

NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENT

Introduction: A proposal to amend the city council election method from a single member district system to a plurality district and at-large system by reducing the number of wards from thirteen to nine and creating four at-large council seats. The proposal also requires that Council positions of city-wide concern, Council president and Council Planning Commission representative, be filled by at large members.

Ward systems, in which representatives are elected by geographic area, foster parochialism because a representative is accountable only to the voters in their ward. Thus the very nature of ward-based election systems set wards off against each other. Moreover, Minneapolis's disproportionately large number of wards, as compared to other cities, exacerbates ward tensions as council members are elected by a comparatively smaller number of voters - further diminishing city-wide perspectives among council members. A combination of district and city-wide seats would balance the advantages of both neighborhood and city-wide perspectives by providing increased representation and access to representatives. Currently, residents can only vote for their ward representative – one out of thirteen. Under the proposal, Minneapolis residents would be able to vote for ward and four at large candidates – five out of thirteen Council members. A combined ward/at large Council would also provide Minneapolis residents greater opportunities to voice concerns to both their ward and four at large Council members while preserving ward representation of Minneapolis' various neighborhoods and communities.

Proposed Amendments: Reduce the number of wards from thirteen to nine. (Section 2.2(a)). No other changes proposed in section 2.2. In section 3.1(d), Order, add Council members at large to the ballot after Ward Council member. No other changes proposed in section 3.1. In section 4.2, amend the Council composition to one Council member elected by and from each ward and four Council members at large. No other changes proposed in section 4.2. In section 4.3, require that the president be elected from the Council members at large. No other changes proposed in section 4.2. In section 4.5, require that at least one of the three Council members on the executive committee be a Council member at large. No other changes proposed in section 4.5. In section 7.2, require that the Council member representative on the Planning Commission be a Council member at large. No other changes proposed in section 7.2.

Conformance: The proposed amendment conforms Council composition with the plurality systems in place for the Park Board (six district commissioners and three at large commissioners) and Board of Education (six district members and three at large members). The proposal for plural ward/at large representation is authorized under Minnesota law governing home rule charter cities. Minn Stat. § 410.16.

Other similarly sized cities utilize plurality ward/at large election systems. Seattle's city council has seven ward and two at large members. Austin Texas has ten wards with an at large mayor who sits on the council. Oakland's city council has seven ward members and one at large member. Boston's city council has nine ward and four at large members. Closer to home, Duluth has five ward and four at large council members.