

# City Charter Review

## Study Session

City Council Meeting  
August 3, 2021

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# Background

- Santa Rosa is a Charter City
- City Charter adopted by the voters pursuant to California Constitution “home rule” provisions
- The City Charter is, in essence, the City’s constitution

# Significance of City Charter

- Adoption of City Charter gives City maximum authority over its own governance and operations
- With respect to municipal affairs, the City Charter, ordinances and resolutions will prevail over state law

# Significance of City Charter

- City authority, however, is not absolute
- With respect to matters of statewide concern, state law will preempt local regulation
- The line between what is a municipal affair vs a matter of statewide concern is evolving as statewide circumstances change

# Significance of City Charter

- The City Charter is a high-level governing document
- Does not itself need to address all elements of municipal affairs
- Details of City governance and operation are generally set forth in Council-approved ordinances and resolutions

# Significance of City Charter

- Absent a voter-approved City Charter, the City would be a general law city, governed by the general laws of the state
- Just a note of curiosity -- Of California's 481 cities, 121 are Charter Cities

# Key Elements of SR City Charter

- Before we begin our Charter review process, it's helpful to understand the basic nature and scope of the existing City Charter

# Key Elements of SR City Charter

- Preservation of local control:
  - Authorizes Council to adopt ordinances in relation to municipal affairs
  - Those ordinances to control over the general laws of the state
  - Allows general state laws fill in the gaps, while retaining maximum City control



# Key Elements of SR City Charter

- Establishment of the City
- Composition of the City Council
- Meetings and procedures of the City Council
- Selection, roles and responsibilities of Mayor and Vice Mayor

# Key Elements of the Charter

- Ordinance procedures
- Boards, Commissions and Community Engagement
- Roles and responsibilities of City officers and employees
- Labor and employment, including personnel rules and regulations and binding arbitration

# Key Elements of the Charter

- Budget and Finance
- Utilities, including establishment of Board of Public Utilities
- Timing and procedures for municipal elections
- Public records

# Key Elements of the Charter

- Procurement and contracting, including design build
- Employee ethics
- Campaign finance reform

# Charter Review

- City Charter Section 12 provides for review of the City Charter every ten years
- Last Charter review began in 2011 and resulted in proposed revisions placed on the November 2012 ballot
- Council has directed that a new Charter review begin this fall

# Charter Review

- Charter review may consider revisions, additions or deletions of Charter provisions
- Any proposed changes to the Charter are subject to voter approval

# Procedures for Charter Review

- To be led by Charter Review Committee appointed by the Council
- Committee to be comprised of 21 city residents
- Each Council member to appoint three Committee members
- Diversity of age, race, background and interest

# Procedures for Charter Review

- Charter Review Committee to begin its work in September
- Committee to research and draft recommended amendments to the City Charter
- In recent past, Committees have worked five to nine months to evaluate and develop proposals
- Extent of work depends on nature of proposals



# Procedures for Charter Review

- Committee recommendations will be presented to City Council
- If approved by Council, proposed revisions to the Charter will be placed on the November 2022 ballot for voter consideration
- If approved by the voters, revisions will be reflected in the Charter

# Procedures for Charter Review

- Possible topics for discussion:
  - Directly elected at-large Mayor
  - Ranked choice voting
  - Police auditor / Police citizen oversight commission
  - Council compensation

# Procedures for Charter Review

- Possible topics for discussion (con't):
  - Climate change
  - Diversity, equity and inclusion
  - Taxation
  - Regulation of rental properties

# Procedures for Charter Review

- Possible topics for discussion (con't):
  - Council continues to seek additional input from the broader community
  - Council also seeks recommendations from those who work most closely with the current Charter, including City employees, unions and department heads

# Sample Process 2012 Charter Review

- Charter review process began in late spring/early summer 2011
- Charter Review Committee created by Council resolution on August 2, 2011
- Committee comprised of 21 citizens, with each Council Member appointing three committee members
- Mike Senneff appointed Chair

# Sample Process

## 2012 Charter Review

- Council's August 2, 2011 Resolution identified eight possible issues for Committee to discuss
- Committee appointments were made quickly and the Committee began its work in September 2011
- Committee met twice monthly for about nine months
- Tremendous amount of work done both by the Committee and City staff

# Sample Process

## 2012 Charter Review

- At the end of the process, four ballot measures were presented to the voters in the November 2012 election
- Three of the four measures passed:
  - Measure Q: District Council Members Elections (failed)
  - Measure R: Binding Arbitration for Police and Fire Employee Disputes (passed)
  - Measure S: Design Build Procurement (passed)
  - Measure T: Charter reorganization, update and clarifications (passed)

# Sample Process

## 2002 Charter Review

- 2002 Charter Review Committee, also comprised of 21 members, worked for approximately five months
- Three ballot measures were presented to the voters in the November 2002 election
- Two of the three measures passed:
  - Measure L: Combined Charter Amendments (passed)
  - Measure M: Council Compensation (failed)
  - Measure O: Campaign Finance Reform (passed)



# Next Steps

- Continued community outreach
- August 17<sup>th</sup> Council meeting – Resolution creating Charter Review Committee and giving direction
- Appointment of Committee members
- Mid-September – First Committee meeting

# Council Direction

- Additional Council direction is requested:
  - Method of selecting Chair of the Charter Review Committee
  - Standards for prioritization of proposals
  - Any additional guidance regarding the Charter review process

# Application for membership on Charter Review Committee

- Applications for Committee membership may be filed on-line or in the Office of the City Clerk:
  - <https://srcity.org/3621/City-Charter-Review-2022>
  - Office of the City Clerk  
100 Santa Rosa Ave, Room 10  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

**QUESTIONS?**