



**Minutes of the Charter Review Commission Town Hall from Tuesday May 20, 2025, 7 p.m.**

Charter Review Commission Members Present: Denny Mariola, Dennis Campbell, Rick Charles, Amy Jones, Janice Arch, Nancy Binzel, Christy Staats

City Officials Present: Drew Reilly, Hannah Morris, Steven Hooten

Chair Dennis Campbell welcomed and thanked those in attendance. He explained the goal of the Town Hall being to explain how the Charter Review Commission worked and what they had been working on as a commission. He then wanted to explain what portions of the charter they have worked through as well as the amendments to the charter they are considering presenting to the council for change as well as topics they have discussed changing but yet to make a decision on having the Law Department make amendments to submit to council.

Mr. Campbell gave a presentation (available on the Charter Review Commission section on the City's website)

He let the audience know what sections had been covered thus far:

- Article 1 – Name and Boundary
- Article 2 – Municipal Powers
- Article 3 – Mayor
- Article 4 – The Council
- Article 5 - Wards
- Article 6 – Department of Finance
- Article 7 – Department of Public Service
- Article 8 – Department of Public Safety
- Article 9 – Department of Law
- Article 10 – Planning Commission and Zoning Procedure
- Article 11 – Board of Zoning and Building Appeals
- Article 12 – Civil Service Commission
- Article 13 – Parks and Recreation Board
- Article 14 – Cemetery Board
- Article 15 – Finances
- Article 16 – Nominations and Elections

- Article 17 – Initiative, Referendum, and Recall
- Article 18 – Franchise
- Article 19 – Amendments to Charter
- Article 20 – Charter Review Commission
- Article 21 – General Provisions
- Article 22 – Budgeting Procedures

He explained the current items discussed for a possible change are :

Section 21.08 – Term limits for elected officials: Currently reads as follows:

A. Mayor, Finance Director and Law Director. With the exception of completing an unexpired term the Mayor, Finance Director and Law Director shall serve no more than two consecutive four year terms in the same elected office and no more than a total of ten consecutive years. Any elected person who is disqualified from holding public office due to the term limitation shall become eligible to hold the same public office upon the expiration of two years.

B. City Council. No member of Council shall serve more than eight consecutive years in the same elected office or serve more than four consecutive two year terms in the same elected office for the City of Council, Ward or At-Large. For the purpose of this section, the office of ward councilperson and the office of at-large councilperson shall be considered the same public office. Any elected person disqualified from holding public office due to the term limitation shall become eligible to hold the same office upon the expiration of two years.

**The proposed change to this piece:**

A. ~~Mayor, Finance Director and Law Director.~~ With the exception of completing an unexpired term the Mayor, ~~Finance Director and Law Director~~ shall serve no more than two consecutive four year terms in the same elected office and no more than a total of ten consecutive years. Any elected person who is disqualified from holding public office due to the term limitation shall become eligible to hold the same public office upon the expiration of two years.

B. **Finance Director and Law Director.** **With the exception of completing an unexpired term, the Finance Director and the Law Director shall serve no more than three consecutive four year terms in the same elected office and no more than a total of 14 consecutive years. Any elected person who is disqualified from holding public office due to term limitation shall become eligible to hold the same public office upon the expiration of two years.**

C. City Council. No member of Council shall serve more than eight consecutive years in the same elected office or serve more than four consecutive two year terms in the same elected office for the City of Council, Ward or At-Large. For the purpose of this section, the office of ward councilperson and the office of at-large councilperson shall be

considered the same public office. Any elected person disqualified from holding public office due to the term limitation shall become eligible to hold the same office upon the expiration of two years.

Mr. Campbell had explained that rational behind this proposed change to the amount of terms for Finance and Law Director. Mr. Charles reiterated those reasons as well.

Mr. Campbell had then asked if anyone who had planned on speaking at the Town Hall to stand and he swore them all in as a group.

He then opened the floor up to public comment:

Christopher Enrick (3631 Oak Rd- Stow) spoke in favor of this amendment, and that he would even rather remove the term limits in general but extending them is a great start.

Kim Butler ( 2515 River Downs- Stow) agreed that this would be a good amendment to the charter.

Tom McGregor (1975 Sandy Hook- Stow) stated his opinions on this change, he agreed it would help to get and keep a quality person in those positions.

Mr. Campbell then showed a slide of possible changes they have been discussing but have not created any amendments for at this point.

Rank Choice Voting / Instant Run-off, Council Term Lengths and Staggering Council Terms.

Mr. Campbell explained Rank Choice voting and gave an example of how it would work.

Mr. Charles explained that the commission has had residents and outside input regarding this controversial issue, even being discussed in Columbus. He said that the commission want the feedback on this issue. Since it would be new to the City not just the Charter.

Ms. Jones spoke and let everyone know that this topic has had the most input from the community as well.

Amy Cajka (4612 Muirwood Pl- Stow) she spoke in favor of Rank Choice Voting.

David Baumgardner (3078 Showshoe Cir-Stow) was sworn in, spoke not in favor of Rank Choice Voting, stating that his philosophy is one person, one vote, he spoke in favor of changing the charter to going to partisan politics over Rank Choice Voting.

Christopher Enrick ( 3631 Oak Rd- Stow) spoke in favor of Rank Choice Voting, he liked that it avoids partisanship, and that it allows two people from the same party to run against another.

Angie Charles (3447 Saratoga Blvd- Stow) spoke in favor of Rank Choice Voting, she stated that Mr. Baumgardner spoke that Stow is non-partisan that the city has started heading in a way to rank choice voting by getting rid of primary partisan elections. She likes that the person elected would have to have the majority vote of the City.

Liam Arch (5491 Timber Ln ) was sworn in- stated that he has spoken many people across political spectra, about Rank Choice Voting. He stated they all have different needs, but they agree that Rank Choice Voting would be a good thing in Stow.

Matthew Chevalier (3759 Kent Rd) wanted to ask the commission a question if they had a plan for the system to cope with ballot exhaustion. He clarified his question per the request of Mr. Charles. He wanted to know that if he had 5 options to vote for, and only chose one, rather than ranking them, if his vote did not get the top pick, then his vote does not matter any longer.

Mr. Charles explained that as a commission they had not explored the rules, but it would rely on the board of elections as well as the state would allow. He further explained that it would be critical to have the education for the population, so the elector has the information ahead of time on how Rank Choice Voting works.

Ms. Binzel expressed that it would be similar if you have a vote to fill 3 seats and you only vote for 2. But it also said that it would be an option with RCV that if you only wanted to vote for one out of ranking all the options, you still have that choice to do so.

Ms. Staats explained that based on her research on RCV it lets the people have the variance of choice of who they are voting for whether they really want to vote for more than one or not vote for someone at all.

Mr. Chevalier expressed that he appreciated the verbiage of having Instant Run-off added to the language and that helped to clarify things as well. He stated as a concept he is in favor of RCV, but he understands the complexity of education and how important that would be prior to this going forward.

Ms. Jones wanted to let the audience know that there is nothing set in stone regarding RCV yet, and they really wanted to have the feedback before making final decisions.

Kim Butler spoke again- she stated that she is in favor of RCV, stated that this is really not a foreign concept but wanted to be sure that if this goes forward that the language be very clear so there was less confusion.

Tom McGregor wanted to have the commission clarify how RCV works.

Mr. Reilly clarified the example that was presented to the audience, and how the instant run off works in the process of Rank Choice Voting.

Mr. McGregor after getting clarification stated that this is allowing someone to win with the popular vote, even if they didn't get the first round picks but they were the most favorable pick overall.

Ms. Staats gave an additional clarification about how it is going to get someone to be the over 50% of the vote to win. Explained that if you had so many people running for the next mayor, someone could technically win with 20% of the vote.

Mr. McGregor stated that if that is how it works, he would be in favor of it but then wanted to know how this is affected by State Bill 63 that was explained on the Stow Sunshine Project. He wanted to know and understand how this would be affected if that passes in the House.

Mr. Campbell had explained as well that the Law Department has been keeping the commission up to date on how this could be affected if that bill passes. Also that this has just been a discussion piece and no amendments have been drafted yet.

Mr. Campbell stated that there would be language that it follows state guidelines, but also this is why they wanted to get feedback prior to getting anything drafted

Mr. Charles reiterated that this is something they are watching.

Mr. McGregor stated he would just be concerned about funding if it passes then the City is tasked with fitting this into their budget.

Ms. Binzel stated that it also depends on if it passes and then holds up in court and there are a lot of "if's" in this change

Sam Galioto (2120 Norton Rd) wanted to give his feedback regarding RCV. He had multiple different sources and articles. He feels that RCV is an attempt to subvert the will of the people and that it would confuse the voters. He stated he's against it. He thinks its about political power, he believes in one person one vote and that has how it has been.

Mr. Chevalier spoke again- he said he thinks this rewards civic engagement, and this is a reward by doing the research on candidates. He had questions if there is evidence that if this type of voting or the traditional type of voting brings more voters out.

Ms. Binzel stated that his question is beyond the commissions expertise on the topic but that there are people that would know those types of answers

Mr. Chevalier stated he thinks whatever type of voting would get the most people out to vote would be best.

Ms. Staats had asked Mr. Galioto if he could provide the commission with his research and studies that way they could look into it more in depth.

Ted London (3582 Charring Cross- Stow) stated that he does like the idea of RCV. He likes that even if the voters first choice did not get picked but their second choice did, he felt that the voter would feel like they did have a say in who won.

Kyle Herman (3652 Hiwood Ave) stated he appreciated the discussion that has been facilitated at the town hall and the questions that have been raised regarding RCV. He explained that RCV is solving the problem of upholding majority rule. This would help that the winner of the election is not winning with a low percentage of the vote since there were so many candidates and it makes it so they have to have the majority vote. He provided many studies and examples of where RCV

has worked and provided answers to some of the questions raised by residents in regard to funding and education.

Mr. Mariola had to cut off Mr. Herman due to the length of his public comment. Ms. Jones did ask that Mr. Herman provide the commission his resources and information he had in regard to RCV.

Christopher Enrick (Oak Rd)- he stated that he has voted for 4 different major parties and that is why he supports RCV that way if your first choice doesn't win you still have the choice to have a second or third choice. He feels that Senate Bill 63 has the bipartisan support because it's the parties that do not support RCV because it allows a person to vote nonpartisan.

Liam Arch spoke again that RCV allows a voter to be more informed about their vote if they are looking at voting for more than one candidate.

Katherine Chevalier (3759 Kent Rd) was sworn in and had a question for the commission whether there is a cut off for how many candidates can run or could the possibility of having say 32 different candidates that are running for one spot and having to rank all of those.

Mr. Campbell stated that the Board of Elections outlines the requirements for petitions for someone to be on a ballot and that the city cannot restrict that number.

Mr. Reilly agreed with Mr. Campbell that there is no limit for the amount of people that can be on a ballot and legally they cannot do anything about that number.

Mr. Campbell had asked if there were any more discussion, there was no more comments from the audience. He then asked Ms. Morris to read into the record any emails that were sent in regarding this topic.

Ms. Morris read in two emails, one from Tim Shaw (3140 Berwin Dr) had asked for Rank Choice Voting to be added to the charter or have an amendment be considered. A second email from John Behringer that he would also like to see Rank Choice Voting added to the charter. He stated that Rank Choice Voting is the future, he expressed his support for how important it is. Stow has the opportunity to drive the United States to be more fair and just one city at a time and that using Rank Choice Voting is a more balanced system and should be important to everyone.

Mr. Campbell then moved onto the next topic that the Commission is considering discussing. Council Term limits. He explained currently council serves 2-year terms and they are discussing changing that to 4-year terms. And also, offsetting ward council terms and at-large council terms. He expressed the Commission's concern regarding that the possibility that there could be an overturn of the whole council at one time if they all lost their seat to a new person.

Ms. Binzel stated it could alter term limits, but that it would be written in a way that current council members would be grandfathered in and not any new winning council members would apply to the grandfathering in.

Ms. Staats stated that Kent, Hudson, Tallmadge and Cuyahoga Falls all have staggered council terms and that was also part of the discussion in wanting to change this. Also that way then the members of council are not spending half there term prepping for re-election and could focus on the job as a council member.

Christopher Enrick (Oak Rd)- he stated he liked the idea of this to help prevent the full turnover of council, and that the inherent knowledge of council to help keep that experience on council and that way there isn't a whole new learning curve of protocol at meetings etc. He also is in support of staggering the ward and at-large seats that way the full city has something to vote for in each election.

Sam Galioto had a question about how it would effect current sitting members of council.

Mr. Campbell stated it would only extend someone's eligibility for 2 years more

Ms. Binzel clarified that currently it is set for four 2-year terms, and they are discussing changing to two 4-year terms. So those people would only be eligible for an additional 2 years but then they would be termed out.

Angie Charles spoke and agreed with he reasons that had been cited by the commission as well as the other residents. She added that elections are expensive and by doing this it would allow more people to run for office. Allows for more time to fundraise as well campaigning. it allows for others to consider getting involved.

Pamela Wind (4558 Chatwood Dr) was sworn in- stated that even though she is an elected official, she is speaking tonight as herself, she wanted to echo the previous residents points of in favor of longer terms and staggering due to it being difficult to do the job and to run a campaign at the same time. The potential of having full turnover is the most important piece and how dysfunctional that could be for meetings.

Matthew Chevalier (3759 Rd) stated he did appreciate how it was laid out the staggering and 4-year terms, but he wanted to know is how you go from the current format to getting to the staggering. Considering there is an election this fall for council for the 2-year terms.

Ms. Binzel explained that obviously this eyra wouldn't be changed, but those in the next election the wards would run for a 4-year term at that time, then the at-large seats would run for another 2-year term. Then after that two years, the at-large would run at that point for 4-year term and that would start the 4 year terms for both as well as staggering them every two years. And any existing council could be eligible for another 2 years if they are a sitting council and would win another election to make those changes to 4-year terms.

Mr. Chevalier had asked instead of someone getting two more years of eligibility if they could have an advisory role but where they aren't on the council, but they have a role still rather than changing temporary change.

The commission explained that within the charter there would be too many places where that would have to be changed to allow that situation where having the exception of two extra years until they could fall into 4-year staggered terms would only be one change in the charter.

Mr. Reilly had followed up that he could foresee legal issues just to have those extra roles temporarily. He thought it was a good idea, but there could be a lot more issues that way.

Ms. Binzel had encouraged Mr. Chevalier to apply to be on the next charter review commission.

Kim Butler (25 Riverdale) expressed support for this change due to the discussion of voter fatigue having to vote for council every two years. She felt there so many elections and it would be nice to have them have more time in their seat rather than having to run every two years.

No further comments on this topic.

Mr. Campbell reiterated the recommendations that have been submitted to council at this point. And encouraged the audience to come to council meetings to show their voice.

Mr. Campbell thanked everyone for coming and sharing their feedback and let them know that they would now be starting a charter review commission meeting and that the Town Hall at that point was finished.

Mr. Reilly reminded that there would be a Charter review commission meeting the next night, May 21.

Angie Charles (3447 Saratoga Blvd) had come back to ask if the commission if any of the items they planned to put forward to council had done so in the past and council had turned them down for putting on the ballot. She stated that she had talked to a Hudson council member, and he shared that any recommendation that comes from the Charter review commission automatically goes onto the ballot and doesn't require City Council approval. She shared that is also something that should be considered by this commission.

Ms. Binzel expressed that they could do that but even still, that change would have to be approved by 5 of 7 council members.

Ms. Charles said that there are a lot of recommendations being discussed and some have been brought up before and shot down by council on getting to the ballot and she feels the voters of Stow should have the opportunity to vote on these recommendations.

Mr. Campbell stated that historically the commission in 2015 did not have things submitted in time as described in the charter and in 2020 if there were similar topics to what they are proposing they have been restructured. He stated the commission has spent a lot of time and

thought behind the recommendations and time spent getting feedback from the community and hoping to get feedback from council so if they need to make changes they have time to do so before the deadline.

The charter review commission began discussion on whether they wanted to rank the proposed items they have thus far before meeting to council.

Mr. Reilly put the discussion items on the screen with also adding in number of wards to be adjusted as well.

Mr. Charles stated that the reason they are ranking items, is because the council had asked to prioritize their work. Mr. Charles stated at first thought yes, we should. Now he has changed his mind. They had spent the last 6 months reviewing line by line and he's reluctant on saying one is more important than another. He feels they had given them a set of items that would improvements they feel need to be done to make the charter better and run the government better. He felt that council should be the ones to prioritize.

Ms. Staats originally stated she came in ready to prioritize them, Ms. Arch and Ms. Binzel agreed.

Ms. Staats said she feels that the council as elected officials they should be the ones to go through them and see what they think of them and not have the commission rank them. She felt that their role was to try and make choices to make the government better and make it better functioning.

Mr. Campbell states that he feels that a few things they are proposing that could be loopholes and he feels that they need to be ranked higher than others. He felt that the wants to go forward to council not adversarial role as the previous commissions has done and doesn't want their work to be thrown out.

Mr. Mariola stated at first he agreed with Mr. Charles but then he felt the more he thought about it he's changing his mind and that he feels on what Mr. Campbell stated regarding Finance Director and Law Director. He wants to know what happens if council decides to not put anything forward.

Mr. Reilly stated council has zero obligation to review and rank them. He stated that if council puts them to the ballot whichever order they vote them through that is the way they will be listed on the ballot. He also explained that council can put a few of the suggestions on this year and even next year add them to another election.

Ms. Binzel also added that citizens can put forth a petition to get things on the ballot as well.

Mr. Campbell just didn't want to see the time and effort to be wasted.

Ms. Staats feels that if she had to rank them that Rank Choice Voting would be her top pick mainly because that is the most discussed topic with the residents.

Mr. mariola wanted to task council how they would rank them and have that open dialogue with them show that the commission is willing to work with them.

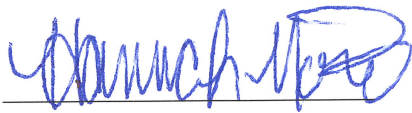
Ms. Arch wanted to know if they could break them into groups. Of the commissions top picks, the residents first pick and share that with council.

Ms. Binzel had thought this would be the best time since there aren't a lot of things on the ballot thus far and this would be the year to put on more changes to alleviate voter fatigue.

Ms. Arch had thought there could be less voters to come out since there isn't a lot of items on currently.

The commission decided to wait until they talked to council to make it a collaborative effort with them so they could get the feedback from them as well.

Motion to adjourn was made by Nancy Binzel and seconded by Amy Jones, motion carried unanimously.



Clerk



Chairman