

**CHARTER COMMISSION  
CITY OF RAMSEY  
ANOKA COUNTY  
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Charter Commission conducted a regular meeting on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:           Chairperson Joseph Field  
                                  Commissioner Joshua Fuhreck  
                                  Commissioner Victor Jumah  
                                  Commissioner Jennifer Leistico  
                                  Commissioner David May  
                                  Commissioner Laura Moore  
                                  Commissioner Amy Rusert

Members Absent:           Commissioner Jim Bendtsen  
                                  Commissioner Ben Deemer

Also Present:               City Clerk Katie Schmidt  
                                  City Administrator Brian Hagen  
                                  City Attorney Fritz Knaak

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Field called the regular meeting of the Charter Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

**CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**APPROVE AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Fuhreck, seconded by Commissioner May, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Fuhreck, May, Jumah, Leistico, Moore and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

**APPROVE MINUTES**

Motion by Commissioner May, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to approve the following meeting minutes as presented:

- 1)     Regular Charter Commission Meeting dated July 19, 2023

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners May, Leistico, Fuhreck, Jumah, Moore and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

## **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.1 Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2024-2025**

Chairperson Field opened the floor for nominations for the position of Chair.

Commissioner Fuhreck nominated Joe Field for the position of Chair.

There were no other nominations.

Chairperson Field declared the position filled as there were no other nominations.

Chairperson Field opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson.

Chairperson Field nominated David May as Vice Chairperson.

There were no other nominations.

Chairperson Field declared the position filled as there were no other nominations.

### **5.2 Approve Year-End Activity Letter for Chief Judge for Year 2023**

Chairperson Field stated that the draft letter was included in the packet for review.

Motion by Commissioner Rusert, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to approve the year-end annual report letter for 2023 and direct staff to submit such report to the Honorable Elizabeth Strand, Chief Judge of the Tenth Judicial District.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Rusert, Leistico, Fuhreck, Jumah, May, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

### **5.3 Ordinance #25-02 Amending the City Charter**

City Administrator Hagen stated that these are relatively minor changes to the Charter that were identified for efficiency and mirror current practices.

Commissioner May stated that he agrees with opportunities to save money and utilize emerging technologies, he would also encourage the City to engage the residents and promote civic engagement.

City Administrator Hagen provided a summary of the proposed amendment related to Council vacancies as a result of a Councilmember moving out of the city and/or their respective ward.

Commissioner Fuhreck recalled a situation in which a Councilmember moved to another ward and asked if that Councilmember resigned when he moved.

City Clerk Schmidt replied that in that situation, the Councilmember may have stayed within the same ward when he moved, or he moved to the at-large seat and vacated his ward seat.

City Administrator Hagen continued to review the proposed amendments.

Commissioner Leistico commented that it seems reasonable to add the language “or respected ward” related to vacancies and the Commission agreed.

Chairperson Field called for a vote and upon unanimous vote of the Charter Commission, that proposed amendment was recommended for approval.

Chairperson Field moved to the next section related to a Council meeting and noted that it appears there was some reorganization of language in the sections.

City Administrator Hagen noted that notification requirements were updated to match State requirements as well.

Chairperson Field expressed concern with the authority to call an emergency meeting and whether that is provided through this language.

Commissioner Moore asked if language should be added, stating that an emergency meeting could be called if there is a declared state of emergency.

City Attorney Knaak stated that there could be emergency meetings that do not fall under a declared state of emergency and provided examples. He also provided details on the process that would be followed in that scenario.

Chairperson Field stated that the existing language also does not grant authority for the Council to call an emergency meeting and only provides the notification requirements.

Commissioner May asked if the State must declare an emergency or whether the City could declare its own emergency.

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the authority and definition within the state statute.

City Attorney Knaak explained when a special meeting may be called for different purposes as well as when an emergency meeting may be called for.

Commissioner Moore asked for clarification on the notice requirement as it appears the 24-hour requirement is being removed.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the 24-hour notice requirement does not meet the state statute requirement and therefore needs to be changed. He stated that in order to keep things as

simple as possible and stay in line with state statute requirements, the ordinance would reference the statute.

Chairperson Field stated that he would find it helpful to see the statute before incorporating that reference.

Commissioner Rusert asked if the emergency meeting should fall under a subset of 3.1. to be encompassed under special meetings.

Commissioner Moore agreed that would make sense.

Chairperson Field noted the different notice requirements for special and emergency meetings and therefore did not believe they should fall under the same paragraph. He continued to ask if this language would grant the authority for the Council to call an emergency meeting.

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the language.

Chairperson Field provided suggested language that he believed would grant the authority and refer to the statute. He stated that even if state statute provides that authority, it should still be specified in the Charter as well.

Commissioner Jumah wondered if they were rushing this.

Chairperson Field identified other issues that he had with this proposed amendment including the use of “immediate jeopardy” and whether that is defined, the definition of citizen in regard to public comment, and the reasonable restrictions that could be placed upon public comment.

City Administrator Hagen replied that this language is being carried over from the existing language. He provided more detailed information on the public input process and the typical limitation of three to five minutes for public input.

City Attorney Knaak stated that the City is able to manage the meeting, which includes public input. He explained that these restrictions ensure that the information provided is not repetitive. He stated that members of the public are provided with an opportunity to speak about something not on the agenda, but reasonable time limits are placed on that as well in order to manage the meeting.

Chairperson Field stated that for the benefit of the public, it might be helpful for the public to have that information ahead of time, as to what the restrictions may be.

City Administrator Hagen commented that the Council does not always choose to enact the three-minute time limit, providing an example of a sewer backup that impacted six properties. He noted that at that meeting, over 90 minutes was spent discussing that issue. He noted that there are also seven members of the Council, and they often govern each other and speak up if they believe someone should be given more time to speak.

City Attorney Knaak provided additional input on the limitations of open forum compared to a public hearing.

Commissioner Moore commented that she likes the language proposed for 3.1.4 as presented. She commented that there are seven members, and they govern each other.

Commissioner Leistico recognized that this is not proposed for changes and therefore did not see a reason to look for problems that do not exist.

Commissioner Jumah commented that he would like more time to review before passing this on.

Chairperson Field requested that this section be tabled to address some of the issues presented at the meeting related to 3.1.2.

It was the consensus of the Commission that this section should be tabled to the next meeting.

Motion by Commissioner May, seconded by Commissioner Jumah, to table the proposed amendments to Section 3.1.2.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners May, Jumah, Fuhreck, and Rusert. Voting No: Commissioners Leistico and Moore. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

Chairperson Field moved the discussion to the proposed amendments to Section 3.4.2. He asked how a split vote would be recorded if there is not a roll call vote.

City Administrator Hagen stated that the ordinance itself records those who vote in favor and against.

Chairperson Field asked for clarification on how the votes are recorded if a roll call vote is not taken.

Commissioner Fuhreck commented that the minutes also record the votes for and against.

Commissioner May commented that there is value to the public in knowing how people vote on the Council, and it is not that time-consuming to take a roll call vote.

Chairperson Field stated that in a unanimous vote, he could agree with this change and asked whether a roll call vote would be triggered if there was a dissenting vote.

City Administrator Hagen stated that if there is confusion either the Mayor or staff ask for clarification to ensure the record is correct. He confirmed that the minutes also show those voting in favor and against and if there is an error in those minutes, the Council would correct that information.

Commissioner Leistico reiterated that the votes are still recorded in the minutes, it is just the method of voting that is suggested to change.

City Clerk Schmidt confirmed that every vote is recorded within the minutes, showing those that voted in favor and against.

Chairperson Field asked the purpose of a roll call vote.

City Attorney Knaak commented that some of this is legacy process, such as a provision in the Charter to waive the requirement to read something aloud, that no longer serves its original function. He explained that the necessity that used to exist no longer exists, although a member of the Council could request a roll call vote at any time even if this provision is removed.

Chairperson Field commented that his main concern was that the votes were known and that appears to be so.

Motion by Commissioner Fuhreck, seconded by Commissioner Moore, to recommend approval of the proposed changes to Section 3.4.2 as proposed.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Fuhreck, Moore, Jumah, Leistico, May, and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

Chairperson Field moved to the next proposed amendment for 3.5.

City Administrator Hagen also noted the proposed changes to 3.7 and provided a summary.

Chairperson Field asked where the notice requirement would be found.

City Administrator Hagen provided additional details on the state statute requirement as well as the City process. He stated that the City must meet state statute, and it would not make sense to include every state statute within the Charter.

Motion by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to recommend approval of the suggested changes to Sections 3.5 and 3.7 as presented.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Moore, Leistico, Fuhreck, Jumah, May, and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

Chairperson Field continued with the review of the proposed changes to 3.9.

Commissioner Fuhreck commented that it is a notice period to a change in the law and there is virtue in that.

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the publication that occurs after the adoption of an ordinance.

Chairperson Field stated that the ordinance also goes on two Council meetings before adoption, which provides notice as well.

Commissioner Jumah asked how this would apply to the publication of the newsletter.

City Administrator Hagen replied that the newsletter is not the official form of publication for that type of item.

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Rusert, to recommend adoption of the proposed changes to 3.9 as presented.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Leistico, Rusert, Fuhreck, Jumah, May, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

Chairperson Field noted the next proposed changes in 7.6.1.

City Administrator Hagen provided additional context on the proposed changes and how they align with the current practices of the City Council.

Commissioner Fuhreck stated that he understands why this needs to be done but believed that more clear language is needed.

Commissioner Leistico also agreed with the intent and desire for better language.

City Administrator Hagen noted that this could be tabled, and staff could bring back alternative language.

Motion by Commissioner Fuhreck, seconded by Commissioner May, to table the proposed amendments to Section 7.6.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Fuhreck, May, Jumah, Leistico, Moore and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

Chairperson Field moved to the proposed changes for Section 12.13.

City Administrator Hagen stated that he would not recommend less than four issues and stated that he does not feel strongly one way or the other, explaining that this is more driven by the budget.

Commissioner Fuhreck commented that it seems the City is stretching for new material in newsletters and it would also be more fiscally responsible to reduce the number of issues and therefore supports this amendment.

Commissioner May agreed.

Commissioner Leistico agreed that it would make sense for the newsletter to follow seasonality.

Commissioner Moore commented that she likes the idea of six issues. She noted that the *Ramsey Recycler* is currently not counted in the newsletter issues.

Chairperson Field commented that he would not want to see the *Ramsey Recycler* counted as the newsletter.

Commissioner Fuhreck commented that it is interesting that the Charter includes language related to the newsletter at all.

Commissioner Jumah stated that perhaps a QR code is added to the newsletter to allow residents the option to sign up for a digital format rather than printed, which could also save on costs.

City Administrator Hagen stated that the City receives a price break for mass mailing and therefore picking and choosing addresses would not result in a cost savings.

Motion by Commissioner May, seconded by Commissioner Rusert, to recommend approval of the proposed amendments to Section 12.13 which include publishing the newsletter four times each year.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners May, Rusert, Fuhreck, Jumah, Leistico, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

## **7. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT**

Commissioner Fuhreck thanked City Administrator Hagen for tackling this issue and addressing these items proactively.

Chairperson Field recognized Commissioner Bendtsen for his service to the Commission for the past ten years and thanked him for his service as he will not continue to serve in 2025.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Fuhreck, seconded by Commissioner May, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Field, Commissioners Fuhreck, May, Jumah, Leistico, Moore and Rusert. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Bendtsen and Deemer.

The regular meeting of the Charter Commission adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Katie Schmidt  
City Clerk

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Fritz Knaak  
City Attorney

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*