

# **SAMPLE DRAFT SECTION**

## **(Draft Charter Review Committee Report)**

### **RANKED CHOICE VOTING**

The Charter Review Committee met on February 16, 2022, to consider a possible amendment to the City Charter to provide for ranked choice voting (RCV) in Council member elections. Ranked-choice voting allows voters to rank their candidate preferences on the ballot rather than voting simply for a single candidate. At the outset, only first choice votes are counted. If no candidate wins a majority among those first choice votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated from the race and their voters' second choices are applied to the tallies of the remaining candidates. The process continues until one candidate achieves a majority of votes cast and thus wins the election.

The Committee heard a presentation from Deva Marie Proto, the Sonoma County Registrar of Voters, as well as the City Attorney. Ms. Proto provided a thorough explanation of the ranked choice voting process. She also outlined the equipment and software required for its implementation and provided an estimate of initial and on-going costs. Estimated costs included a one-time investment of approximately \$350,000 for the purchase and installation of needed software and approximately \$70,000 in annual processing costs. Additional costs would likely be incurred for required printing, ballot design, and educational materials. The City Attorney provided data on ranked choice voting results in four Bay Area jurisdictions in the 2018 and/or 2020 election cycles. The data indicated that, out of 32 elections reviewed, ranked choice voting resulted in a different result in one race. In all other races, the candidate leading in the initial vote prevailed in the final round as well.

After a thorough discussion, a straw poll was conducted in which the Committee voted 17 to 3 against a Charter amendment. Those opposed to an amendment expressed that:

- Ranked choice voting seems a “solution in search of a problem”; a possible answer to a possible problem in the future, but not yet warranted for Santa Rosa City Council elections;
- The complexity of a ranked choice voting ballot may discourage voting and add to voter skepticism of election outcomes;
- The financial burden to the City outweighs the marginal benefits;
- Because of the relatively small size of district elections, and the fact that in other jurisdictions ranked choice voting has rarely changed the election outcome, a change to the current system is not needed.

Those in support of an amendment expressed that:

- Ranked choice voting ensures a broadly-accepted winning candidate;
- Ranked choice voting encourages voters to look more closely at the entire slate of candidates and not simply focus on their initial candidate of choice;
- Ranked choice voting, while perhaps not needed now, may prove important in the future.

In a final vote of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, the Committee recommended against preparation of a ballot measure related to ranked choice voting.