

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
CITY OF WILDWOOD, FLORIDA

June 16, 2025 6:00 PM  
CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM 124

(meeting taped)

**1. Call to Order**

Chairperson Fountaine called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

**2. Proper Noticing**

City staff confirmed there was proper noticing for the meeting.

**3. Roll Call**

Attendee Name	Title	Status
David Fountaine	Chairperson	Present
Derrel Strickland	Vice Chairperson	Absent
Andre Nacaxe	Voting Member	Present
Robin Caruthers	Voting Member	Present
Keith Pearlman	Voting Member	Present
Joe Elliott	Ex-officio Member	Present
Jenalyis Otero	Non-Voting Member	Absent
Emily Ruiz	Non-Voting Member	Absent
Cassandra Smith	Assistant City Manager/CFO	Present
Madison Guinn	Executive Assistant	Present
Joshua Bills	City Attorney	Present

**4. Determination of a Quorum**

Chairperson Fountaine confirmed that a quorum was present.

**5. Comments from the General Public**

There were no members of the public present for the meeting.

**6. Presentations**

There were no presentations.

**7. Action Items**

**A. Minutes for approval: March 3, 2025, Charter Review Committee Meeting**

Chairperson Fountaine asked the Committee to review the minutes from the previous meeting held on March 3, 2025.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>Passed</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Pearlman

<b>SECONDER:</b>	Caruthers
<b>AYES:</b>	Pearlman, Nacaxe, Caruthers, Fountaine

## 8. Discussion Items

### A. Review of Article III of the City Charter

The Charter Review Committee opened with discussion on whether to recommend switching from at-large representation to a district-based system. Concerns were raised about how district lines would be drawn and whether population-based boundaries could dilute representation in slower-growing areas. Some committee members felt districts would ensure more consistent and equitable representation, while others argued the current system already provides a voice for all areas.

The committee also discussed the mayoral selection process. Under the current system, the mayor has no additional power and is selected by the city electors at large. Some viewed this as a strength, while others felt that a commission-selected model would be better. Concerns were raised about political blocs forming under a commission-selected model, while others noted that public election can also result in inexperienced leadership, as seen in other municipalities.

Residency requirements for district candidates were debated, with suggestions to increase the minimum from 90 days to at least a year to ensure candidates have strong community ties. It was also noted that districting may prevent developers or outside interests from concentrating influence by backing multiple at-large candidates. The 2014 proposed charter amendment, which included districting and a commission-selected mayor, was referenced as well. The committee agreed that public education will be critical if any changes move forward. Some committee members supported keeping the current system to avoid unintended consequences, while others saw districting as a natural response to growth. The committee agreed to continue the discussion at a longer meeting in August, where the goal will be to decide between districts or at-large. A copy of the 2014 amendment will be shared with members ahead of the next meeting for reference.

The committee convened to continued its discussion on whether to recommend shifting from an at-large representation system to a district-based model for electing city commissioners. The conversation centered around the implications of redistricting, its frequency due to population growth, and the potential impacts on equitable representation.

Several members emphasized that while the committee would not be responsible for drawing district lines, the decision to recommend districting would guide future elections. It was clarified that the Supervisor of Elections, not the City Commission, would manage the redistricting process, using legal guidelines and GIS mapping to ensure population balance and geographic logic. Concerns were raised about gerrymandering, underrepresentation of certain neighborhoods, and whether redistricting would truly resolve those disparities.

Committee members discussed the option of having four districts with a mayor elected at-large versus five districts with a commission-appointed mayor. There was a broad agreement towards a citywide election for mayor while establishing four geographic districts. Members felt this would preserve accountability while ensuring localized representation. It was noted that the current at-large system allows all residents to vote for all commissioners, and some members valued maintaining this citywide voting process even under a district residency requirement.

Historical context was provided regarding a prior failed attempt at districting in 2014. Members

speculated that the proposal's defeat stemmed from low public engagement and a lack of understanding of the issue. The need for strong public education and transparency was emphasized if any structural changes were to be proposed again. Some members expressed concern that switching to districts might be premature given the city's rapid growth, which could lead to frequent and disruptive redistricting. Others argued that growth itself made districting necessary to ensure future representation remains fair and balanced. It was also noted that the charter currently only requires candidates to reside within city limits for 90 days, prompting suggestions to consider a longer residency requirement for those seeking to represent specific districts.

The committee acknowledged differences in lived experience among residents, from long-term locals to recent transplants, and discussed whether those perspectives are currently well represented. There was recognition that growing populations in the newer areas might further dilute voices from historically underserved communities unless district lines are carefully considered.

In terms of mayoral selection, several members supported continuing to elect the mayor at-large, cautioning against a system where a newly elected commissioner with little experience might immediately become mayor under a rotation or internal appointment model. They felt that having the commission select a mayor could improve continuity and leadership but risked reducing public input and transparency.

Ultimately, the committee agreed it may not reach a unanimous recommendation and discussed the idea of forwarding both options – the current at-large system or adopting a district-based model with four districts and an at-large mayor – to the City Commission for consideration. Members emphasized that their role is advisory and that the Commission, with its deeper awareness of city operations and growth trends, is best positioned to make a final decision.

The discussion concluded with the consensus that any recommendation should be accompanied by context, noting the committee's discussions and the pros and cons considered. The committee plans to continue refining its recommendation at the next meeting.

**B. Begin Review of Article IV of the City Charter**

The committee did not begin their review of Article IV of the City Charter before the meeting concluded.

**9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7 PM.

SEAL

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE  
CITY OF WILDWOOD, FLORIDA

Date: 8.11.2025

Chairperson: 