



2026 Charter Review Commission

Final Recommendation

Presentation to City Council - 7/21/2026

The Charter Review Process

9-member commission appointed by council and the mayor in March 2026

Joe Combs (Chair)	Greg Kathman (Vice Chair)
Greg Elsbernd (alt Tammy Knock)	Andy Graf
Ryan Grubbs (Mayor)	Kathie Lawyer
Hank Menninger	Bill Neyer (City Council Rep)
Ed Whitt (City Council Rep)	Bill Deters (law director is a non-voting member)



The Charter Review Process

- Public meetings held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from April through June
- Article by article breakdown of the current charter with guidance from Mr. Deters along with the Mayor and Councilmen Neyer and Whitt
- Reviewed recommendations not taken to voters from previous charter reviews, in particular the painstakingly thorough 2021 charter review, as well as a more general review based on current city operations



Timeline For Charter Amendment

**Charter Commission
Recommendation**

7/21/2026

Board Of Elections Deadline

9/4/2026

Election Day

11/3/2026

**Council Passes Resolution To
Put Amendment(s) Before
Voters**

Notifications To The Public

Clerk of Council mails copy of the amendment(s) to all registered voters by 10/4/2026

Full text of amendment(s) published in The Register no later than 10/14/2026

Second publication of amendment(s) in The Register on 10/21/2026

Optional third publication of amendment(s) in The Register on 10/21/2026



Recommendations – Overarching Changes

- Spelling and grammar fixes identified by previous reviews but deferred by council having been deemed not worth the expense of putting before the voters
- Language and terminology cleanup to eliminate confusing sections
- Updates to keep current with evolving technology – meeting notices and council records being made available via the city website



Recommendations – Article 3 (Council)

- §3.03 – Removed retirement age as a factor set by council
- §3.04 – Added a definition for clerk of council, a role referenced later in the charter but never properly defined
- §3.04 – Altered the meeting frequency to allow the possibility of fewer meetings during summer months and end of year holidays. Also establishes a 4 PM deadline on the Friday prior to a council meeting for publishing the agenda



Recommendations – Article 3 (Council)

- §3.08 – Added conviction of a felony as cause for removal. Also increased the voting requirement to a super-majority for removal to match existing requirement for removal of the mayor
- §3.10 – Change the procedure for filling ALL vacancies to be selection by council



Recommendations – Article 4 (Mayor)

- §4.02 – Increased qualifications to require the mayor to be at least 21 years of age and be a 4 year or greater resident of the city
- §4.03 – Cleaned up verbiage around the vice mayor or acting mayor in the absence of the mayor and their ability to vote on matters before council.
- §4.06 – Added conviction of a felony as cause for removal. Also increased the voting requirement to a super-majority for removal



Recommendations – Article 5 (City Administrator)

- Newly added Article codifying the role of City Administrator which was created last year
 - Appointed by the mayor and ratified by a super-majority of council
 - Serves at the pleasure of the mayor
 - Mayor may designate another city officer to perform the duties of the city administrator during times of absence or disability
 - Supervises administration of city affairs at the direction of the mayor
 - Strong mayor plus 7 member city council form of government is retained



Recommendations – Article 6 (Departments, Boards, and Commissions)

- Incorporated the City Administrator into all sections where references to duties assigned by the mayor are mentioned
- §6.09 – Removed requirement for the law director to be a Hamilton County resident
- §6.10 – Clarified wording to allow not more than 7 members on the Recreation Commission
- §6.11 – Removed reference to capital improvement programs for the Planning Commission



Recommendations – Article 7 (Civil Service Commission)

- §7.01 – Clarified wording around roles that comprise the unclassified service of the city



Recommendations – Article 9 (Initiative, Recall, and Referendum)

- §9.01 – Increased the petition requirement from 10% to 25% of the number of voters casting ballots in the last regular municipal election
- §9.05 – Increased the window for holding a recall election from 30-45 days to 30-120 days



Recommendations – Article 10 (Finances)

- §10.07 – Removed public bidding threshold of \$20k in favor of a reference to the amount set by ORC
- §10.09 – Added requirement for an annual financial audit



Recommendations – Article 11 (Miscellaneous Provisions)

- §11.02 – Removed this section and incorporated it's text into §11.05 to keep it together with the definition of the charter review process
- §10.07 – Adjusted the oath of office to make it more recitable



Bread Crumbs For The 2031 Charter Review

- Revisit Article 6 (Departments, Boards, Commissions, and Bureaus) as the shape of city government evolves. Most notably the economic
- Evaluate non-partisan elections – the majority of cities in the region are non-partisan and Harrison is comprised of over 60% independent voters
- Reconsider qualifications for office – ward-based candidacies, residency and age requirements, term limits, etc
- Mark your calendars, the next charter review commission needs to be appointed on or before 12/1/2031



Thank You!

