

**City Commission Workshop – Charter Review**  
**July 28, 2025**  
**Video and Agenda Packet**

Present: Mayor Cleveland, Vice Mayor Martin and Commissioners Perrine, McGuirk and Ashley, City Manager Cowper, City Attorney Avallone, and City Clerk Taylor-Harding

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Comments from the public included the following:

- All city residents can vote on the proposed charter revisions.
- The pros and cons of voting for each item individually vs as a combined set of revisions was discussed, with mixed opinions
- Several residents expressed concern about the expense of a special election
- Turnout for a special election was also a concern
- Comments about tying the Mayor/Commissioner salaries to the County were expressed and that compensation includes all benefits received, not just salary
- Several residents expressed concern about changing the mayor's term to 4 years as taking power away from the voters, and some wanted to see term limits
- One resident spoke in favor of the proposed addition of 6.05 Arts and Culture
- Some important issues have not been addressed in the Charter, i.e. flooding

**COMMITTEE REPORT** presented by Mark Billings, Charter Review Committee Chair

The Committee is recommending the following changes to the City Charter:

1. Revisions to Sections 2.02 and 3.06 to provide for a four-year mayoral term.
2. Revisions to Section 3.05 to declare a candidate a winner in the primary election if the individual garners 50% plus one vote of the votes cast, without the need for a vote at the general election.
3. Revisions to Sections 2.03, 2.05, 4.01, 4.02, and 4.03, to provide for the City Clerk to be an employee of the City Manager, rather than a Charter Officer.
4. Revisions to Section 2.11, to increase the salary of the Commission members to 75% of the County Council Chair for the mayor, and 75% of the mayor's salary for the four other commissioners.
5. Revisions to Section 6.03, Historic Preservation, to clarify the prioritization of historic preservation, rather than mandating certain actions.
6. Adoption of a new Section 6.05, titled Arts and Culture, to guide all future commissions on the prioritization of the arts and cultural events in the City.
7. Revisions to Section 7.03 to clarify and mandate that the Charter be reviewed at least once every 10 years.

Susan Boyer, facilitator for the Charter Review committee:

- Gave corrections to the current NSB salaries as listed in the agenda packet and indicated that information about current benefits were requested and included
- Called attention to the spreadsheet in the packet showing the final committee votes on each item along with key pros and cons of each item (most by a supermajority)

The City Attorney recommends individual votes on the proposed changes and has provided proposed ballot language for each item individually. The commissioners will vote on the proposed changes at the August 26<sup>th</sup> regular Commission meeting. The Committee is recommending a special election to vote on the recommended changes.

### **Commissioner Comments**

#### Vice Mayor Martin

- Doesn't see the urgency, the review was scheduled for 2026
- Thinks that procedural items should be taken out of the Charter, such as annexation and salaries, based on the difficulty of changing the Charter
- Loves the inclusion of the Arts and Culture but is distressed about downgrading Historic Preservation from mandatory to encouraged
- Asked whether special election would be mail or in-person-*Commission to decide*

#### Commissioner Ashley

- Asked whether term limits were considered – *discussed but not included*
- In favor of individual votes on the changes, supports the 4-year term for mayor
- Is okay with special election if it fits in the budget but concerned about turnout
- Supports the City Clerk reporting to the City Manager
- Tying salaries to the County makes him uncomfortable; it is public service; salary wasn't a consideration for him but mileage compensation would be welcome

#### Commissioner Perrine

- Considers the recommendations necessary tweaks, supports individual votes
- Thinks the mayor's term should align with other municipalities in the area
- Supports the shift of Historic Preservation to encouraged
- Supports the special election and thinks if the City Clerk had reported to the City Manager this year, it would have saved the city money
- Supports the salary increases, thinks it will attract better candidates

#### Commissioner McGuirk

- Believes the recommendations are mostly corrections to the last revision process so supports the changes but doesn't want to modify the Charter more than necessary
- In the end the voters will decide about the recommendations
- Thinks term limits takes away pure democracy because the voters should have the final say

#### Mayor Cleveland

- Asked Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections (present at the meeting) whether there had ever been a time that all 3 commissioners up for re-election had been voted out – *not that she could recall*
- Asked whether any candidate that had gotten 50%+1 votes in the primary had then lost in the general election – *NSB is the only city that requires top 2 to go to the general election*
- Asked for clarification about how salary increases are done now (by vote of the Commission) and whether the intent was to give the power to the voters (yes)
- Why is the Committee recommending a special election? *Billings said they believe the changes are important and should go into effect as soon as possible*

- Salary increase won't attract candidates directly but might allow younger candidates to be able to serve
- Thinks term limits are in place by voting as everyone votes for all zones
- Recommended changing Arts and Culture to Cultural Arts

The City Attorney reviewed the proposed ballot language for each of the recommended amendments. She indicated the only item that would be delayed if a special election was not held was the primary voting percentage. The ballot language for the 4-year term could indicate that if approved, it would go into effect with that election.

#### **Next Steps:**

- August 12<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> reading of ordinances
  - Final changes need to be made
  - Decision on how/when a special election would happen needs to be made
- Legal will fine tune the language and translate into Spanish, publish on August 6<sup>th</sup>
- August 26<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting – 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and VOTE