

AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR CHARTER REVIEW

MOTION

The Los Angeles City Charter is the foundation of how our City government works. It defines the powers and responsibilities of the Mayor, City Council, departments, boards and commissions, and establishes the systems through which the City makes decisions and delivers services to Angelenos.

Los Angeles has undertaken comprehensive Charter reform at important moments in the City's history. Following the political abuses of the Frank Shaw era, Charter changes sought to strengthen the civil service and protect City government from political interference. Decades later, concerns about accountability, executive authority, administrative management, representation, and the relationship between City Hall and its communities contributed to another comprehensive reform effort. The secession movement in the San Fernando Valley and Harbor Area brought those questions into sharper focus and helped drive the Charter reform process that culminated in voter approval of a new City Charter in 1999. That Charter changed the organization of City government, strengthened management and auditing functions, and created new mechanisms for neighborhood participation.

The issues that prompted that reform have not disappeared. Los Angeles continues to confront questions about how authority is allocated, how decisions are made and implemented, how elected officials and departments are held accountable, and how communities participate in City government. In 2024, the City again convened a Charter Reform Commission to examine these questions. While certain recommendations advanced for consideration by voters, other matters were deferred, referred for further study, or remained unresolved.

The Council has now established an Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review to continue that work, and the Committee has an opportunity to build on work already undertaken while identifying issues that have emerged since the last comprehensive review. The Committee should begin by taking stock of what has already been proposed and studied, what remains unresolved, and how those questions fit within the Charter as a whole.

A comprehensive Charter review should begin with the experience of Angelenos and the people who understand how City government works in practice. The Committee should create meaningful opportunities for communities across Los Angeles to identify where the structure and operation of City government can be improved, while drawing on the experience of current and former City officials, labor and civic organizations, academics, practitioners, and governance experts. The goal is not simply to revise individual provisions, but to strengthen the institutions of City government so they are more effective, accountable, responsive, and prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Clerk and Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), with the assistance of the City Attorney as appropriate, be instructed to report on the applicable provisions of the Los Angeles City Charter and California Elections Code governing the submission of Charter amendments to the voters, including applicable deadlines and procedures, and to provide a proposed timeline identifying the key dates and milestones necessary for the development, analysis, Council consideration, and submission of potential Charter amendments to the voters.

I FURTHER MOVE that the CLA, with the assistance of the City Clerk and City Attorney, be instructed to prepare and maintain a public-facing matrix for consideration by the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review identifying:

- Recommendations and proposals considered by the 2024 Charter Reform Commission that were deferred, identified for further study, or otherwise not finally resolved or placed before the voters;
- Pending Council Files proposing, requesting study of, or otherwise concerning potential amendments to the City Charter;
- Significant Charter-related matters identified for further study or future consideration during prior comprehensive Charter reform efforts, to the extent reasonably identifiable from existing City records;
- Other Charter-related matters previously identified by the Council, City departments, commissions, or other City bodies as warranting consideration as part of a comprehensive Charter review; and
- For each identified matter, its subject area, current status, responsible department or office, prior reports or Council actions, relevant election or procedural considerations, and any relationship to other Charter provisions or proposals under consideration.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review be requested, consistent with applicable Council procedures, to provide meaningful opportunities for residents, constituents and stakeholders across the City to participate, and to solicit testimony and analysis from academics, practitioners, current and former City officials, labor and civic organizations, governance experts, and other subject-matter experts.

I FURTHER MOVE that the CLA, with the assistance of the City Attorney as appropriate, be instructed to prepare for the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review's initial meetings a timeline and summary of significant amendments to the City Charter, with particular emphasis on major and recent amendments, identifying the Charter sections affected, the subject matter and purpose of each change, and, where reasonably available, the circumstances or reform effort that led to its adoption. The report should highlight significant changes to the structure, authority, management, and representation of City government and provide a concise historical reference to help inform the Committee's priorities and identify areas warranting further review.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Administrative Officer (CAO), with the assistance of the City Attorney as appropriate, be requested to assist the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Review in evaluating potential reforms, including by identifying comparable practices and Charter provisions in other jurisdictions through analyzing their fiscal, labor, and operational implications and interaction with the City Charter. The CAO should advise the Committee throughout the review on potential labor relations implications, including matters that may implicate meet-and-confer obligations, so that such considerations can be identified and addressed at the appropriate stage of the process.

PRESENTED BY: 

TIM McOSKER
Councilmember, 15th District

SECONDED BY: 

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