

Fellow Commissioners.

I regret not being able to make the last commission meeting on 8/31. Unfortunately I also will not be able to attend the special meeting scheduled for 9/8, as I will be traveling out of state that evening. However, I would love to take this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you about the discussion had at the commission meeting on 8/31, and in advance of the special meeting on 9/8 and the discussions you will be having then as per the agenda.

1. Thoughts on a workplan and timeline for the Commission.

Based on how other cities around the country have gone about their charter review process, the best practice is to organize the work of a commission in 5 phases, as it relates to obtaining and integrating community input into their work:

- a. The commission gets empaneled, reviews their remit, and designs a research and community engagement process.
- b. Community meetings are held to 1. Educate residents about how the city functions, 2. Get feedback and recommendations from them about how to make it better, and plant seeds as to how these relate to the charter, and 3. Create a space where neighbors talk with and listen to neighbors, across differences, about issues that directly affect their lives.
- c. The commissioners takes some time to consider all community feedback and integrate the community voice in their discussions about the charter matters in their remit. They produce a draft set of recommendations.
- d. Community meetings are held to 1. Have residents respond to draft recommendations, and 2. Create a space where neighbors talk with and listen to neighbors, across differences, about issues that directly affect their lives.
- e. The commissioners takes this community feedback into consideration as they finalize recommendations, which are sent to the governing body for consideration.

For our purposes in Santa Fe at this time, in my opinion we have not quite gotten clear on (a), and have completed (b).

My timeline proposal is as follows:

- Sept- November: Research and community input integration, phase (c).
- December: Design Round 2 of Community input sessions, phase (c).
- January and early February: Implementation of Round 2 sessions, phase (d)
- March: Draft our final recommendations, phase (e).
- April: Send recommendations to the governing body, phase (e)

I understand that it is a hardship for staff to secure our venues and it is a logistical feat, but I do believe that we would benefit as a commission from postponing our second round of community input sessions for the reasons stated above. I feel it is more important to answer the WHY and HOW we are doing community input sessions, rather than when.

I also understand this is a tight timeline, particularly given the holidays which preclude us from conducting community sessions for a whole month, but I think it is doable if we choose to do it.

2. Thoughts on Round 1 of Community input sessions.

All of you have attended at least one of the sessions, and I want to thank you for that. We completed the first round of community input sessions last night at the Convention Center, and it was a really good session.

- The sessions were really good, though poorly attended (4-9 participants). The first one was a bit more challenging for a number of reasons including a too-ambitious agenda, which we simplified significantly for the other three sessions. We had great collaboration between commissioners in terms of facilitation and running the agendas for each meeting.
- Several participants showed up to multiple meetings, so overall it is my count that we had roughly fifteen individual residents participating, which I believe is a 700% + increase from what it was during our work with the last charter review commission
- Our participants engaged in really rich and meaningful conversations about their city and their thoughts on its functionality.
- We were able to quickly pivot to a Spanish language session (at NEA) to accommodate the residents who showed up. This was really amazing– shout out to Commissioners Villareal and Granillo, and to Javier from the city! They all stepped up and together we made this happen. It was important for the residents. They all mentioned it.
- Almost all of the residents attending stayed for 2 hours, and most of them remarked about having enjoyed the experience, and having learned something new about the city and its workings.
- It is crucial to have food for residents who show up for their civic duty.
- We got a lot of great nuanced data from our participants (sharing transcriptions separately). I think we have a lot to look at and think about, as it relates to our remit. I do not agree that the information we gathered is unrelated to our remit.
- Shoutout to Jerica and city staff who helped with notetaking, logistics, creating a good and welcoming learning and deliberative space for our residents.

3. Thoughts on surveys and Round 2 of Community input sessions.

I think creating a survey is an excellent idea, and it also is part of the best practice for a charter review process. Surveys allow us to get more input from a larger number of residents. Ideally, in a process like this there is a larger pool of more limited data from surveys, and a smaller pool of more nuanced data from community input sessions. The two complement each other perfectly.

As far as Round 2 of our Community Input sessions, as detailed above, I believe that we are putting the cart before the horse here, if we go ahead with them as scheduled. I don't believe there is any benefit for the commission or the public in us holding four additional meetings without a proper design, which requires proper goals. I think we should, as a commission, define what our goals are for a second round of community sessions after we spend some time focusing on our research and integrating the community input we have into it. Only then will we know what specifically it is that we hope to get input about from the community. We

should reach back out to the residents in community sessions only after we have something for them to weigh in on/respond to, in the spirit of collaboration.

I personally bring a lot of years of experience designing community learning and deliberation processes, and will be happy to help in the design of Round 2, as long as the commission decides as a whole to move in a direction that aligns with my values around community engagement: It must not be extractive. There must be value in them for both the jurisdiction and the residents who participate. They must be an opportunity for everyone involved to learn something and to teach something, and to create a culture of democratic deliberation. If the commission decides to move in a direction that goes against these values, then I will step back and let others design and lead the forthcoming community input sessions.

4. Thoughts on inviting Councilors to speak to the commission.

I feel strongly that we should not, as a commission, invite councilors or the mayor to come speak with us. They spent much time deliberating amongst themselves about what they wanted us to look into, and told us very clearly what that is. They passed a resolution and we got our remit. Now it is our time to do the work they asked us to do, as an independent body. If the governing body feels like they want to change our remit, they can pass another resolution and go about it the official way. I also feel that we should as commissioners be discreet in our conversations about our work to councilors and the mayor when we are out and about. Our meetings are public and they don't need additional information from us as individuals. This is my opinion. If our elected officials who gave us our remit via resolution want to share their thoughts with the commission, they should adhere to the rules for public comment, and attend one of our commission meetings, where they can have 2 minutes like any other resident of the city. We should be protective of our independence as a commission. We experienced some real headaches regarding this very issue the last time the commission was empaneled, and I strongly advise us as a commission to avoid that this time.

That is all I have to share with you today. Thank you for considering my thoughts during the next Commission meeting on Sept 8. I appreciate you all and your service in this commission.

In solidarity,

Commissioner Maria Perez.
Sept. 4, 2026.