



Agenda
Charter Commission Meeting
St. Louis Park, Minnesota
April 29, 2024
5:30 p.m. – St. Louis Park City Hall

The mission of the Charter Commission is to evaluate and propose changes which are warranted in the city's Home Rule Charter as provided by state statute. Home rule charters are, in effect, local constitutions passed by local voters and cannot conflict with state laws. Commissioners are appointed by the Chief Judge of Hennepin County District Court and serve on a volunteer basis. Commissioners are not appointed by city council. Staff help prepare agendas and perform other administrative duties at the direction of the commission.

The St. Louis Park Charter Commission meets in person at St. Louis Park City Hall, 5005 Minnetonka Blvd.

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Roll call**
- 3. Minutes**
 - a. July 28, 2021 Charter Commission meeting
- 4. Old Business**
 - a. Update on discussion with city council regarding possible amendments to Chapter 2 and Chapter 12 of the St. Louis Park Home Rule Charter.
- 5. New Business**
 - a. Discuss recruitment needs and strategies (verbal discussion)
 - b. Election of officers
 - c. Annual reports (verbal)
 - d. Official city communication channels (verbal discussion)
- 6. Future Meetings**
 - a. Set schedule
- 7. Communications**
- 8. Adjourn**

Members of the public can attend St. Louis Park Charter Commission meetings in person. Official minutes of meetings are available on the city website once approved. Charter Commission meetings are not broadcast.

If you need special accommodations or have questions about the meeting, please call 952.924.2505.



1. Call to order

Chair Maaske called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

2. Roll call

Members present: David Ault, JC Beckstrand, Jim Brimeyer, Lynne Carper, Jim de Lambert, Terry Dwyer, Sara Maaske, Erin Smith and Henry Solmer.

Members absent: Andrew Rose

Others present: Melissa Kennedy (City Clerk), Soren Mattick (City Attorney)

3. Approval of minutes

a. Minutes of June 16, 2021 Charter Commission meeting

It was moved by Commissioner Carper, seconded by Commissioner Dwyer, to approve the minutes of June 16, 2021 as presented. The motion passed 9-0.

4. Old business

a. **Discuss draft ordinance amending Chapter 2 and Chapter 12 of the St. Louis Park Home Rule Charter pertaining to investigation of city council members, interference with city administration, and conflicts of interest.**

The commission discussed the draft ordinance and the additional legal questions raised by the city attorney.

Commissioner Brimeyer stated he agreed with the suggestions offered by the city attorney.

Commissioner Ault questioned if family interests should be extended to household members, regardless of relation.

Commissioner Carper questioned if the intent is to prevent a council member from giving benefit or an unfair advantage to someone who is not related to them.

City attorney Mattick explained that the term “relative” is outdated and vague. He suggested that the language could be clarified by offering and defining a term such as “first-degree relative”.

Commissioner Beckstrand noted it is difficult to define the degrees of separation.

Commissioner Maaske stated her preference would be to use more inclusive terms, such as “household relationships”.

Commissioner Ault added it is also difficult to define “interest” in terms of a business relationship.

Commissioner Dwyer stated he would be in favor of a narrower view. He did not feel that language was vague because it refers to back to section 12.12. He questioned if the intent was to close a loophole that doesn't exist.

Commissioner Carper added that the definitions become expansive quickly.

Commissioner Beckstrand questioned if leadership affiliations with nonprofit organizations should be addressed.

Commissioner Maaske noted it should be disclosed if the affiliation could result in a benefit to a council member.

City attorney Mattick clarified that section 12.12 relates to the actual filing of information. In terms of 12.13 the question becomes how broad the commission wants to make the umbrella.

Commissioner Brimeyer stated that elected officials need to know they are being watched and that they need to be mindful of real and perceived improprieties as it relates to their role.

Commissioner Maaske explained she wants to avoid potential abuse or weaponizing of the system, noting that keeping the scope narrow makes the most sense.

Commissioner Beckstrand noted the intent of the draft language was to use what is "legal" as the foundational floor and to provide a means for elected officials to understand they are checked.

Commissioner Dwyer expressed concern that this would create a new authority for the council to investigate its own members and felt that the language in 2.08 provided too broad of power. He stated he was uncomfortable with the breadth and scope of the alleged actions that could be investigated and felt that the commission is overreaching with the proposed amendments.

Commissioner Beckstrand stated that he feels the community is asking for greater accountability and transparency, noting that the charter is the conscience of the community, and it needs to be flexible as times change.

Commissioner Dwyer stated he is not sure it is appropriate for the Charter Commission to establish themselves in a new role as an oversight body. He suggested instead focusing on procedures to enhance effectiveness and promote good governance.

Commissioner de Lambert stated he was more closely aligned with Commissioner Dwyer's comments, and he did not feel the role of the commission was to be an oversight body for the council.

Commissioner Carper stated if something didn't work properly or was not transparent to the community, it should be addressed.

Commissioner Solmer stated it would be helpful to address instances in which a benefit or conflict of interest is not financial in nature and when it should be disclosed.

Commissioner Maaske suggested it would be helpful to have a discussion with council members regarding the commission's work on this topic to get their input, noting they would need to be a part of any charter amendment process.

Ms. Kennedy stated there would be an opportunity to schedule this item for discussion with the council on August 23 or September 13. She suggested the commission select 2-3 representatives to attend the meeting and to assist in the preparation of the staff report.

Commissioners Beckstrand and Brimeyer volunteered to participate in the discussion with the council given that they were a part of the subcommittee taking the lead on this work. The commission agreed by consensus this would be appropriate.

It was moved by Commissioner Brimeyer, seconded by Commissioner Carper, to draft a memo for discussion of this topic with the city council on September 13. The motion passed 9-0.

5. New business

Chair Maaske announced her resignation from the Charter Commission, effective August 2, 2021, because she is moving out of the city. The commission thanked Chair Maaske for her service and leadership.

As Vice Chair, Commissioner Beckstrand will fill the role of Chair going forward following Ms. Maaske's resignation. The commission agreed to consider the nomination and election of a new vice chair at a future meeting.

6. Future meetings

The commission discussed scheduling a meeting after the discussion with the city council.

7. Communications

8. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Beckstrand, seconded by Commissioner Carper, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Melissa Kennedy, city clerk

Executive summary

Title: Update on discussion with city council regarding possible amendments to chapter 2 and chapter 12 of the St. Louis Park Home Rule Charter

Recommended action: None at this time. The commission is asked to provide direction on next steps, if any.

Summary: The Charter Commission previously discussed and reviewed potential amendments to specific sections of chapters 2 and 12 of the charter. At the direction of the commission, members of the subcommittee subsequently discussed the proposed amendments with the city council. The feedback received from the council at that time was general interest in potential updates to chapter 12 to add clarity around conflict of interest for elected officials. There was not much interest in pursuing amendments to chapter 2. A recap of the discussion with the city council will be provided at the meeting. City council meeting minutes and a copy of the agenda item are linked below for the commission's information and review. Agendas and minutes from previous commission discussions are also linked below.

Next steps: To be determined by the Charter Commission.

Strategic priority consideration: Not applicable.

Supporting documents: [September 13, 2021, city council study session minutes](#)
[September 13, 2021, city council study session agenda item \(p. 2\)](#)
[July 28, 2021, charter commission agenda item 4a \(p. 5\)](#)
[June 16, 2021, charter commission minutes](#)
[June 16, 2021, charter commission agenda item 4a \(p. 5\)](#)
[April 6, 2021, charter commission minutes](#)
[April 6, 2021, charter commission agenda item 4a \(p. 6\)](#)

Prepared by: Melissa Kennedy, city clerk