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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 21, 2016

Commission closely reviewing Murphy City Charter

MURPHY (June 21, 2016) Meetings and deliberations of the Murphy Charter Review Commission have resulted in a set of proposed changes to the Murphy City Charter, part of the process that occurs every six years.

In keeping with a provision in the Charter, the City Council appointed a commission to review the Charter; inquire into the operation of City Government; determine whether any Charter provisions need revision; propose any recommendations; and report its findings to the City Council.

The commission is chaired by longtime community volunteer Barbara Harless. Assisting as Vice Chair is John Wideman, who has a similar history of service to the Murphy community. Other members of the commission include Chi Egwuekwe, Will Ewin IV, Michelle Foley, Bernard J. Grant, James Holley, Christine Johnson, Jody Johnson, Kevin McGillis, and Revis E. Smith. Grant is a former City Council member.

Harless has the distinction of having served as a member of the Charter Commission that developed the document in 2003, on the Charter Review Commission in 2010, and, of course, the current one. She is a retired stockbroker who moved to Murphy in 1981 from Dallas, where her family has roots back four generations. She served on the Murphy Ethics Review Commission from 2012 to 2016.

Wideman is a ten-year resident of Murphy, where he and his wife are raising their three children. An active member of his HOA board and its past president, he served on the Marketing and Branding Committee in the City when the distinctive Murphy logo and tagline were chosen. He narrowly lost a bid for City Council in 2011. Employed in the information technology sector, he manages application support as well as data security and compliance.

Both submitted answers to a series of questions regarding the Charter Review process.

Q: How critical is a thorough review of the City Charter?

Harless

“The City Charter is like the Constitution of Texas; it is the guidepost that directs the purpose and function of local government. Its purpose is not to micro-manage, therefore it is not easily or frequently amended. A thorough review should keep an eye toward this purpose.”

Wideman

“A thorough review of the Charter is critical because it sets the tone for our City and how it operates. I am not going to say it is the next best-selling novel but if you want to know how and why things are done in the City, better yet if you want to change it, get involved in the Charter review process. Make your voice heard!”

Q: In what ways does the charter affect the residents of Murphy?

Harless

“The Charter can affect the residents in many ways such as the form of government (strong mayor/council or strong

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council/manager government), the terms of office for Council, terms of Recall, Initiative, & Referendum, and other issues. Regardless of how brief or wordy a City Charter may be, one thing is constant; the State of Texas created the cities in Texas and as such the State Legislature has the final authority to limit the powers and discretions of the City of Murphy. Much of the Murphy City Charter mirrors what our state legislature has already dictated.”

Wideman

“The Charter defines how residents are represented by their elected officials, it defines a process of how to react in a disaster situation, it provides for fiscal responsibility, and it lays out opportunities for residents to get involved in the City, just to name a few ways. Overall it is a guiding document for our City and as residents we need to make sure it is charting the right course.”

Q: Why is it important that ordinary citizens, and not elected officials, review the charter?

Harless

“America was created by men to be the government of the people, by the people, for the people. As such it must then be the People that participate in granting government those powers which they will abide by.”

Wideman

“For me personally I think it is more fun that way. Elected officials get to make decisions, talk, and make decrees, etc. all the time. To put it another way, it brings a new perspective that is nice to have.”

Q: What motivated you personally to get involved?

Harless

“My first memorable civic involvement in Murphy was around 1992 when DART approached the City of Murphy for one percent cut of our sales tax; in return Murphy would have received a DART bus. Murphy residents voted down the proposal two-to-one. I think it may have been that election that sparked the fire of civic involvement in my heart. I am constantly looking for new ways to spark a fire in the hearts of my neighbors because I believe that it is too little attention paid to government that creates oppressive governments.”

Wideman

“Well, I truly love Murphy and my friends that don’t live in Murphy would tell you they get tired of me talking about Murphy. Probably the most important thing for me, I like working with other people and hearing what other people have to say. I truly believe I become a better person when I listen to others perspectives and I learn new things too.”

Q: How would you describe the importance of citizen involvement and participation in this process?

Harless

“If the residents don’t understand the process of government then they certainly can’t be a participant in it. We all began our hands-on experience somewhere. I encourage every resident, regardless of age, to be involved with some aspect of the City government, whether it be the review of the Charter, City Council meetings, P&Z meetings, school board meetings, etc. It’s not our government if we’re not actively involved in it.”

Wideman

“There is no process without the citizens, and that is where all the best ideas are going to come from. The charter review process is a lot more fun when there is input from the citizens of Murphy.”

Q: Will you be active in getting residents to vote on the charter amendments, and why?

Harless

“I will encourage my neighbors to vote on the Charter. It’s their civic duty. Besides, it’s only 33 pages and if just one neighbor picks up a copy and reads it before heading to the polls that will be one more neighbor who has brushed up on our form of government.”

Wideman

“Absolutely I will, I plan to be the biggest and best advocate that I can be of every amendment our team puts forth whether I voted for them or not. If our team decided that it was right for the City of Murphy, then I am getting behind it.”

Proposed amendments are to be presented to the City Council in July, after which the proposed amendments will be reviewed and either approved as is, further amended or not approved. From there, citizens will vote on any amendments at the Nov. 8 General Election.

For more information on the City Charter or the Charter Review process, please contact City Secretary Susie Quinn at squinn@murphytx.org.

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ABOUT MURPHY -- Murphy is a fast-growing community located in Collin County. The population is approximately 18,020, generally characterized as highly educated with a median household income above the state average. With more than 70 percent of the land developed, the community is dominated by single-family residences. City planners strive to preserve a country feel while exhibiting an aggressive economic development stance. Money Magazine has dubbed Murphy as the 27th Best Place to Live in America for small cities, and D Magazine placed Murphy as the fifth best suburb in the 2014 list, where it has consistently ranked in the top 10.