

Dear City Councilors, Mayor Ballantyne, and Clerk Wells,

I've talked about voting methods with some city councilors privately, and I gave public comment during some of the charter reform public commentary sessions, but my opinion on voting methods has changed rather significantly over the course of the past three years (after more education on the topic), and I want to be sure to accurately communicate my present opinion to you all. Sometimes a first impression is the most lasting, despite updated information -- here's hoping we can combat that tendency with this email. :)

I used to support Ranked Choice Voting. I've used it for many years, as a Hugo Awards nominator and voter.

However, RCV has many flaws. After doing more research and receiving education on voting methods (partially but not wholly from the [Center for Election Science](#)), **I would like to express my strong support for Approval Voting INSTEAD of RCV in Somerville.**

- Approval Voting has less tendency for a voter to "strategize" with their vote instead of voting their true opinion.
- We use a form of Approval Voting when we vote for city-councilors-at-large -- we vote for our top choices from the pool of candidates (with up to 4 votes). Therefore, it's my belief that Approval Voting would require less public education than RCV would need if rolled out.
- It's my understanding from the Center for Electoral Science that Approval Voting would not require new voting machine software nor need a more complex ballot format, whereas RCV would require both for implementation.
- It's definitely my experience that Approval Voting would not involve nearly so many spoiled ballots (nor upset voters) as RCV.
- Approval Voting might also save us money in local elections, as it can eliminate the need for primaries!

For all of these reasons and more, I would like to request that when the charter reform committee's recommendations are evaluated, the city council create a "Voting Methods Committee" instead of a "Ranked Choice Voting Implementation Committee."

It may be that RCV has more support within Somerville than other voting method alternatives, at the moment. However, from talking with other activists on voting methods, including Klaus Schultz (who spearheaded an entire effort on RCV on Somerville Twitter conversations), I believe that the support for RCV is mostly because people believe that's the most possible change away from First-Past-The-Post voting (our current voting method). Everyone who has done research on voting in Somerville seems to agree that First-Past-The-Post is just not serving us well.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or would be interested in a presentation on Approval Voting? I started putting together a presentation about it, in my enthusiasm. ;)

Best,

Crystal Huff

Editor, Recognize Fascism

Executive Director, Include Better

Board Member, International Pronouns Day

-- I use they/them pronouns. --