

**Charter Change Committee**  
**Monday, October 27, 2025**  
**Remote via Zoom/In-Person in Queen City Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall, Burlington,**  
**Vermont**  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Becca Brown McKnight (Chair), Gene Bergman, Evan Litwin

**Staff Present:** Jessica Brown (City Attorney), Kelli Perkins (REIB Director), Katie Greene (REIB Program Manager), Katherine Schad (Chief Administrative Officer), Jennifer Zakaras (Deputy Chief of Staff), , Erik Ramakrishnan (Assistant City Attorney)

**Public Present:** Sharon Bushor, Keren Sita, Evan G

Meeting called to order at 6:04 PM by Councilor McKnight.

**1. Adopt the Agenda**  
**1.01 Adopt the Agenda**

*Motion to Adopt Agenda as written.*

*Motion by Councilor Bergman, Seconded by Councilor McKnight*

*Final Resolution: Motion Passes*

*Yes: Unanimous*

**2. Public Forum**  
**2.01 Verbal Comments**

Sharon Bushor commented on Agenda Item 4.01, stating there is no timeline indicated for paying back credit as opposed to the usual language included in past budget resolutions. Bushor also expressed concern over adding \$6 million for DPW Water Resources, considering the recent \$200 million bond for this department, and whether this would actually reduce the City's debt. Bushor spoke in support of Item 5.01, regarding the proposed homestead exemption, and wondered how the group arrived at \$30,000. Bushor also wanted to know the impact on non-homestead and commercial properties, and noted she does not support the ability for the City to raise the general tax rate based on CPI.

Keren Sita asked for documentation regarding new leadership's plans for REIB.

Evan G spoke to Item 5.01, asking the Committee to look at the impact on renters in developing this policy, suggesting a per-unit exemption or other alternatives in addition to the flat rate.

Public forum closed at 6:17 PM.

**3. Adding REIB Department to the Charter Discussion**  
**3.01 Adding REIB Department to the Charter Discussion**

The Committee discussed community feedback received at the last REIB Committee meetings with REIB Director Kelli Perkins and REIB Program Manager Katie Greene.

To depoliticize the Director role, community feedback expressed support for structuring the REIB Director position as a role subject to the hiring process versus mayoral appointment, but that if mayoral appointment were to make it into the final charter language, the appointment should be for two years.

Dr. Perkins confirmed the language is mostly there, except to change “recommend” to “consult” on page 4 of the memo in the proposed charter language.

The Committee requested clarification on director appointment by the next meeting to be able to vote the charter change out of the Committee.

#### **4. City Council Authority to Pledge Credit Charter Discussion** **4.01 City Council Authority to Pledge Credit Charter Discussion**

CAO Schad reviewed the reasons for proposing to increase the City’s and relevant departments’ borrowing limits in the charter, to meet capital expense needs over the long-term.

CAO Schad clarified for Councilor Bergman that the requirement to pay back borrowed amounts within two years only applies to working capital, as opposed to capital improvements, the terms for which are set by resolution.

Councilor McKnight confirmed with CAO Schad that the Director of Finance would be sending out a breakdown of future debt projections and the potential tax implications, in the context of increased borrowing authority.

No action was taken.

#### **5. General Fund Tax Fairness Charter Discussion** **5.01 General Fund Tax Fairness Charter Discussion**

Deputy Chief of Staff Zakaras reviewed the proposal originating from the Mayor’s Tax Fairness Working Group that proposes an exemption for the first \$30,000 of property value for homesteads, to address inequities in assessed property values.

Councilor McKnight requested further documentation outlining this change.

Data Analyst Stetson clarified for Councilor Litwin how the working group arrived at \$30,000. CAO Schad also added the amounts paid to the City by affordable housing organizations is dictated by state statute and will not be affected by this charter change. Attorney Ramakrishnan confirmed Vermont has no form of rent stabilization, answering Councilor Litwin’s concern regarding if Burlington would have any power to prevent landlords from passing costs onto renters.

Councilor Bergman noted that properties falling under housing subsidy covenants should be made easily identifiable for the Assessor's Office. Councilor Bergman also requested more information on the impact to smaller landlords' properties and indicated he would be open to separating the exemption from the inflation aspect of the charter change.

Councilor McKnight asked that the City consider bring in outside expertise to weigh in on the impact to businesses from a potential increase in commercial property taxes as well as a ward-by-ward impact report.

Attorney Ramakrishnan clarified this change only impacts the General Fund Municipal Tax and no other municipal taxes.

No action was taken.

**6. Any Other Committee Business**  
**6.01 Any Other Committee Business**

No action was taken.

**7. Adjournment**  
**7.01 Motion to adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned with no objection at 7:40 PM.