

#9 Proposed Charter Amendment

**City Council District and At-Large Elections,
Other Reforms Complement**

City of Columbus

Full Text of the Proposed Amendment

Sec. 3. - Legislative powers.

The legislative powers of the city, except as reserved to the people by this charter, shall be vested in a council, consisting of nine members elected ~~from districts by the electors of the city~~ by only the electors of each member's respective district.

Sec. 3-1. – Legislative powers, at-large complement

After January 1, 2028, the council shall expand to include two (2) additional members, and the legislative powers of the city, except as reserved to the people by this charter, shall be vested in a council, consisting of nine (9) members elected by only the electors of each member's respective district and two (2) members representing the city at large elected by electors of the city.

Sec. 3-2. – Legislative powers, second at-large complement

After January 1, 2030, council shall expand to include two (2) additional members, and the legislative powers of the city, except as reserved to the people by this charter, shall be vested in a council, consisting of nine (9) members elected by only the electors of each member's respective district and four (4) members representing the city at large elected by electors of the city.

Sec. 4. - Council members.

Each member of council shall be elected from one of nine districts by the electors of ~~the city~~ that district. All council members shall serve for a term of four years.

Sec 4-1. – Council members, at-large complement.

After January 1, 2028, each member of council elected at-large shall serve for a term of four years.

Sec. 4-1. – Transition.

~~This section provides for a transition from the seven-member council elected at large to the nine-member council provided by this charter, and maintains the current practice of staggered terms for members of council. Notwithstanding Sec. 3 of this charter, council shall be composed of seven members elected at large until the first day of January in 2024. Notwithstanding Sec. 4 of this charter, the terms of all council members elected or appointed prior to the 2023 general election shall end on the first day of January in 2024. At the primary election in 2023, candidates for council shall be nominated from nine districts by the electors of the city, and at the general election in 2023, nine council members shall be elected from nine districts by the electors of the city. At the first meeting of council in 2024, the city clerk shall divide the council districts into two classes by drawing lots. Lot A shall consist of five districts and the members from those districts shall serve a four year term. Lot B shall consist of four districts and the members from those districts shall serve a two year term, and candidates for those districts shall stand for election to a four year term in 2025, marking the end of the transition period.~~

Sec. 4-2. – Transition

This section provides for a transition from a nine-member council to an eleven-member council and subsequently to a thirteen-member council. This will be done while maintaining the practice of staggered terms for members of council.

Transition to Eleven-Member Council. Pursuant to Sec. 3-1 of this charter, council shall be composed of eleven members with nine members each representing one of nine districts and two members serving at-large beginning the first day of January in 2028. In addition to contests for districts 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9, at the primary election in 2027, candidates for council shall be nominated to represent two at-large council seats. The members elected to represent two at-large seats in the 2027 general election shall serve a four-year term.

Transition to Thirteen-Member Council. Pursuant to Sec. 3-2 of this charter, council shall be composed of thirteen members with nine members each representing one of nine districts and four members serving at-large beginning the first day of January in 2030. In addition to contests for districts 1, 3, 4, and 7, at the primary election in 2029, candidates for council shall be nominated to represent two additional at-large council seats. The members elected to

represent the two additional at-large seats in 2029 shall serve a four-year term.

Section 4-3 Changes in boundaries of council districts

At any time the boundaries of council districts are changed pursuant to the provisions of Sec. 7 of this charter, a councilmember whose term will not expire within two years of the time that new boundaries become effective shall represent, for the remainder of the term for which the councilmember was elected, the council district that contains the largest portion of the population of the district from which the councilmember was elected. If more than one councilmember whose term will not so expire would represent the same district by following the provisions of this section, the maps submitted to council pursuant to Sec. 7-3 of this charter shall designate which councilmember shall represent the district and shall designate which district the other councilmember or councilmembers shall represent for the balance of their term or terms.

Sec. 6. - Qualifications of council members.

Members of council shall be electors of the city, shall have resided within the corporate limits of the city of Columbus ~~and the district the member represents~~ for not less than one consecutive year preceding the date of the regular primary election for such office, and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus. Members of council representing a district shall have resided within the district for not less than one year preceding the date of the regular primary election for such office, and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus and the district the member represents as the boundaries of the district were drawn at the time of the council member's appointment or election. Council members shall not hold any other public office except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Any member who shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein.

Sec. 7. - Districting for Council.

An independent, citizen-led districting commission shall be appointed by March 1st in the year ~~2024~~ 2027. A districting commission shall then be appointed by March 1st in the year 2031 and each tenth year thereafter. The purpose of the districting commission is to conduct an open and transparent process enabling public consideration of and comment on the drawing of council district lines, culminating in the recommendation of three districting plans to council.

Sec. 7-2. - Districting criteria.

The districting commission shall create and submit three districting plans which lay out the boundaries of the nine council districts for the city of Columbus, using the following criteria:

1. Districts shall comply with the United States and Ohio constitutions, this charter, and all applicable local, state and federal laws, including, but not limited to, the federal Voting Rights Act and any successor thereto.
2. Each district shall have reasonably equal population with other districts based on data from the most recent federal census, except where deviation is required to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act and any successor thereto or is otherwise allowable by law; but in no instance may the population of the largest district exceed that of the smallest district by more than ~~one~~ seven and one-half percent.
3. Districts shall be geographically contiguous, with boundaries of each district comprised of a single nonintersecting continuous line.
4. To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn to encourage geographic compactness such that nearby areas of population are not bypassed for more distant populations.
5. To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn to maintain the geographic integrity of a neighborhood or community of interest.
6. To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn using the boundaries of existing election precincts, council districts, and geographically identifiable boundaries, such as roads and waterways.
7. Districts shall not be drawn for the overt purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political group.

Sec. 7-3. - Adoption of a Districting Plan.

The commission shall develop no less than three districting plans that comply with the requirements of the charter. In developing these plans, the ~~first~~ districting commission shall conduct public meetings ~~in nine areas of the city before~~

~~submitting plans to council; and subsequent commissions shall hold one public meeting~~ in each of the nine council districts ~~before submitting plans to council~~. Audiovisual records of the meetings shall be made available using a medium readily accessible by the general public.

The commission shall provide a means whereby any resident of the city of Columbus may submit a proposed districting plan for review by the commission. The commission shall establish and publicize a period of no less than 30 consecutive days for residents to submit such plans.

The commission shall make at least three plans available for public inspection and comment no less than 30 consecutive days prior to approval and submission of such plans to the council.

No later than nine months after appointment, the commission shall vote to approve and submit three districting plans to the council, including with each plan a statement explaining how the plan complies with the districting requirements herein. Council shall not modify any districting plan or portion thereof, except to ensure compliance with the requirements of this charter. No later than December 31st of the year of submission, council shall pass an ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, adopting one of the districting plans. The districting plan so adopted shall be effective at the next succeeding primary and general municipal elections and shall remain in effect until a new districting plan has been approved as provided for herein.

Upon council adoption of a districting plan, the districting commission shall be automatically dissolved.

If territory is annexed into the city after the adoption of the districting plan, council shall by ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, amend the districting plan to attach the territory to the contiguous council district sharing the largest boundary with the territory. If territory is detached from the city after adoption of the districting plan, council shall by ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, amend the districting plan to detach the territory from the council district within which it previously resided.

If a districting plan is invalidated by a court of competent jurisdiction, the prior district map shall remain in effect and the provisions of this charter shall be followed forthwith to develop a new districting plan.

Sec. 9-3. - Expelling, removing, forfeiting office.

The council shall be the judge of the election and qualification of its members. Council may punish or expel any member for gross misconduct, or for malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or upon conviction of a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude while in office, or for disorderly conduct, or violation of its rules during the term of office. No expulsion shall take place without the concurrence of ~~six~~ 2/3rds of the members of the full council, nor until the delinquent member shall have been notified of the charge and been given an opportunity to be heard. Any vacancy created upon the expulsion of a member shall be filled as provided for in this charter. In addition to these provisions and those regarding permanent inability, absence from eight consecutive regular council meetings shall operate to vacate the seat of a council member unless the absence is excused by resolution, adopted by vote of ~~three-fifths~~ 2/3rds of its members, setting forth such excuse and entered upon the journal.

Sec. 17. - Legislative procedure.

Five members shall constitute a quorum to do business. On and after January 1, 2028, six members shall constitute a quorum to do business. On and after January 1, 2030, seven members shall constitute a quorum to do business. ~~but a~~ A lesser number may adjourn from day to day and compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as may be prescribed by ordinance.

Sec. 18. - Action on ordinances or resolutions.

The action of council shall be by ordinance or resolution and the affirmative vote of at least five members of council shall be necessary to adopt any ordinance or resolution. On and after January 1, 2028, an affirmative vote of at least six members of council shall be necessary to adopt any ordinance or resolution. On and after January 1, 2030, an affirmative vote of at least seven members of council shall be necessary to adopt any ordinance or resolution. The vote upon the passage of all ordinances, and upon the adoption of such resolution as the council by its rules shall prescribe, shall be taken by "yea" and "nays" and entered upon the journal. Every ordinance and resolution of the council, so

adopted, shall be maintained as a permanent electronic record that is made available to the public pursuant to the general laws of the state governing public records.

Sec. 20. - Reading procedure.

No ordinance, unless it be an emergency measure, shall be passed until it has been read at two regular meetings, not less than one week apart, or the requirement of such reading has been dispensed with by an affirmative vote of at least six members of council. On and after January 1, 2028, the requirement of such reading may be dispensed with by an affirmative vote of at least seven members of council. On and after January 1, 2030, the requirement of such reading may be dispensed with by an affirmative vote of at least eight members of council.

Sec. 22. - Emergency measures.

All ordinances and resolutions shall be in effect from and after thirty days from the date of their passage by the council except as otherwise provided in this charter. The council may, by a vote of seven of its members, pass emergency measures to take effect at the time indicated therein. On and after January 1, 2028, an emergency measure requires an affirmative vote by no less than eight members for passage. On and after January 1, 2030, an emergency measure requires an affirmative vote by no less than nine members for passage. An emergency measure is an ordinance or resolution for the immediate preservation of the public peace, property, health or safety, or providing for an emergency in the usual daily operation of a municipal department, in which the emergency is set forth and defined in a preamble thereto.

Sec. 41-3. - Nomination of municipal officers.

(a) Candidates for the office of city council member and for mayor, city attorney, and auditor, shall be nominated by a nonpartisan primary election. The name of any elector of the city shall be printed upon the primary ballot if there is filed with the election authorities a valid nominating petition in accordance with the following provisions:

- (1) The requirements for such petition form and circulation, and for the validation of such petition and the parts thereof and signatures thereon, shall be as provided for nonpartisan nominations in general laws of the state, unless otherwise provided for by this charter or ordinance of council.
- (2) For the offices of mayor, city attorney and city auditor such petition shall be signed by not less than one thousand registered electors of the city and such signatures shall be affixed thereon no more than one year prior to the date of filing; and, to ensure a strong voice for electors in each council district, for each council district such petition shall be signed by not less than ~~two hundred and fifty~~ one hundred and fifty registered electors of the district; and, for each council at-large seat, such petition shall be signed by not less than two hundred and fifty registered electors of the city.
- (3) Such petitions shall be filed with the election authorities no later than four p.m., not less than ninety days previous to the day of such primary election.
- (4) Such petitions shall contain the names and addresses of five registered electors of the city of Columbus designated in advance by the candidate or candidates as a nominating committee.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a) of this section, if no petition in accordance with the provisions of this section is filed for any of the offices to be voted on at the next regular municipal election, or if the number of persons filing such petitions does not exceed, as to any such office, the number of candidates which would be placed upon the ballot at the next regular municipal election, then no primary election should be held for the purpose of nominating candidates for such office to be voted upon at such next regular municipal election. The election officials whose duty it would have been to provide for and conduct the holding of such primary election, shall declare the results thereof and issue certificates of nomination to the persons entitled thereto if such primary election had been held, shall declare each of such persons filing petitions in accordance with the provisions of this section to be nominated and shall place their names on the ballot at the next regular municipal election in the same manner as though such primary election had been held and such persons had been nominated at such elections.

Sec. 41-5. - Election of municipal officers.

With the exception of city council offices, every ~~Every~~ elector of the city may vote for any municipal office appearing on a primary, general, or special election ballot. Electors may only vote for candidates for city council from the district in which the elector resides. The two candidates for nomination to any municipal

office, including a councilmember elected by district, who shall receive the greatest number of votes in a primary election shall be placed on the ballot at a regular municipal election, and the candidates at the regular municipal election who shall receive the highest number of votes for their respective offices at such regular municipal election, shall be declared elected. The ballot in each district shall contain both citywide races and the district council race for that respective district. A tie between candidates for any office shall be decided by lot under the direction of the election authorities, as provided by the general election laws of the state.

Sec. 41-5-1. – Election of municipal officers; at-large council complement.

Beginning with the primary election in 2027, every elector of the city may vote for any at-large city council office appearing on a primary, general, or special election ballot. Elections for at-large city council offices shall be conducted in accordance with Sec. 41-5.

Sec. 46. - The recall.

Any elective officer provided for in this charter may be removed from office by recall petition. Such recall petition shall contain the signatures of not less than fifteen per cent of the number of electors who voted in the last preceding regular municipal election for mayor, except that a recall petition for a councilmember shall contain the signatures of electors from their district only, equaling not less than fifteen per cent of the number of electors from their district who voted in the last preceding regular municipal election for mayor. Except as herein otherwise provided, no petition for recall shall be filed within one-hundred-eighty days after a person takes office, or within ninety days preceding a regular municipal election for such office. No more than three elective officers may be subject to the recall at any election.

Sec. 46-0-1 – The recall; at-large council complement

Beginning January 1, 2028, any at-large council member may be removed from office by recall petition. Such recall petition shall contain the signatures of not less than fifteen per cent of the number of electors who voted in the last preceding regular municipal election for mayor and except as herein otherwise provided, no petition for recall for an at-large council member shall be filed within one-hundred-eighty days after a person takes office, or within ninety days preceding a regular municipal election for such office.

Sec. 46-3 - Placement of recall on the ballot.

The question of the removal of the elective officer shall be submitted to the electors of the city or, if the officer is a council member, to the electors of the district the officer represents, at the next regular municipal election if one shall occur not less than sixty, nor more than one-hundred-twenty, days after the city clerk determines the sufficiency of the same. If no such election will be held within the period herein provided, the city clerk shall order and provide for a special election within such period. If more than three valid petitions have been found sufficient, the three petitions bearing the most valid signatures shall be submitted at such an election. After such election, the city clerk shall repeat the provisions herein until all such sufficient petitions have been submitted to the electors.

Sec. 46-3-1 – Placement of recall on the ballot; at-large council complement

Beginning January 1, 2028, the question of the removal of an at-large council member shall be submitted to the electors of the city at the next regular municipal election if one shall occur not less than sixty, nor more than one-hundred-twenty, days after the city clerk determines the sufficiency of the same. If no such election will be held within the period herein provided, the city clerk shall order and provide for a special election within such period. If more than three valid petitions have been found sufficient, the three petitions bearing the most valid signatures shall be submitted at such an election. After such election, the city clerk shall repeat the provisions herein until all such sufficient petitions have been submitted to the electors.