

2-28-2022 Email from Sarasota Citizen

The **Charter review committee** ended up proposing a 4-year, directly elected at-large mayor and 4 single districts. They voted down adding any additional investigatory specificity or ethical / legal guidelines for elected officials, or disciplinary tools to the charter (although many other cities in Florida make these explicit in their charters).

While it may work fine elsewhere, a 4 year directly elected mayor is a bad idea for Sarasota for a number of reasons - with Hagen Brody as the poster child (and there are others waiting in the wings with similar sensibilities, approaches to governance, and beholdenness to developers and Chamber).

I have assumed responsibility for the PAC that others have used the last 6 times the idea of a supreme leader was floated by the developers. I hope not to activate it, as I don't think anyone wants to spend the next 9 months re-hashing Brody's abuse of staff and power. I plan to address that, as well as the following reasons in my remarks:

- **Can't fire bad elected officials.** Short of being convicted of a crime, there is no mechanism to remove an elected official from office (recall is pretty much a mathematical impossibility in Florida). So, we could end up with 4 years of an autocratic bully who abuses staff in ways that put's the city's taxpayers at financial risk but have no means to discipline or remove them from the role of mayor (under the present system, where the commissioners appoint one of their members, they could also remove them from the ceremonial leadership role).
- **Balance of power / citizens voice.** There is a civil rights history which led to the creation of 3 geographic districts and 2 at-large. The logic was that this would give every resident of this city 3 commissioners (e.g., a majority of the commission) to vote for, and hold to account to represent their interests. The system worked well for the citizens until 2020.
- **Representation.** Statistically, women and people of color are less likely to be elected mayor.
- **A lot of drama for not much change.** The 4-year directly elected ceremonial mayor (aka "head cheerleader" or spokesmodel) would have no differing powers from the current 1-year at a time ceremonial mayor appointed by our elected commissioners. If they are doing a good job moderating meetings, listening to residents, and working with staff, and they'd like to do it for another year, there is nothing in the charter preventing a commissioner from throwing his / her hat in the ring and asking his / her colleagues to give them another year in the mayor role. Suzanne Atwell was mayor twice in a row. The current chair of the county commission, Al Maio, has served for two consecutive terms as well.

If enough folks speak or write against the idea, I think there is a possibility that the majority of the commission will agree that sticking with our current means of selecting Sarasota's ceremonial leader is the best approach.