

**UPDATE MINNEAPOLIS
CHARTER CHANGE PROPOSAL
Questions and Answers**

What is the problem?

Minneapolis' size, needs, and demographics have changed remarkably in the last 137 years. But its charter, which establishes the structure of city government, has changed hardly at all since its adoption in 1872. It is a relic. And it burdens the city's leaders with an antiquated, obsolete, and overly complex structure that harms the city's competitiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability to voters. It's a muddled structure that produces a city government in which so many people are in charge that no one is in charge.

Why change now?

Global and national events are pushing every layer of government to review its efficiency, function, transparency, and accountability. As President Obama said at his inauguration, it's not a question of whether government is too big or too small; it's how well government works. Presented now with a massive \$52 million cut in state aid over the next two years, Minneapolis needs a government with clearer lines of responsibility in order to make sure that citizens get the most for their money, and that the city is agile enough to compete with other cities across the metro, state, nation, and world.

What is the change?

Stronger professional management and a streamlined reporting structure are at the heart of this change. All city department heads would report to a new City Administrator answerable to the Mayor and City Council. Currently, a City Coordinator works with some departments while eight other major department heads report directly to the Mayor and City Council. That creates a chaotic situation in which department heads have 14 bosses, sometimes with conflicting agendas. The new structure will allow the Mayor and City Council to concentrate on setting policy while day-to-day operations will be shifted to rational and sensible professional management.

In addition, separate charter amendments would shift the responsibilities of the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Park Board to the new city structure. If approved by voters, the Council will set the tax levy, thus eliminating the need for the outmoded Board of Estimate and Taxation. And the Park Board will become an advisory body to a new Parks department. The Parks department head will, along with other department heads, report to the City Administrator. One aim is to shift savings made possible by the new arrangement to improve the current park and trails system. Another is to incorporate a green ethic into all city departments. Still another is to bring accountability to a crazy system in which the Mayor and City Council control the park purse strings but have no say in how parks money is spent.

The trend across the country is to switch to either a strong mayor or strong council/city manager system. This proposal falls in between. It's tailored to fit Minneapolis and to fit the changing times.

What is the process to change the charter?

Council Members Don Samuels, Ralph Remington, and Paul Ostrow have asked the City Council to give Minneapolis voters a chance to vote on updating the charter. The

Charter Commission and City Council will review these updates. Residents are encouraged to provide feedback in several public hearings. The Council may vote to place the three separate charter updates on the November ballot. If the Council votes against the updates, Minneapolis voters can still have a chance to vote if 10,000 signatures are collected.

Why is this important to you and your family?

Minneapolis has succeeded in spite of its cumbersome and disjointed bureaucracy, but it cannot be expected to continue overcoming these obstacles in the current financial climate. City residents, workers, and visitors deserve the very best service for the dollars available. That means a streamlined city structure that saves time and money while also being more transparent, straightforward, and accountable to citizens. How much can the city save by updating its charter? That's hard to say. In a 2004 article in the Star Tribune, former City Coordinator John Moir estimated \$5 million a year. But the larger point is that a fiscally and politically healthy city will have a far better chance of holding value for the homes and businesses of its residents and a far better opportunity to build an economy to attract prosperity for the next generations – your children and grandchildren.