



BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL CHARTER CHANGE COMMITTEE
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pwd=YTISREprYzkvdXhrZ0c3cUFRZTRqdz09 Meeting ID: 878 7022

Charter Change Committee

Minutes of June 8, 2020

Present: Joan Shannon (JSh), Chair; Perri Freeman (PF), Jane Stromberg (JSt)

Invited presenters present: Terrill Bouricius, Robert Bristow-Johnston, Jane Knodell

Staff present: Eileen Blackwood (EB), City Attorney

Other attendees (speakers at Public Forum):

JF Carter Neubiser

Jack Hanson

Winifred McCarthy

Samantha Hurt

Jean Hopkins

Tom Proctor

Daniel Brown

Kate Lapp

Kurt Wright

Grant Crichfield

Solveig Overby

David Nichells

Zoraya Hightower

Joe O'Brien

Chair JSh called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.



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1.01 Agenda. PF moved to adopt the agenda; JSt seconded. JSt moved to amend the agenda not to adjourn at a time certain; PF seconded. Amendment adopted 2 (PF, JSt) -1 (JSh).

PF asked why each speaker was given a different time. JSh responded that she tried to give them the times they asked for. Presenter Knodell offered to speak for only 10 minutes.

The motion to adopt the agenda as amended was then voted on and carried unanimously, and the agenda as amended as adopted.

2.01 Minutes. JSt moved to approve the minutes of May 20, 2020. PF seconded.

The motion carried unanimously, and the minutes of May 20 were approved.

3.0 Presentations

3.01 Robert Bristow-Johnson presented a slide show and spoke in favor of the Condorcet voting method and an analysis of the 2009 Burlington election.

3.02 Prof. Jane Knodell presented research analyzing ranked choice voting and the concern of exhausted ballots. The research pointed out the concern that if a voter does not mark multiple choices, their vote may not be counted, so that the winner may not receive a majority of all ballots cast. The point was also raised that different class of voters may be differentially affected, including voters of different races, education, or income.

PF asked if these concerns weren't also true of the current voting system—that if a voter didn't vote for one of the top two candidates, their vote essentially didn't count. The presenter clarified that the research did not draw comparisons to the current system.

3.03 Terrill Bouricius pointed out that all election systems have flaws and drawbacks and strengths. He spoke about several concerns with the Condorcet system, including that a person can win if they are no one's first choice. He also spoke to the use of ranked choice voting in other communities and the fact that the current system supports polarization.



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4.01 Public Forum.

The above 14 speakers spoke concerning ranked choice voting, 11 in favor and 3 against.

5.01 Ranked Choice Voting.

JSt moved to recommend to the council that it adopt the proposed charter change regarding ranked choice voting and ask the mayor to call a special election in November so that the proposed change could be placed on the ballot, as follows:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council calls on the Mayor to call a special election to be held at the same time as the November 3, 2020 general election in order to place a charter change question on ranked choice voting for the election of the City's mayor, city councilors, and school commissioners before the voters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council hereby places on this special election ballot the following question on ranked choice voting for the election of the City's mayor, city councilors, and school commissioners through the amendment of City Charter § 5 and asks the City Clerk to set public hearings on this question as required by law:

"Shall the Charter of the City of Burlington, Acts of 1949, No. 298 as amended, be further amended to allow for ranked choice voting for the election of the City's mayor, city councilors, and school commissioners through the amendment of City Charter § 5 as follows:

§ 5 Election to be by ballot; method of election; runoff elections. ~~The election of the mayor, all city councilors and school commissioners shall be by ballot, and the person or persons receiving a plurality of all votes cast for any office aforesaid shall, except as hereinafter provided, be declared elected thereto. However, if no person receives at least 40 percent of all votes cast for any office aforesaid, no one shall be declared elected and a runoff election shall be held. The only candidates in the runoff election shall be the two persons receiving the greater number of votes or, in case of a tie, the persons receiving the greatest number of votes or the persons receiving the second greatest number of votes. The chief administrative officer shall within seven days warn a runoff election to be held not less than 12 days nor more than 20 days after the date of the warning. The warning shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city and posted in a public place. The person or persons receiving a plurality of all the votes case in a runoff election shall be declared elected.~~

All elections of mayor, city councilors and school commissioners shall be by ballot, using a system of ranked choice voting without a separate runoff election. The chief administrative officer shall implement a ranked choice voting protocol according to these guidelines:

(1) The ballot shall give voters the option of ranking candidates in order of preference.



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(2) If a candidate receives a majority (over 50 percent) of first preferences, that candidate is elected.

(3) If no candidate receives a majority of first preferences, an instant runoff re-tabulation shall be performed by the presiding election officer. The instant runoff re-tabulation shall be conducted in rounds. In each round, each voter's ballot shall count as a single vote for whichever continuing candidate the voter has ranked highest. The candidate with the fewest votes after each round shall be eliminated until only two candidates remain, with the candidate then receiving the greatest number of votes being elected.

(4) The city council may adopt additional regulations consistent with this subsection to implement these standards.

PF seconded.

Each of the Committee members then spoke to the motion. PF has supported ranked choice voting for many years and believes it is a much better system than our current voting system. She explained some of the advantages of ranked choice voting over plurality voting. JSt agreed with PF's comments and noted that she thought the voters should decide. JSh expressed some concerns based on Burlington's prior experience with instant-runoff voting and having the vote taken in November rather than March.

The motion carried 2 (PF, JSt) to 1 (JS). City Attorney Blackwood will prepare a resolution for the Council.

6.01 The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

