



**Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR
REMOTELY via ZOOM**

**When: Oct 27, 2025 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Topic: Charter Change Committee Meeting**

Join from PC, Mac, iPad, or Android:

<https://zoom.us/j/96832615204?pwd=1xxC53A6BxY9pw5Ct93U5QBLbQ4kPE.1>

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+1 507 473 4847 US

+1 564 217 2000 US

+1 669 444 9171 US

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

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International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/abpdI7inGO>

1. Agenda

1.1. Motion to amend/adopt agenda

2. Public Forum

Subject

Meeting

Category

Department

Type

2.1. Verbal Comments

October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

2. Public Forum

Council and Board

3. Adding REIB Department to the Charter Discussion

Subject **3.1. Adding REIB Department to the Charter Discussion**

Meeting October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category 3. Adding REIB Department to the Charter Discussion

Department Council and Board

Type

Recommended Action

4. City Council Authority to Pledge Credit Charter Discussion

Subject **4.1. City Council Authority to Pledge Credit Charter Discussion**

Meeting October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category 4. City Council Authority to Pledge Credit Charter Discussion

Department Council and Board

Type

Recommended Action

5. General Fund Tax Fairness Charter Discussion

Subject **5.1. General Fund Tax Fairness Charter Discussion**

Meeting October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category 5. General Fund Tax Fairness Charter Discussion

Department Council and Board

Type

Recommended Action

6. Any Other Committee Business

Subject **6.1. Any Other Committee Business**

Meeting October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM

Category 6. Any Other Committee Business

Department Council and Board

Type

Recommended Action

7. Adjournment

Subject	7.1. Motion to adjourn
Meeting	October 27, 2025 - Charter Change Committee Meeting Agenda - Monday, October 27, 2025, 6:00 PM, Queen City Room 3rd Floor, City Hall OR REMOTELY via ZOOM
Category	7. Adjournment
Department	Council and Board
Type	
Recommended Action	



Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB)

Date: July 9, 2015

To: Burlington City Council

From: Christian Berry, Interim Director

Re: Recommended Action: Motion to Refer the REIB Proposed Charter Language to the Charter Change Committee

Introduction

This memo proposes the formal addition of the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) to Burlington's City Charter and recommends City Council refer the proposed REIB Charter Language to the Charter Change Committee for further action.

Establishing the REIB Office within the city's charter signifies a commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice throughout our city. This initiative aligns with our ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive community, and it addresses systemic inequities that have historically affected the most underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized members of our community.

History of Racial Equity and Social Justice Work in City Governance

The City of Burlington has taken significant strides towards racial equity and social justice since the early 2000s. In 2000, the City Council adopted the Legacy Action Plan, outlining a vision for improving the city's economic, environmental, social, and cultural health for future generations. This plan initially overlooked the urgent need to assess and address systemic barriers related to diversity and racial equity, which were incorporated into the plan in 2010.

In 2011, under the direction of the Social Equity Director, Wanda Hines, a Unity Retreat convened over 50 stakeholders to identify structural barriers and emphasize the necessity of a coordinated, city-supported plan to advance racial equity. This work laid the foundation for future initiatives. A resolution to create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee was passed by the City Council in 2012 and by late 2013, the city enlisted the Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity to develop a strategic plan addressing racial and ethnic disparities. This plan was adopted in 2014 with the goal of embedding inclusion, equity, and justice into city operations.

In response to identified gaps in Burlington's approach to addressing racial and social disparities, the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) was established in 2019. This formal launch created a centralized structure to lead internal systems change efforts and public-facing equity initiatives throughout the city. Tyeastia Green was appointed as the City's first Director of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in 2020.

Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Initially, the City of Burlington's efforts to address racial equity were often reactive rather than proactive, leading to a fragmented approach to social justice. Establishing a dedicated Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging provided a centralized focus for racial equity and social justice-based efforts and initiatives, ensuring ongoing attention to issues faced by the most underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized members of our community.



Since its establishment in 2019, the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) has emerged as a key driver of systemic equity efforts throughout city governance. The office's work is now integrated into internal policies, public engagement initiatives, budget planning, education and training, and service delivery. In response to community needs and organizational gaps, the REIB's strategic and operational responsibilities have expanded. The REIB continues to be relied upon to lead and support equity-based initiatives across departments and within city policies.

Currently, the need for a formal REIB Office is more urgent than ever. National conversations surrounding racial inequality and ongoing attacks on human rights reveal the systemic injustices faced not only by racial and ethnic groups, but also by various underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized groups, including those impacted by socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and other factors that result in disparate treatment.

The focus on inclusion and belonging emphasizes the importance of creating a community where everyone feels safe, valued, and supported, irrespective of their backgrounds or experiences. An official Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging would ensure that racial equity and social justice considerations are integral to all city policies and programs, rather than an afterthought.

Justification for Including the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and REIB Director position in Burlington's City Charter

Institutionalizing the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging within Burlington's City Charter offers numerous benefits for future governance. By embedding the REIB Office in the Charter, the city demonstrates an unwavering commitment to prioritizing racial equity and social justice in all aspects of governance and community development. This institutionalization creates a mechanism for long-term accountability, ensuring that city officials and employees remain responsible for promoting equity and belonging in both policy decisions and program implementations.

Furthermore, a chartered REIB Office facilitates a centralized, coordinated approach to equity-based initiatives, effectively breaking down silos between departments while ensuring comprehensive strategies that address systemic inequities. It also allows for dedicated funding and resources, thereby enabling the sustainable development of programs that cater to the needs of the most underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized members of our community. This formal commitment fosters greater public trust and engagement, as community members will feel more included in the decision-making processes knowing there is an office specifically dedicated to their concerns.

With the REIB Office enshrined in the City Charter, considerations of racial equity would be systematically integrated into all city policies, programs, practices, and services, promoting a culture of inclusion throughout municipal governance. The REIB can conduct regular assessments, collect data, and provide ongoing training regarding racial equity, leading to better-informed decision-making by city officials. Moreover, its establishment encourages community engagement and empowerment, creating a platform where voices from various backgrounds can be heard, leading to more impactful initiatives.



Additionally, the REIB can set measurable goals and benchmarks for achieving racial equity, allowing the city to track progress over time and make necessary adjustments to strategies. Ultimately, embedding the REIB Office within the City Charter serves to facilitate a cultural shift towards inclusivity, supporting a broader societal change that values diversity and belonging. In summary, institutionalizing the REIB Office would create a robust framework for addressing systemic issues, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive Burlington for everyone.

Request:

Establishing the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging within Burlington’s City Charter is a vital step towards fostering an inclusive and equitable community. This formal recognition will ensure that our commitment to racial equity, inclusion, and belonging is embedded in the governance of our city, paving the way for systemic change and accountability. Adding the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to Burlington’s City Charter is a crucial step toward reinforcing our commitment to equity and justice.

Proposed Motion: “To waive the first reading of the proposed Charter Change and forward the language to the Charter Change Committee for further deliberation subject to review and approval of the City Attorney’s Office.”



Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (REIB) Charter Language

The City of Burlington shall form an Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and establish a Director of Racial Equity Inclusion and Belonging.

The REIB Director role shall be a permanent position in the City appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.

1. The REIB Office shall be under supervision, direction and control of director subject to the orders and ordinances of city council
2. The office of racial equity, inclusion, and belonging administrative officer shall have all of the powers, duties, and responsibilities as are provided in the racial equity, inclusion, and belonging director position description.

Subject to the orders and ordinances of the City Council, the Mayor and REIB director shall develop and implement a comprehensive racial equity, inclusion, and belonging strategy for the City of Burlington.

In furtherance of this work, the REIB director shall, subject to the orders and ordinances of the City Council, have the following rights, powers and duties, and implement such alongside all city departments:

1. To work on behalf of the City to advance equity and social justice by championing diversity, inclusion, belonging, and anti-racism;
2. To develop, coordinate, implement, and administer racial equity and inclusion strategies and projects for the City;
3. To recommend to city departments, the mayor's office, and City Council, policy and program changes to better advance racial equity and inclusion in the City;
4. To enhance representation in city government through decision-making bodies, community engagement initiatives, and policy development process for folks who hold underserved communities;
5. To coordinate and facilitate resident engagement in the City that encourages inclusive spaces for engagement with city government.

Resolution Relating to

MARCH 3, 2026 ANNUAL CITY MEETING – CHARTER
CHANGE RE: CITY COUNCIL AUTHORITY TO PLEDGE
CREDIT OF THE CITY (REFERRAL TO CHARTER
CHANGE COMMITTEE)

RESOLUTION^{5.8}

Sponsor(s): Bergman
Introduced: 10/21/25
Referred to:
Action: adopted as amended
Date: 10/21/25
Signed by Mayor: 10/23/25

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-Five.....

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

1 That WHEREAS, § 62 of the City Charter generally requires voter approval to sell general obligation
2 bonds, but allows the City Council to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to sell up to \$2 million in
3 general obligation bonds per fiscal year for working capital and capital expenses, while also granting the legal
4 voters of the City the power to referend the City Council’s exercise of said authority; and

5 WHEREAS, § 63 of the City Charter grants similar authority to the City Council upon
6 recommendation of the Board of Light Commissioners to authorize the sale of bonds up to \$3 million for use
7 by the Burlington Electric Department, said authorization also subject to the voters’ referendum power; and

8 WHEREAS, bonds sold under § 63 are on the general credit of the City but are to be paid from rates
9 rather than from property taxes; and

10 WHEREAS, the City has significant deferred maintenance needs for its infrastructure, including the
11 infrastructure of its electrical, drinking water, storm drainage, and wastewater systems, and delays in
12 addressing deferred maintenance needs typically increase costs once those needs are addressed; and

13 WHEREAS, due to inflation, the dollar limits specified in §§ 62 and 63 are not adequate to meet the
14 City’s deferred maintenance needs; and

15 WHEREAS, the City Council desires that any increase in the \$2 million borrowing limitation of § 62
16 to be phased in to limit the burden on the City’s property taxpayers; and

17 WHEREAS, the City Council now desires to refer proposed amendments to §§ 62 and 63 of the
18 Charter to the Charter Change Committee to review and to report back in time for the City Council to place
19 any proposed amendment on the ballot for the March 3, 2026 annual City meeting;

20 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby asks the Charter Change
21 Committee to review the following proposed amendment, and to report back in time for the December 1 ,
22 2025 meeting of the City Council:

23

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ORIGINAL

DISTRIBUTION:

I hereby certify that this resolution has been sent to the following department(s) on

RESOLUTION RELATING TO

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Adopted by the City Council

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..... Clerk

Approved....., 20.....

..... Mayor

Vol. Page

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24 “Shall the Charter of the City of Burlington, Acts of 1948, No. 298, as amended, be further amended as
25 follows?:

26

27 § 62. Council; School Board; not to pledge credit of City; exceptions:

28

29 Subsections (a) to (e), *As written*.

30 (f)(1) The Chief Administrative Officer, when authorized and directed by resolution of the City
31 Council, may pledge the credit of the City by issuing negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds in an amount
32 not to exceed in the aggregate \$2 million in any fiscal year for the purpose of providing working capital and
33 capital improvements, additions, and replacements required for the efficient and economical operation of the
34 City and its departments, other than the Electric Light Department and the Water and Wastewater Divisions of
35 the Public Works Department. If any of such annual borrowing authority is used to provide working capital,
36 notes shall be issued in anticipation of the receipt of City revenue and shall mature within two years from the
37 date of issue, and may be renewed or refunded by the issue of other notes maturing within a similar period
38 whenever such action is deemed expedient. If any of such annual borrowing authority is used to provide
39 capital improvements, additions, and replacements, the negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds issued for
40 such purposes shall be of such denominations, payable at such time or times, at such rate of interest, and to be
41 sold and registered in such manner and under such terms and conditions as shall be established by resolution
42 of the City Council. Beginning in fiscal year 2028, the foregoing \$2 million limitation shall increase to not
43 more than \$5 million, and beginning in 2031, it shall increase to not more than \$10 million.

44 (2) Notwithstanding the above, however, five per cent of the qualified voters of the City may petition
45 for referendum review of the action by the City Council. Any such request for referendum review shall be in
46 accordance with and governed by the procedures specified in section 63 of this charter for borrowing on
47 behalf of Burlington Electric Department or Public Works Department.

48 Subsection (f)(3), *As written*.

49 § 63. Council may pledge credit of City when authorized by voters to do so:

50 (a) Whenever the legal voters of said City, by two-thirds vote of all voters present and voting on the question
51 at any special or annual City meeting duly warned for the purpose, or, if the purpose shall be the making of an
52 improvement relating to a public school by a majority vote of all voters present and voting on the question,
53 shall give authority to the City Council thereof to pledge the credit of said City for any purpose by issuing its
54 negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds, ~~or whenever the City Council shall determine by resolution, upon~~
55 ~~prior recommendation of the Board of Light Commissioners, that it is necessary during a fiscal year to pledge~~
56 ~~the credit of the City by issuing its negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds in an amount not to exceed in~~
57 ~~the aggregate \$3 million in any such fiscal year for the purpose of providing capital improvements, additions,~~
58 ~~and replacements required for the efficient and economical operation of the Electric Light Department,~~ said
59 City shall have power and authority to issue its negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds, and to prescribe
60 whether such bonds shall be registered or have interest coupons attached, to the amount, not to exceed the
61 limit prescribed by the general laws of the State, for which authority has been given as aforesaid to so pledge
62 the credit of said City; such notes or bonds to be of such denominations, payable at such time or times; and at

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RESOLUTION RELATING TO

Adopted by the City Council

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..... Clerk

Approved....., 20.....

..... Mayor

Vol. Page

Attest:

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63 such a rate of interest, and to be sold and registered in such manner and under such terms and conditions as
64 shall be established by resolution of said City Council.

65 (b) Whenever the City Council shall determine by resolution,

66
67 (1) Upon prior recommendation of the Board of Light Commissioners that it is necessary during a
68 fiscal year to pledge the credit of the City by issuing its negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds in
69 an amount up to in the aggregate \$6 million in any such fiscal year for the purpose of providing capital
70 improvements, additions, and replacements required for the efficient and economical operation of the
71 Electric Light Department, or

72 (2) Upon prior recommendation of the Public Works Commission that it is necessary during a fiscal
73 year to pledge the credit of the City by issuing its negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds in an
74 amount up to in the aggregate \$6 million in any such fiscal year for the purpose of providing capital
75 improvements, additions, and replacements required for the efficient and economical operation of the
76 drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste facilities operated by the Public Works
77 Department,

78 Said City shall have power and authority to issue its negotiable orders, warrants, notes, or bonds, and to
79 prescribe whether such bonds shall be registered or have interest coupons attached, to the amount, not to
80 exceed the limit prescribed by the general laws of the State, for which authority has been given as aforesaid to
81 so pledge the credit of said City. Such notes or bonds shall be of such denominations, payable at such time or
82 times, at such a rate of interest, and sold and registered in such manner and under such terms and conditions as
83 shall be established by resolution of said City Council. By majority vote, the voters of the City may increase
84 either or both borrowing limits set forth in this subsection permanently or for any fiscal year or years.

85 (c) Notwithstanding subsection (ab) of this section, however, a City Council resolution authorizing the credit
86 of the City to be pledged ~~in an amount not to exceed \$3 million in a fiscal year for the operation of the Electric~~
87 ~~Light Department as pursuant to said subsection (b) aforesaid in an amount not to exceed \$3 million in a fiscal~~
88 ~~year for the operation of the Electric Light Department as aforesaid~~ shall not give the City power to so pledge
89 its credit until 44 days have passed following the effective date of such resolution. If during such 44-day
90 period a petition is filed with the Chief Administrative Officer signed by not less than five percent of the
91 qualified voters of the City requesting a referendum vote on whether the credit of the City will be pledged in
92 accordance with the City Council resolution, the credit of the City shall not be pledged pursuant thereto unless
93 a majority of the qualified voters of the City present and voting at a duly warned annual or special City
94 meeting vote to affirm such City Council resolution. Upon receipt of a proper petition, a special City meeting
95 shall be called by the City Council within 60 days from the date such petition is received, or if the next annual
96 City meeting falls within the 60-day period, the City Council shall include an article in the warning for such
97 annual City meeting, to determine whether the voters will affirm such resolution. If at such City meeting a
98 majority of the qualified voters voting on the question affirm the action of the City Council, the City shall
99 have power to pledge its credit pursuant to the City Council resolution as of the day following such City
100 meeting. If the City Council resolution is not affirmed by a majority of the qualified voters voting on the
101 question, the City shall not have power to pledge its credit in accordance with such resolution.

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RESOLUTION RELATING TO

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Adopted by the City Council

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..... Clerk

Approved....., 20.....

..... Mayor

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Resolution Relating to

MARCH 3, 2026 ANNUAL CITY MEETING – CHARTER CHANGE RE:
CITY COUNCIL AUTHORITY TO PLEDGE CREDIT OF THE CITY
(REFERRAL TO CHARTER CHANGE COMMITTEE)

103 *Material underlined added.

104 ** Material stricken deleted.

105

106

107 *er/ Resolutions 2025/Charger Change re City Council Borrowing Authority*

108 *October 21, 2025*

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DISTRIBUTION:

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Charter Change Committee

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RESOLUTION RELATING TO


March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Charter Change re: City Council Authority to Pledge Credit of the City (Referral to Charter Change Committee)

Adopted by the City Council

October 21, 2025

 Clerk

Approved October 23, 2025

 Mayor

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Attest:



Lori Olberg
Council and Licensing Coordinator

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Resolution Relating to

MARCH 3, 2026 ANNUAL CITY MEETING – CHARTER
CHANGE RE: GENERAL FUND TAX FAIRNESS
(REFERRAL TO CHARTER CHANGE COMMITTEE)

RESOLUTION 5.7

Sponsor(s): Bergman
Introduced: 10/21/25
Referred to: _____

Action: adopted as amended
Date: 10/21/25
Signed by Mayor: 10/23/25

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty-five.....

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

- 1 That WHEREAS, § 99 of the City Charter provides for a General Fund tax in addition to all special-purpose
- 2 municipal property taxes allowed by the Charter; and
- 3 WHEREAS, the rate of the General Fund tax is set not exceed fifty-two and 76/100 cents per one
- 4 hundred dollars of assessed value on the Grand List, subject to voter-approved increases, and subject further to
- 5 downward factoring for revenue neutrality pursuant to § 98a of the City Charter; and
- 6 WHEREAS, the rate of the General Fund tax for FY26 was set by the City Council at nineteen and
- 7 32/100 cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value on the Grand List, plus 20/100 cents for bike path
- 8 maintenance, as previously approved by Burlington voters, plus 39/100 cents for open space land
- 9 conservation, as also previously approved by voters) for a total of nineteen 91/100 cents; and
- 10 WHEREAS, in CY25, the Mayor established a Tax Fairness Working Group to study the City’s
- 11 property tax system and to make recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council; and
- 12 WHEREAS, on October 6, 2025, the working group delivered its report to the City Council; and
- 13 WHEREAS, among the working group’s suggestions were splinter tax reform and the establishment of
- 14 a universal homestead real property tax exemption to make the City’s property tax system more progressive;
- 15 and
- 16 WHEREAS, the inclusion of a universal tax exemption would require resetting tax rates to avoid a
- 17 significant loss of existing revenues for the City; and
- 18 WHEREAS, the City’s General Fund tax is one of three property tax rates that is subject to revenue
- 19 neutrality pursuant to § 98a of the City Charter, which has the effect of creating a structure deficit since
- 20 revenue neutrality fails to account for annual inflation; and
- 21 WHEREAS, the City Council now desires to refer proposed amendments to § 99 of the Charter, which
- 22 would implement some of the recommendations of the Tax Fairness Working Group, to the Charter Change
- 23 Committee to review and to report back in time for the City Council to place any proposed amendment on the
- 24 ballot for the March 3, 2026 annual City meeting;

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ORIGINAL

RESOLUTION RELATING TO

Adopted by the City Council

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..... Clerk

Approved....., 20.....

..... Mayor

Vol. Page

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Resolution Relating to MARCH 3, 2026 ANNUAL CITY MEETING – CHARTER CHANGE RE: GENERAL FUND TAX FAIRNESS (REFERRAL TO CHARTER CHANGE COMMITTEE)

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby asks the Charter Change
26 Committee to review the following proposed amendment, and to report back in time for the December 1, 2025
27 meeting of the City Council:

28 “Shall the Charter of the City of Burlington, Acts of 1948, No. 298, as amended, be further amended as
29 follows?:

30

31 § 99. Additional assessment; amount:

32

33 The city council, in addition to the taxes required by the general laws of the state, and required or
34 permitted by the provisions of this Charter, to be raised upon the property grand list and not included
35 in the tax authorized by this section for city purposes may also annually at the same meeting and
36 immediately after it gives final approval to the annual city budget, assess upon the property grand list
37 for city purposes during the fiscal year, a tax which shall not exceed ~~fifty-two~~twenty-four and
38 7611/100 cents upon the dollar thereof and may assess a larger tax when authorized to do so by the
39 legal voters of said city at a meeting duly warned for that purpose. For any property declared a
40 homestead, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5410, as the same may be amended or renumbered from time to
41 time, a homestead exemption in the amount of thirty thousand dollars shall be applied, or three
42 hundred dollars per one hundred dollars of assessed value on the grand list, prior to calculating the
43 amount of the tax hereby authorized to be raised. Both this exemption amount and the maximum tax
44 rate set forth hereinabove shall be increased each fiscal year by the twelve-month increase, if any, in
45 the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers, Northeast Region, as published by the U.S.
46 Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of May in the same calendar year as the start of the fiscal year in
47 question. If the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics or successor agency ceases to publish the foregoing
48 measure of inflation, then the City Council shall select a reasonable, comparable measure of inflation.
49 In every fiscal year for which the revenue neutrality provisions of section 98a of this Charter shall
50 apply, the maximum tax rate set by this section shall be adjusted for inflation prior to adjusting said
51 rate in accordance with section 98a, and, after adjusting the exemption amount set forth herein for
52 inflation, said exemption amount shall be adjusted by multiplying it by the ratio of the total grand list
53 amount of the city after the general reassessment to the total grand list amount prior thereto.

54

55 *Material underlined added.

56 ** Material stricken deleted.

57

58

59 er/ Resolutions 2025/Charger Change (Referral) re General Fund Tax
60 October 21, 2025

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ORIGINAL

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I hereby certify that this resolution has been sent to the following department(s) on

Charter Change Committee

RESOLUTION RELATING TO

March 3, 2026 Annual City Meeting - Charter Change re: General Fund Tax Fairness
(Referral to Charter Change Committee)

▲ as amended

Adopted by the City Council

October 21
....., 2025

[Signature] Clerk

Approved *October 23*, 2025

[Signature] Mayor

Attest:
[Signature]
Lori Olberg
Council and Licensing Coordinator

Vol. Page

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Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council
From: Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak
CC: Katherine Schad, CAO and Jessica Brown, City Attorney
Date: October 16, 2025
Re: Municipal Financial Policy Changes

In late 2024, I convened an advisory group of financial experts, policy specialists, city councilors, community representatives and city staff to review the City's municipal tax policy and create a set of recommendations to create a fairer tax system. I specifically asked the group to explore how to make our tax system more equitable among all taxpayers, more affordable for low and moderately income people, and more sustainable regarding the City's revenue generating system. This work resulted in a report presented to the City Council on October 6th with a series of recommendations. The group also explored other tax policy and made recommendations on ways the City can consider simplifying our splinter taxes in the future and also made note of some state tax policy changes worth pursuing.

Among these recommendations, there is one important tax charter change item I support for immediate consideration by the City Council. The recommendation proposes **creating a universal exemption for the first \$30,000 to 50,000 of property value on homestead properties in the City**. This recommendation received the most support from members to advance for further consideration. As the report explains, "this reform would address the inequities in assessed values across low and high value properties and shift the municipal tax burden away from lower value primary residents towards higher value commercial properties." Value exemptions exist across the country, such as in Hawaii, where high property values can overburden low to moderately income full-time residents. The City already has a value exemption of \$40,000 for the primary residence owned by a veteran living with a disability, this is based on State law which mandates municipalities offer at least a \$10,000 exemption but allows them to offer up to \$40,000. As the City continues to find ways to address affordability for residents, it is important we consider this proposal as a straightforward way to begin to address the municipal tax burden on residents and rebalance how we raise revenue from primary residents compared to other types of property.

I recommend the Council also consider another charter change item that will allow the City to begin to address the chronic challenge of our structural budget gaps year over year. One major contributing factor to the City's budget gaps is that the general tax rate does not automatically increase based on inflation (CPI-U Northeast). Voters currently must approve every general tax rate

increase. This process creates undo pressure on our City's budget planning process and contributes to challenging budget decisions where we must balance the realities of inflationary growth for city operations and cost of living salary increases within collective bargaining agreements with our unions with predicting if and when our general tax rate increases. One-time funding from grants and federal covid related resources both obscured this structural gap challenge for a number of years and also led to the addition of 98 additional full time equivalent positions over the last 9 years. This grew our workforce in an unsustainable fashion without a guaranteed funding source beyond increasing local tax rates. In FY26, the City embarked on a challenging review of core services to look for cost savings to help close the \$14M budget gap. This work included a reduction of the workforce size by 25 positions. This work narrowed the structural budget gap somewhat but was never meant to be a full solution to the chronic budget gap issue.

While the Tax Fairness Working Group's mission was not specifically to address the structural budget gap challenges for the City, a proposal to **add an inflator to our general fund tax rate** is an opportunity to begin to do so and to standardize one of our tax rates to create more predictability and consistency in our tax system. This can contribute to the City's ability to offer taxpayers more accurate projections on tax increases year over year compared to our current system that often does not clarify if a tax increase is needed with only 3 to 4 months of notice before a Town Meeting Day vote.

If we add an inflator to the City's general tax rate, the Council will be able to increase the rate up to the inflation rate each year but not beyond. Other sections of the city charter empower the Council to decrease any of the City's tax rates which allows the City to respond to the needs of the community, including adjusting what may need to be raised from taxpayers to balance what is raised by any growth in our grand list.

I also recommend the City Council consider **increasing the annual borrowing limits** for the ongoing needs of the City's capital program (facilities, fleet, etc.), our Water Division, and Burlington Electric Department. These annual borrowing limits remain too low in our city charter to run the City's operations effectively and require the City to seek additional stand-alone bonds every few years to keep up with the increased costs of maintaining and replacing our infrastructure. If we increase the annual bonding limits for these three important ongoing capital needs, our City can better plan and maintain our city assets. In 2024, the Administration and Council discussed this item but ultimately decided to wait a year given the need to focus on seeking voter support for three sizable infrastructure bonds for our capital program, water and wastewater systems.

On the Council agenda for October 21, Councilor Gene Bergman is proposing a charter change to create a homestead property value exemption and adding an inflator to the general tax rate. I support both of these proposals and encourage the Council to consider advancing this proposal to committee for further exploration and study. Councilor Bergman will also be proposing a charter change to increase the annual borrowing limits.

Finally, there are two state legislative items that emerged out of the Working Group's deliberations I would like to encourage our legislative delegation to address. The first is the **state's very low maximum household income level for an individual to receive a tax credit on their municipal property tax bill**. It is currently set at \$47,000. This is compared to the state education tax property tax credit maximum household income of \$115,000. This creates a regressive tax structure for lower income households who are paying a higher share of their income towards municipal taxes than they do for state education tax. The second is to encourage the **state to review the state Renter Credit Program** to better assist renters with the high cost of rent

compared to modest income levels. Currently, income limits are very low to qualify for a full rental credit. A family of four in Chittenden County must earn less than \$35,650 for a full credit and the maximum income for a family of four is \$77,290 for a partial credit. This program greatly benefits very low-income households but leaves many households out with such low-income levels.

I would like to thank City Assessor Joe Turner and Senior Policy and Data Analyst Nancy Stetson for leading this work alongside Director of Finance Bradley Kukenberger, Assistant City Attorney Erik Ramakrishnan, and my Chief of Staff Erin Jacobsen. I also appreciate the time and thought that all members of the group provided over the last several months. You can find a complete list of these community members in the report. Thank you for your service to the City.
