

Charter Review Process and Recommendations

Somerville MA City Council
November 9, 2022

Tonight's Agenda

Review Recent History

5 Broad Policy Topics

Gather Preliminary Feedback

Implementation Process Review

Deliberation Process Preview

Committee Timeline

October 2020 - Former Mayor Joe Curtatone and City Council President Matt McLaughlin create an *advisory* charter review committee

Phase 1, March 2021 - June 2021

Decision making rule, values, ground rules

Phase 2, July 2021 - October 2021

Education, issues of interest, interviews

Phase 3 & 4, November 2021 - August 2022

Deliberations, drafting, final report

We seek to revise the Somerville Charter to make our government more **just, empowering, responsive** and **innovative** for its residents.

Community Engagement

- **Kick-off Event** at Foss Park on August 28, 2021 - **80 attendees**
- Tabling at farmer's markets and winter markets around Somerville
- City-wide educational brochure -
- Final report postcard -
- Four community meetings - 55 attendees
- **85 public comments** at committee meetings and via email
- A public hearing - **20+ attendees**
- Monthly newsletter - over 560 subscribers
- Outreach to **150 community organizations**
- **950+** residents took a community **survey**

5 Broad Topics for Change Consideration

Elections

Balance of Power

Budget / Finance

Administration

Elections

Elections

Ranked Choice Voting Implementation Committee

Public Financing of Campaigns Study Committee

Reduced signature requirements for at-large and ward-elected offices

Enfranchising non-citizen and 16 and 17 year old residents in municipal elections

Balance of Power

Chief Administrative Officer

City Council Access to information provision

Mayoral 4-year term

Maintain 2 year terms for city council

City Council authority to hire staff and independent advisory legal counsel

Maintain a Mayor-Council form of government

Maintain the current composition of the city council, 7 ward and 4 at-large councilors

Appointment process for department heads, boards and commissions

Budget / Finance

Change budget drafting timeline:

- Annual Budget Meeting prior to April 1
- Mayor submit budget to City Council “on or about” 30 days before the end of the fiscal year
- School Committee submit budget to mayor “on or about” 15 days prior to the day the mayor submits to CC
- Requiring city council to take action on the budget prior to beginning of new fiscal year

Budget Mechanics:

- Public hearing on or before February 15th
- Framework for allowing city council to submit their budget priorities to the mayor prior to budget drafting
- City Council can only delete or decrease budget items
- Public hearing prior to city council cuts
- Budget posting to city website

Budget / Finance

Formalize Capital Improvement Plan

City council appointment of independent auditor and mandate the appointment

Periodic review of compensation of all city employees

Equitable Compensation Distribution Study Committee

Participatory Budgeting Study Committee

Administration

Organize the city via Administrative Code

Remove all city organization from the charter

Change the start of term of office to the first business day in January

Periodic Review of Charter, Ordinance and Multiple Member Bodies (individually) every 10 years

Posting requirements to include City Website

Misc.

Newly drafted charter

Change vacancy process for Mayor

Maintain current vacancy process for city councilors

Maintain 2 year terms and composition of school committee

Maintain school committee vacancy process if occurs 1 year or greater, remove appointment for < 1 year remaining

Add a group petition provision, city council hold a public hearing on petition signed by 100 municipal voters

Additional Items to Consider

Previous Charter amendment efforts

- 1978, 1986, 1994, 2005, etc

Public repository for shared documents

- tinyurl.com/HashtagCharterReform

Legislative Policy Analyst Notes

Public Feedback - 2 Public Hearings

Councilor Suggestions

Implementation Process

1. City Council discussion and edits
2. Mayor & Solicitors Office provides edits and recommendations
 - a. Allow State Legislature to make edits to the charter or approve/reject charter as a whole
3. City Council approves HRP, Mayor Signs and sends to State Legislature
4. State Legislature - approves or rejects Special Act
5. Governor Signature
6. If Approved, State Legislature may require municipal vote to adopt

Deliberation Process

City Council Kickoff: 11/9/22

Next meeting: 11/21/22

- begin topic area review, set topic schedule

Public Hearing 1: 12/7/22

Early Feedback
Online meeting

Deliberation: 1/11, 1/25, 2/8

In Chambers
By broad topic

Updated Draft Review: 2/22

Location TBD

Public Hearing 2: 3/8

Followed by deliberation
and opening to motions

Members of the Charter Committee have requested to assist with drafting updates to follow policy decisions made by the City Council.