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To: [CharterReviewCommittee](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment re Mayor System
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Hello members of the Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to provide you with my comments as you debate that and other changes to the city charter. Specifically:

1. Council member pay: I am strongly in favor of paying council members a livable salary. This is an extremely important job, Santa Rosa has a wealth of talent that could fill it, but who simply cannot afford to run for office.

I would suggest that compensation be liveable, possibly tied to the median household income of Santa Rosa, but much less than the compensation afforded to the Board of Supervisors so that elected officials are incentivized to make hard decisions rather than to protect their salary.

2. Strong mayor system: I would also like to voice my support for a change away from the council-manager system towards a strong(er) mayor system. I believe this will serve several important purposes:

a. Increased accountability to the public: I doubt that the general Santa Rosan can even name the current city manager, and I think this poses an accountability problem. Santa Rosa is faced with a number of pressing issues, homelessness and affordable housing being the largest, that are unevenly shared by the districts and their councilmembers. In addition, each individual councilmember has relatively little power to address the issues facing their district. A stronger mayor, accountable to the citizens when they go out in public and with more power to address issues, will help improve accountability. After all, if Santa Rosans didn't like what Sean McGlynn did or what Maraskeshia Smith is doing, what are their options for addressing it?

b. Better policy and a more robust policy-making apparatus: Relatedly, the push-pull an elected mayor and elected city council will have incentives to have more debates in public about the issues facing the city. This will result in a more robust and public policy-making system that will result in a better policy approach for Santa Rosa.

c. Development of local political talent: A stronger mayor will also allow local political talent to cut their teeth and gain experience in the 25th largest city in California before moving on to other offices that will allow them to advocate for Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. Mike McGuire has done well for himself and the county, but the bench behind him is not particularly deep. Having someone with a higher profile will ultimately better serve the city.

d. Cost-savings and equity: Finally, an elected mayor will not be paid \$270,000 in salary, not including benefits. While not a huge dollar amount, Santa Rosa has known its share of hard times and will continue to face pension issues into the future. Removing an extremely highly-compensated employee who makes almost 4 times the annual household income of Santa Rosa (\$75,000) is both a smart money move and a step towards equity - why should executives be paid so highly in a city with a homelessness crisis and thousands of families struggling to get by?

Thank you for your time and your service on this committee.

Julian