the elected officials. One example Mr. Liblick gives is that the County Clerk cannot ask for a raise except when their term begins. Mr. Reeves wants to speak at the Commission and make some suggestions. Ms. Lara, the County Treasurer, would also like to speak.

Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission must do research and speak to other counties that have the County Executive form of government, County Managers and Board of Supervisors and see how their leaders are leading their County governments.

With regard to a change in the Charter, Mr. Walter stated that in §C2.02(O) regarding counsel of governments, he would like them to meet quarterly on the third Thursday, or the same Thursday as a full Board meeting. (Added to notes).

Mr. Walter also stated that another issue was the way Commissioners are appointed – solely appointed by the County Manager. He believes the County Managers should get a list down to three (3) and meet with the Committee Chair that oversees that division and one (1) minority party member so we always have a Democrat and Republican present for the hiring process and vote. A dismissal should be a full Board vote, not just by the County Manager. Mr. Walter stated that he's seen too many good people dismissed and have no reason why, and it created chaos. He believes the Board should be involved in that process.

Mr. Conway questioned if that issue was more of a Code issue, than a Charter issue. Mr. Walter stated that if it was in the Charter, it is more difficult to change than it is in the Code.

Mr. Barnett stated that he felt this would be taking a lot of authority away from the County Manager. What is that person's position if they can't hire or fire people and you're giving it to a committee?

Mr. Walter stated that it is under the power of the office County Manager, but it doesn't give the employee a lot of latitude to operate because it isn't being done the way the County Manager believes it should be done, or the County Manager, in the interview process, can taint the direction he wants it to go, and the Legislators have no idea.

Mr. Barnett stated that there's a process of delegation of authority, and if you corrupt that power, that everything has to go up to Legislature, what would be the point of having a person as County Manager if you are going to undermine them? In his business experience, there's nothing worse than telling someone you have accountability, but not responsibility. It's a recipe for mediocrity. He understands you can have the opinion of the County Manager, but that's their job. They got selected, presumably through the Legislature, and thinks it's a mistake to take that important function and authority away.

Mr. Chellis stated that he was also against that idea for the reason Mr. Barnett stated, but also feels that the cart is being put before the horse. The recommendation assumes that it's keeping the current form of government rather than moving toward a County Executive. If the Commission did move toward a County Executive, the point would be moot. If it was not moot, it would create a dangerous mix of legislative and executive functions. Before we get to that, we need to deal with the bigger question.

Mr. Walter stated that people have continually been let go and no one knows why, and the chaos that ensures.

Mr. Barnett stated it's more problematic if the County Manager who is not performing, then they need to be held accountable by the Legislature. If you have someone who is not qualified, that may be where the problem starts; you have the wrong person in the County Manager position. Ms. Lerner stated that was a great point, and probably the reason why there are opposing views about County Executive because people look at who could be County Executive instead of the position itself. Mr. Barnett read a portion of the description of the County Manager, stating that it's a big job. Mr. Conway stated he should be like the CEO of a corporation accountable to the Board of Directors to keep him/her accountable. Ms. Lerner questioned if the County Manager's contract was annual. Mr. Liblick stated the County Manager's contract is voted on by the new Legislature, just as is the County Attorney, and there was a one year extension, a big incentive package, including a big raise, extra vacation time, and other perks. Some people wanted to put an ad in to see who else would qualify for the position, but the Legislature did not go along with that; they extended the contract. Mr. Walter stated that it was a 4-year contract that was extended one year, which extension provides for continuity.

Mr. McLewin stated he has opposing views about the County Executive.

Mr. Barnett stated that the Board has to keep them accountable.

Mr. Conway stated that the County Manager serves at the pleasure of the Legislature.

Mr. Walter stated that there's a mistake in the assumption that the Legislature knows everything that's going on. There are things that go on that the Legislature isn't privy to. We're voting on a very simple motion before them to rubberstamp the person that the County Manager has. He feels

the other way around has more input and that the County Manager is in tune with the Legislature's policy in the interview process. He'd like to see this not done anymore.

Mr. Liblick stated what this is opening up is pollical…several members stated that everything is political. Mr. Liblick stated if you have a member of the Legislature there, one Democrat, one Republican, you don't know who's making the potential deal with the County Manager and there are extra votes.

Ms. Lerner mentioned that staggered terms may come into this as well. If you have almost a full Board, which essentially they had the last go around, they didn't know who the County Manager was. It is odd to her that there isn't a formal interviewing process at the beginning, which may they did, maybe they didn't. Mr. Liblick stated that they did, they RFP'd it in the past, but they did not do that, they chose to extend it.

Mr. Conway stated they all seemed to agree about the conversation regarding the County Executive is about taking more decision making away from rule by committee and having a County Executive run things, and we're going backward to making daily operations part of the Legislature's bailiwick and he thinks that is a backward step. Ms. Lerner stated that they needed to remember that the Legislator's work part-time and if we give them more work…

Mr. Barnett stated he believed in empowering the County Manager and would focus on the performance review. Board's work is part-time. They don't know what's going on, they'll never know everything that's going on, and it's not their job to know what's going on. However, they do need to conduct very sound performance reviews, and what we have here is pretty skinny. I would focus on that and question how do we make greater accountability? How do we put more of a burden on the Legislature to have a 360 degree review of the County Manager? If you think that there's problem that could arise, then the Legislature should be required to talk to people who both report to, and who the County Manager reports to, and have greater criteria around "Are they doing a good job?" If not, then they should be considered for removal or replacement. Ultimately, that's how a Board can be effective in putting influence on the County Manager.

Mr. Rose agreed, and asked if the Legislature should review other department heads and not just the County Manager? Mr. Liblick believed they could be incorporated into a performance review, but doesn't think they should be managing. Mr. Barnett stated that he believed the Legislature should stick their nose in, but keep their hands off. Mr. Liblick agreed with that point of view because maybe the performance review would be required of the County Manager and Deputy County Manager, and department heads and present a report to the Legislature, whether it be in executive meeting or an open forum. The Legislature should be reviewing the County Manager's performance but department heads, that's an obligation of the person who hired them, the County Manager. Mr. Rose believes the Commission should get some input from various County departments.

Mr. Chellis stated that we cannot, again, put the cart before the horse. If you were to adopt a County Executive, then this conversation is no longer relevant.

Mr. Liblick stated the first item of business is to go through the Charter and have a serious discussion about everything that the Commission would like to present, and present an initial report of what we want changed, etc., and bring it to the Legislature to vote on.

Mr. Conway stated that the Commission doesn't know what they're adopting, or not. If the Commission spends a lot of time on this particular item, we will, in effect give them the opportunity to pass on the County Executive.

Mr. Chellis suggests a more efficient use of time would be to tackle the biggest things that the Commission wants to do first, and if it's a consensus, then we have to fill in Code and fill in the details.

Mr. Liblick agreed. The County Executive issue is #1.

Mr. Conway mentioned the 2017 report was done very well and the Commission should go over that as well. How the County Executive would influence other departments within the County.

Mr. Barnett stated that he wasn't sure that all of the members agreed, further stating that it would be interesting to see how people would feel about the County Executive.

Mr. Liblick stated that Nadia Rajsz will try to get this on the ballot for November. How are we going to edit the job, pros and cons? If you went to the people, people would be coming out. Nadia is frustrated. Stonewalled. Next year the Legislature is up.

Mr. Barnett commented that it's been 20 years.

Mr. Walter posed a question concerning procedure - what got put on the ballot, an idea or if it's fleshed out what it's going to look like?

Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission had to have something in writing to give to the Legislature. Mr. Walter questioned what went on the ballot. Mr. Liblick replied that if we are going to do like Ulster County did, and we are mandated, we can propose a new Charter. Mr. Walter then asked who adopts the new Charter? If the Commission proposes who puts minutia together? If we are asked to do that, we would work with an attorney to get the language that would go before the Legislature to present to the voters and that language and the Charter is voted on.

Mr. Conway stated that the last recommendation was a 10-page report. It had all of the ins and outs on what the Executive would do and how it would impact …

Mr. Walter asked if that was going to be on the ballot as presented? Who says we get rid of the County Treasurer and replace her.

Mr. Liblick stated that when we issued that report, there were two (2) avenues with the County Treasurer. The County Treasurer becomes either non-elected, or remains an elected position.

Mr. Walter stated that's two (2) options. He stated he is the voter. What are we voting on?

The Charter. Mr. Liblick stated there are two (2) phases. Like Ulster County, where the Charter Review Commission, re-did the Charter, everything in detail, and that was presented, that's what as voted, and that's what changed the government. Or, there's a referendum that says there's a

mandate to change the County to include the office of the County Executive, and if the vote is yes, then it's the Legislators' responsibility to then re-do the Charter.

Mr. Walter stated that something Mr. Liblick has said many times is that we have to mandate from the Legislature. If we're not going to get a mandate from the Legislature, why spend time on it?

Another member asked, "Mandate from the Legislature for what?" Mr. Walter responded to having a County Executive.

Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission has to present to the Legislature whatever it is that it's doing.

Mr. Walter stated that Mr. Liblick stated that Ulster County was mandated. Mr. Liblick stated that they did by their Legislature. The Legislature gave the Charter Review Commission the responsibility. Mr. Walter then stated that we (this Commission) would need to be mandated first. Mr. Liblick stated that the Charter Review Commission would have to present the proposal that we would like to either (a) re-do the Charter to include County Executive or (b) have a simple referendum.

Mr. Liblick that questioned what the other members were feeling about County Executive.

(1) Mr. Chellis stated he's inclined to be supportive of a County Executive, but he would like to be a little more educated on the possibilities. He would like to hear from Delaware County about how they are doing with a Board of Supervisors. He doesn't believe he's inclined to that, but would like due diligence to be done.

(2) Mr. Rose is definitely in favor of a County Executive. That's what democracy is supposed to be about. He also agreed that the Commission needed to be educated, and speak with people who have gone through this process already. He believes this is what the priority should be.

(3) Mr. Barnett likes the idea of having someone who's the boss. He believes things run better that way. He's troubled that the Commissions of the past haven't gotten that done, and it's never been on the ballot. While he's in favor of a County Executive, he questions if the Commission is wasting its time because no Legislature has decided to put it on the ballot for over 20 years. And, when the Board of Supervisors was dissolved and the current structure was put into place, that was also an option and they didn't take it. Going back to the first meeting, he joined the Commission because he would like to make a difference. He would like to do something to actually help Sullivan County not disappear, need to be saved, or whatever. He knows the Commission is constrained by guidelines. He questioned if the majority is in favor of the County Executive, how do we effect it to be presented to the people to see how they feel. How do we make that happen? He thinks that the Commission has to convince themselves they can do that if they're going to spend all the time rehashing what the Commission has done previously.

(4) Mr. Conway stated that he is very much in favor of a County Executive, but the devil is in the details, and there are various different things that the Commission needs to learn about it. Mr. Conway wants to echo what Mr. Barnett was saying the Commission first needs to address the fact that the way the County Charter lays out the provisions for revising it are vague, weak, and ridiculous. There needs to be a better way of revising the Charter, number one, and that would

circumvent the fact that every recommendation that's made by the Charter Review Commission just gets dropped. They don't even consider a lot of them. If there's a way to amend the Charter that bypasses the Legislature, and believes that needs to be put that in place. This is a great example of why – running something by committee just doesn't work. It's never worked anywhere.

At this time, Legislative Chair Nadia Rajsz had just walked in, and stated that she appeared briefly to state two things: (1) that the Code is going to change because of the closing of ACC (the Care Center at Sunset Lake). It has to play out and then it has to be removed, which will take some time, and (2) The County Executive sent information for Ulster. Never sent information for the gentleman that was behind that County Executive motion and movement, but will send to Mr. Liblick so that the Commission can converse with him either in person or via Zoom.

The secretary reminded Co-Chairman Liblick that ITS needed to be involved where Zoom meetings were concerned regarding equipment and ITS staffing for meetings after 5:00 pm. Ms. Rajsz stated if the meetings are started earlier, there shouldn't be an issue.

Mr. Liblick stated he wanted to speak with Chairperson Rajsz momentarily before she left regarding the Charter review and County Executive.

(1) Is there a way for us to recommend, if we do decide to recommend, or

(2) Do you want us to change the Charter, like in Ulster County? What would you like us to do?

Ms. Rajsz stated that she believed the Charter needs to be changed first, but the Commission needed to speak with the gentleman from Ulster County, and then put it up on referendum to see what the people of Ulster County wanted.

Mr. Conway stated to answer Ken's question about what are they voting for? Mr. Liblick replied, "Charter." John raised some issues as well. It's not in the Charter, we would like to put in the Charter that the Commission can present something to the public to vote on, an amendment or a referendum, that doesn't have to be stalled by the Legislature, because if we have a brand new Charter to present to the people to be voted, we still need the majority of the Legislators to vote on it. Ms. Rajsz stated that there are obstacles. Mr. Liblick then stated that this work must be done by August to present and have it voted on so that it can be on the ballot. Ms. Rajsz stated that she believed the Board of Elections had to have language by late August so that they could put it on the ballot. Mr. Liblick stated then the Commission would have to have the new Charter, do the research, due diligence, everything by January/February. Ms. Rajsz stated, "Sooner rather than later." Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission's discussion right now is concentration. Should we concentrate on amending the Charter, or try to present a new Charter for County Executive. Ms. Rajsz said that Mr. Liblick was talking about recreating, including the mechanism where it wouldn't be so cumbersome to make changes. Mr. Liblick agreed. Ms. Rajsz said it was a lot to think about.

Mr. Barnett stated that he thought the mechanism would be would the Commission have the ability to put things on the ballot. I know the Commission has no authority. Mr. Conway said if the public decides, through a petition, that they want to adopt a County Executive, they could petition to put that on the ballot. Ms. Rajsz said, "Correct." Mr. Conway continued by saying they wouldn't have

to go through the Legislature, which has skin in the game. You're impacted one way or another. Ms. Rajsz stated, "I'm going to be honest with you, I think we're ready for a County Executive. One person heading this County so that we're going in one direction and not spiraling in a million different ways."

Mr. Chellis stated to Ms. Rajsz that when she agreed, it seemed unclear whether or not the statute in NY allows for a petition or referendum to get a new Charter onto the ballot without the Legislature. It seems that the authority is given to the Legislature to amend or repeal the Charter. Do you know off hand?

Ms. Rajsz stated that she couldn't answer off hand, however, our attorneys would be able to.

Mr. Liblick stated that equally, when the County had that committee that was separate from the Charter to get it on the ballot, and we went to the Board of Elections, they were told the resolution had to come from the Legislature. Mr. Conway stated that according to the Charter, it does, and that's what needs to be changed. Mr. Chellis then stated that he also thought it comes out of the statute itself… New York Municipal Home Rule defines how you amend, alter, or repeal the County Charter via the Legislature.

Ms. Rajsz, again, recommended that the Commission speak with the person from Ulster County.

(5) Maureen stated that she agreed with everything that's been said, and asked why this wasn't questioned when it was voted down over the past 20 years. The Commission will spend a lot of time presenting to the Legislature, only to find out they're not interested. Is there a way to find out first if there's an interest if we put something together in front of their face? Also, before this Charter started, there was a letter that came from the County Manager saying he wasn't interested in having a County Executive. Therefore, she believes that the Commission should do interviews first before we come up with anything because it has been addressed for so long. Mr. Liblick stated that the letter Ms. Lerner referenced was a letter sent by the hired County Manager to the Legislature was inappropriate… it never should have happened and the Legislature should have told him that, publicly.

Ms. Lerner stated that the back room deals were unfortunate, and if you were at the last Legislative meeting, there was a clear indication that we absolutely need a County Executive. Mr. Barnett stated that it should go without saying that the County Manager wouldn't want it. Mr. Liblick stated you're giving an advisory brief to your elected officials as to why they should be against it. This is had nothing to do with the Charter Review Commission. This was when Nadia was trying to get it on the ballot, and then it created turmoil about who was going to educate the public. Then certain members of the Legislature stonewalled and said there's no mechanism in how you're going to present it.

(6) Ms. Johnston agreed with Mr. Barnett – someone has to be held accountable and the County Manager has a lot of power, but doesn't really use it in her opinion. She also agrees with Ms. Lerner that someone has to hold everyone accountable, but feels the Commission will be wasting its time until it finds out which way the Legislators are going to go, because not all are in favor of a County Executive. If we're going to rewrite the whole Charter going towards that, we'd be wasting our time. How do we proceed with that? She doesn't think the Legislature is going to

allow the Commission to give mandate what goes on the ballot because we aren't elected officials. We were charged with this Commission, as Ken said, to look at the Charter. We weren't charged to change the complete Charter towards a County Executive. She thinks that the Commission needs to look at what it was asked to do, and maybe it's another Commission that will have to re-write it for a County Executive, if that happens.

Ms. Lerner than queried, "That by the time the Commission finishes, there could be a whole new Legislature, right?" Mr. Liblick responded affirmatively. Ms. Lerner then stated, "So even if we interview and find out, there's a whole new group coming in that may or may not be interested."

Mr. Liblick stated that no matter what, it's going to be an issue, whether it's on the ballot or not, in next year's Legislative election.

Mr. Chellis stated that he wanted to push back on an idea that he keeps hearing about being supportive of a County Executive because someone has to be in charge and hold people accountable. When we speak about a County Manager or County Executive, if we adopt a County Executive, we are not electing a dictator. He's not going to be in charge of the Legislature. The Legislature will be keeping him accountable, and he will be keeping the Legislators accountable, but the ones who have to keep the County Executive and Legislature accountable are the people. The glory isn't that we're now going to have one person who is going to be able to drive out dissent, or keep politics out of everything, and just make a decision. There's no form of government… one thing the Constitution requires is that whatever form it is, it be a republican form of government. That's what the Constitution expressly requires. We're not looking for a king or a dictator. It would provide accountability, but they won't be in charge of everything. Mr. Liblick stated that it will be reporting to the people and that's the key.

Mr. Barnett stated that the Legislature can hire and impeach the County Executive. If we have a County Executive, that person has authority to run the County with the oversight of the Board.

Mr. Chellis stated to think of the Legislature like Congress and the County Executive like the President. They are co-equal branches that have different functions. One is clothed with executive – that is the County Executive so he would have administrative function over the executive functions, but the Legislature will still be a free Legislature who would still be in charge of the purse strings and still in charge of enacting laws.

Mr. Liblick wants to obtain printed copies of the Charter report from 2017 to get a vote on how the Legislators voted – it was never done.

Mr. Conway stated that he looked up voter initiative, which doesn't address the question specifically, but it does say that under a procedure set forth in §33 of the Municipal Home Rule Law – the voters of a County may petition the County Legislative body to establish and appoint a Charter Commission… so they can petition certain things. Why can't they petition to get the Charter on the ballot? Mr. Conway believes that this is something that must be verified.

Mr. Barnett also looked it up and saw that you can elect a Commission but you get in the loop we're in now that the Commission comes up with something that the Legislature has to approve.

But, there's a potential alternative route, which is called the Alternative County Government Law, which does allow citizens to bring a petition that needs to be put on the ballot.

Mr. Chellis stated that the Commission is operating under the County Legislature. Would the Legislature agree to allow us to handle a County Attorney at our disposal to be here for the meetings.

Mr. Conway stated that we do have access to someone from the County Attorney's office who has been in meetings in the past. Mr. Conway stated that if there is initiative, it should be black and white, prohibited by State law or not.

(7) Mr. McLewin stated that he agrees with everything that's been said. He stated that he is probably the least educated, but agrees to having only one person in command as he's only worked for himself since he was 21 years old. The checks and balances are there. There is correction when needed. He's in favor of a County Executive, but would like more education before a final decision.

(8) Mr. Walter stated that everything is political no matter what the Commission does. Selecting someone for County Executive two parties, two individuals. Mr. Liblick stated. "You're not running for that. You're applying for a job that certain qualifications, degrees, must be met." We have to really look at our demographics right here. There's nobody really coming to the top of the heap that I can see that can really run a County, and that's going to be an ongoing issue. We're finding that in the County Attorney situation. We don't have the expertise we used to have. We don't have the professional people we used to have. As far as how much it's going to cost, how much is it costing us now? How much of those costs are going to be used in a different way? And, how much more is it going to cost us because we have people that think money is more important than people, and that's going to be an issue. As far as having a County Legislature that makes policies just like they do now with a County Manager, and the County Manager is supposed to follow through. The only difference is that the County Executive has veto power. That's the only thing he has. He's going to try to work with the opposite parties, and then he's going to try to work with them to get it through. If it's the same party, like we have in Washington right now, good or bad. There's a lot of things that have to be considered and the people out there don't have the stomach for another change of government. They feel they got screwed in the present form. I know why we went through it because three (3) big or four (4) towns control everything in the County because of the way they're voting... that's what threw off the supervisors. He doesn't think the County or the people desire change because they have a bad taste in their mouths, and it's going to come down to who is going to decide on the final form of government.

Mr. Conway told Mr. Walter that most people today don't remember any other form of government so his thinking doesn't hold much water, and people are so fed up that they are ready for a change of government. In terms of cost, are you measuring cost over one year, or a lifetime, because the County Executive may cost more on a year-to-year basis, but over a period of time, the savings that might be implemented by having a more efficient form of government might offset any of that initial cost. My final comment about your point of the gene pool in Sullivan County. Personally, I think that is a little cynical, but why is it more difficult to elect one good person than it is to elect 9? Right now we're electing 9 people to run the County. Can we get 9 good people out of the

County? Mr. Walter stated that politics are the biggest hindrance we have. Mr. Conway stated that everything is politics. The Legislature is politics. Why would this be any different? The country is run through politics, and part of the problem that we've run into as a country is when we began to implement these administrative positions that are not accountable to the electorate/people. The County Executive is not going to be accountable to the Legislature. He's going to be accountable to the people, and that's the way the government is supposed to work. The County Manager is only accountable to the Legislature. The people have no power over the County Manager, at all. The County Manager is looking over his shoulder constantly. It's just the way the system is set up, so he can't cross the Legislature. It's a bad system. The County Manager's contract ends 2028 – and the only way, he'd have to resign or be removed for cause. If he's forced out, he gets paid to the end of 2028.

Mr. Liblick stated that there wouldn't be an elected County Executive until after 2028. Just because we get a vote on it next year, doesn't mean it's going to happen the next day. He agrees with Mr. Conway that if people are fed up and want a change of government, it's now. He's been involved on all Charter reviews. When a Governor is giving a State address, our County Managers are in one room, and County Executives are in the same room as the Governor. That alone should tell you the power of the County Executive right now. I don't care if political Democrat, political Republican. That's how you get grants. That's how you get legislation. That's how you get respect – by having one elected leader that people can look at. They don't look at a County Manager, whether it be Josh or a past County Manager, and say, "They're the one in charge." People look at the Legislators as 1 of 9 in charge. We really need a County Executive, and if anything, we will keep talking about the Adult Care Center, and all of the people who care about money, and people don't care about lives… those are issues that a County Executive would absolutely be involved in with the people. That alone should make someone like a Ken Walter say that we need a County Executive for accountability and to report to the people because what you yourself was talking about back room deals, and taking illegal votes. Electing someone right before the public, and we know where that person stands and what job that person is mandated.

Mr. Liblick also stated that he resented people talking about the gene pool. We have a dynamic Assemblywoman who's working across the aisle with everyone. And, Paul. Nobody knew Paul when he applied to sit on the Charter Review Commission. He saw an ad in the newspaper. Did you ever research Paul, his company, and what he's done in his life? If you look at Paul, I'd say what a dynamic person to be a County Executive. I don't know if he's Democrat or Republican. There are plenty of people in Sullivan County. Bill Chellis, he has a background that could come to the public. So you do have a pool like that, and if you present it to the public, you will see certain people come forward that will run. We have the same thing with the judicial system. We don't have lawyers, but we have a lot of good judges whether they're Democrat or Republican. In Sullivan County you have the District Attorney. One of the youngest in the State of New York and he's doing a great job. You see all of the convictions that he's getting, so the pool is there. People do want to give back to Sullivan County, but it may not sit with the narrative that you want to present because it's double-standard.

Mr. Rose stated that he's spoken to a lot of people about what the Commission is doing and feels there would be very strong support for a County Executive if we could get the facts out.

Mr. Barnett stated there's a difference of a pool of applicants for County Manager if they have to report to the Legislature versus a County Executive. He believes it would be a very attractive position, and believes there would be qualified people.

Ms. Lerner agreed with Mr. Barnett, further stating that in Ulster County, she's doing a great job. Latimer did a great job.

Mr. Liblick stated that he saw Latimer, who's in Congress right now, last week, and they spoke a long time about Sullivan County. The people are there.

Mr. Walter stated that if that were true, it wouldn't be so hard to find candidates to run for our local offices.

Mr. Liblick asked if it was difficult… maybe abuse or people don't work together and things are political and people don't come up from the public.

Mr. McLewin stated that he would never run for office because it would hurt his business. He further stated that if he ran for office, and held his job, it would take one-third of his business out immediately.

Mr. Chellis stated that the pay scale for a County Executive is significantly higher than for a Town Highway Supervisor. If you're looking for someone to be a manager, a degree in public administration. Politics aside, whether you like him or not, Mark Molinaro went from a kid that made pizza to Mayor and County Executive. He's pretty successful. The talent you need doesn't necessarily come with a degree in public administration.

Mr. Liblick stated that the talent comes with the hiring of Commissioners and their background. Mr. Liblick stated that he'd like to go through some of the items in the Charter, and invite three (3) County officials, i.e., Treasurer, Clerk, and District Attorney, to come before us and see if there's anything in the Charter particular to them and see if there's anything that they want to change, or if they're okay with everything. He feels that could be a very short process.

Mr. Conway stated he needs a list that's prioritized.

Mr. Liblick stated that by December the Commission should go to the Legislature with a report of where the Commission stands, and what the Commission is focusing on, and to talk about the County Executive. Let's discuss this further.

Mr. Barnett stated that it seems like a majority of the members interesting in a County Executive. If we were to do something, we need to have it to the Board of Elections by August. It doesn't seem like we have a lot of time with two (2) hours a month. Soo we have November, December, January, if we are going to pursue, aggressively, the County Executive recommendation, why would we go through the existing Charter because that's just time that … Mr. Liblick stated because he believed it is a mandate that the Commission has. We can present that they vote on it next November to approve a County Executive, and then the following year they have the actual Charter to vote on. I think there are certain items that we have to do our research with parts of the Charter, not just the County Executive issue versus some of the others.

Mr. Walter asked what it was that the Commission wanted to present to the Legislature. He feels that the Commission needs to define what it wants to present. How much time do we have to put that together? Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission had a meeting, that the Commission would like to concentrate on the County Executive issue, and that our goal is that it's the will of the Charter Review Commission that we would like the opportunity to present, maybe in June or July, a final resolution to be presented to the Legislature for wording for the public.

Mr. Walter asked why can't we truncate it? We're drawing it out too much as far as he's concerned. The Commission needed to get an answer from the Legislature if the Commission is going to follow that road. If they aren't going to do it, why waste the energy?

Mr. Liblick stated that they gave an indication that they wanted to do it. Their mechanism was how were they going to educate the public. So if the Commission presents it to the Legislature that we would work on an independent council to have forums throughout Sullivan County giving the pros and cons of the County Executive, that may be a solution for them, and give a certain time frame.

Mr. Walter stated what we see is the vision of what we think our County Executive should be and the offices underneath it, then you can go forth to the public.

Mr. Liblick stated the vision has been clear to everyone whether they know what the Charter Review Commission is or not. You just look at every government. It's similar to what Bill said, it's like Washington. You have a President that's a leader and you have Congress.

Mr. Walter stated to keep a County Treasurer or eliminate it? Those are the things that need to be fleshed out because those are the things people are going to ask.

Mr. Chellis, previously in agreement with the question on the table, is whether or not the Commission should take it back to the Legislature to get some type of a thumbs up before we move forward. We can sit here and deal with the minutia, but he'd would rather do something that would be significant because what we have isn't working. He remembers some stories about folks that gathered in Philadelphia once, and when they did so, the job they were given to do, they amended the Articles of Confederation. They then went and came up with something far better and said, "Let's do this." He wants to come up with something better and say, "Let's do this." In either case, the Commission can spend its time on minutia just fixing some small things that they'll never go with, or we can do something grand and fight for it and hope they do something. Maybe they do, or maybe they don't, but at least it will have been worth trying.

Mr. Liblick stated let's go to the next meeting and come up with a statement to present to the Legislature at a future meeting. Mr. Chellis wondered if the Commission should just give them the statement in June and not give them a chance to say no. Mr. Rose agreed. Mr. Chellis stated that the Commission do the work and present it to the Legislature instead of trying to get their temperature. Mr. Liblick said then the Commission should do that. He's willing to concentrate on the County Executive issue. Mr. Rose agreed. Mr. Liblick stated he was willing to put everything else to pasture right now.

Mr. Conway asked for clarification from Mr. Chellis that he means to rewrite the Charter. Mr. Chellis stated that the Commission was there to revise it, so let's make it worthwhile. Mr. Conway stated

that while there are a lot of flaws in the Charter, not everything needs to be thrown out, and the Commission has covered some of them.

Mr. Barnett liked the idea and stated that the Commission should talk to the other County Executives. Mr. Rose believed that should be a priority.

Mr. Walter suggested getting a hold of other charters for counties smaller than Sullivan County. Start from scratch and look at different ones. Tami to email links to the charters for similar counties to the Commission members. Mr. Liblick moved to have the Commission meeting of November 4th (and every monthly meeting thereafter) commence at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Walter moved to start the November 4th meeting to 3:00 pm. Mr. McLewin seconded, and all members were in favor. It was then stated that the start time may be at 3:00 pm each month thereafter.

Mr. Liblick would like to get two guests, with one suggestion being Jen Metzger.

At this time, Mr. McLewin questioned if the Commission was educated enough to move forward with speaking with guests at the next meeting, with Mr. Rose stating that the Commission needs more information. Mr. Liblick thought it would be a good idea to get a presentation from Metzger and Neuhaus. suggested then going through Mr. Liblick suggested the members send emails with suggestions on potential guests. Mr. Liblick stated that the Commission will review some Charters, have a couple of guests at the November meeting, and see where the Commission can proceed. Let's spend the first hour going over the Charters.

Ms. Lerner asked if there was a formal outline of the County Executive, to which Mr. Liblick replied that there was not. It's what the people create.

Mr. Chellis stated that it will be in the other charters that will be reviewed.

Mr. Liblick thought a note should be sent to the Legislature. Some members agreed, others did not, stating that the Commission is independent of the Legislature.

Ms. Johnston stated that the Commission needed to get a feel from the Legislature. She questioned why the Commission couldn't start with the Legislature, instead of putting all of that effort in to be ignored. She's not a fan of that idea. Mr. Liblick stated that he could not see the Legislature telling the Commission to do the research and come back to them.

Mr. McLewin stated that in dealing with the government structure for years in business, he never liked to go into a meeting saying, "This is where we are." He liked to go around to the individual people. You get all of the ducks swimming in the same direction, or see what direction the ducks are swimming, and then have a meeting with them. He feels the Commission is better off knowing what the Legislature is going to say instead of wondering what they're going to say. Mr. Liblick would like to get a background by meeting with other County Executives prior to meeting with the Legislature.

Mr. Chellis disagrees with taking the temperature of the Legislature beforehand, stating that the Commission needs to have the work done, the project done to hand to them, so the Legislature can't say they aren't interested.

Ms. Lerner stated that after the election in November, the Legislators will start thinking about their election because they're up the following year, correct? So that could change the mindset as well.

Mr. Conway asked who is to say that they would be honest about the County Executive, or whatever the item may be, when, in reality, they have no interest.

Mr. Barnett stated the Legislature stymied it for 20 years. He feels the Commission is better off coming up with a plan as opposed to trying to get their buy-in. It's never been brought up to vote so they just kind of squash it.

Mr. Conway stated the Commission is mandated to do the work whether they like it or not. We still have to do the work. Mr. Rose stated that they cannot censor what the Commission is doing.

Mr. Walter stated that the Commission has to be more than arm's length from the Legislature. He believes they're having too much input right now. He further stated that the Commission is here to do a job, and it should be done more independently without seeing what the temperature of the Legislature is or having their input. Mr. Liblick didn't believe the Commission had input from the Legislature.

Ms. Lerner stated that Ms. Johnston's point is valid but feels that should be after the fact, after the Commission is educated. Mr. Liblick agreed.

The mission, at this point, is to get links to, and review, the charters for other counties, with County Executives, and research County Executives, maybe Steven Acquario of NYSAC.

Mr. Walter stated there was one question that should be asked of each County Executive that's interviewed, is if they have more juice with the Governor because of who they are.

Mr. McLewin questioned if the group communicated during the month. Mr. Liblick said could use personal email addresses. Mr. Walter asked if there was a group chat that could be put together? Mr. Liblick asked if he wanted to do a WhatsApp…it would be informal. We're appointed by the County. If we have a discussion amongst ourselves,

Ms. Lerner questioned if there was anything other than the County Executive? She stated that we have 9 Legislators that work part time, in a time when they really need to pay attention full time, and nothing was more clear than at the last Legislative meeting. Is County Executive the only other way to go? To which Mr. Liblick replied that it was not. Equally, you can put in the Charter they're mandated certain hours and what the salaries are. They would still have to approve that. If you're calling for a full-time Legislature, are they going to quit their other jobs, and are we going to give them salaries over $100,000? Ms. Lerner stated that the last session was abysmal and it appeared that people didn't take the time to dig deep.

III. Strategic Review & Modernization

With regard to Zoom/videoconferencing, Mr. Liblick stated he spoke with the County Attorney's Office and the Legislature needed further clarification. It was reiterated that the Charter Review Commission is not a voting body, and he made a point that as long as there are five (5) members

present, there is a quorum, and anyone can participate. Mr. Liblick stated that the last two Legislative hearings have been focused on other items such as the budget and the nursing home, so it has to be brought up again and clarified by the Legislature. Mr. Liblick reminded members can call in on his phone as was done in the recent past. If a member misses three (3) consecutive meetings, that creates the problem. The ability to videoconference makes it more inviting for speakers to appear if they aren't local to Sullivan County or Sullivan County elected officials.

Legislative Chair Nadia Rajsz made a brief appearance during the meeting when Mr. Liblick questioned the Legislature's position with regard to Zoom conferencing for the Charter Review Commission. Ms. Rajsz stated that she believed the Commission was able to Zoom. Mr. Liblick questioned if the Commission had to have the Legislature formally vote on whether the Commission could Zoom. Ms. Rajsz did not believe so but stated she would find out.

IV. Assignments & Future Planning

Research and review other County Charters

Conduct interviews of County Executives and other guest speakers

V. Adjournment

- **Motion to Adjourn:** William Chellis; Seconded by George Rose. **Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:39 pm.**

- **Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at 3:00 PM**.