

September 10, 2013

The Honorable John C. Hoffman
Chief Judge Tenth Judicial District
Washington County Government Center
14949 – 62nd Street North
Stillwater, MN 55082-3802

Re: City of Ramsey, Anoka County, Minnesota, Charter Commission Annual Report

Dear Judge Hoffman:

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 410.05, the following is an annual report reflecting the activities of the City of Ramsey Charter Commission during the year 2012.

Members of the Charter Commission for 2012 were as follows: Susan Anderson, Jim Bendtsen Benjamin Deemer, Joseph Field, John Niederhaus, Harry Niska, Marilyn (Moe) Shea, Cindy Sherman, and Chad Sivertson. Commissioners Shea and Sherman did not request reappointment to the Charter Commission when their terms ended December 31, 2012.

The Charter Commission met on March 26, 2102. Commissioner Field was elected as Chair and Commissioner Sherman was elected as Vice Chair for the year 2012. It was noted there were two new members - John Niederhaus and Chad Sivertson. Both replaced resigning members and are filling a term to expire December 31, 2013. Discussion was held on Chapter 8 of the Charter regarding Special Assessment Petitions. It was noted that currently 35 percent of benefitted property owners can petition for a public improvement, then requiring a simple City Council majority vote to order the improvement, or without a petition, or less than 35 percent of the benefitted property owners petition, the City Council, can, with a four-fifths vote, order the public improvement. The recommendation to the Charter Commission was to consider changing the 35 percent petition numbers to the higher threshold of 50 percent. The reasoning behind the recommendation was to have a higher bar to get a project going before all the commitments and all City resources go forward. This would be more efficient and still meet the intent that the project could be stopped. The City would like to be more efficient – including cost efficient on the front end. The Charter Commission directed the City Attorney to draft an ordinance – changing the petition amount from 35 percent to 50 percent and bringing it back for Charter review. The Charter also reviewed the publication requirements for the City's newsletter. After a fairly lengthy discussion, the Commission voted to postpone this subject. The Commission approved the Summary Letter to the Judge for year 2011.

The Ramsey Charter Commission met on April 19, 2012, and approved the ordinance language drafted by the City Attorney which would change the petition amount for a public improvement to 50 percent. The City Council reviewed the language and adopted the amendment to the Charter, which became effective October 1, 2012. The Charter Commission discussed Chapter 2 of the City's Charter, specifically Section 2.3 Council Composition and Election. Discussion centered on 2.3.3 Transition Schedule. A motion was approved that the City Attorney should draft ordinance language to delete 2.3.3 and rewrite the last sentence of 2.3.1 which refers to 2.3.3, to make it easier to understand what years different wards are elected. Section 2.5 Vacancies were discussed and a motion was approved that the City Attorney draft ordinance language amending 2.5 to clarify the clause referring to non-residency in the City to have language to include non-residency in the ward. A fairly lengthy discussion took place regarding Chapter 4, Section 4.5 Vacancy of Municipal Elected Office. A motion was approved to postpone any action on that section, work on ideas for clearer language, and bring it back to a future meeting. The Charter Commission discussed a request by a Ramsey resident relating to changing the format of the City's Charter to that of the United States Constitution. The Commission felt that it was not necessary to change the format but they would welcome specific examples if the resident felt some language of the Charter should be amended. They directed that the City Attorney draft a letter to the resident telling him of the Charter's discussion. The Commission discussed the issue of the City's newsletter – the issue being that Council had suggested something less than six issues per year which would save on printing and distribution costs; however, the Charter states that there shall be six issues per year. The Commission determined that if Council wanted to reduce the number of issues to four, the City Attorney could draft an ordinance to amend the Charter to reduce the number of issues required. *(The outcome of this discussion was that the City Council opted to keep the number of issues at six; however, two of the six would be a double-sided page of news inserted in and mailed out with the utility bills. The other four issues would be published and distributed as they have been.)*

The Charter Commission held no other meetings in 2012.

Very truly yours,

On behalf of the Ramsey City Charter Commission

Jo Ann M. Thieling, CMC
City Clerk