

April 1, 2019

Barry Clegg, Chair  
Minneapolis Charter Commission

Dear Mr. Clegg:

At its regular meeting in March, there was a request to have staff provide a synopsis of key dates in the overall development of the City's political history. In response, I have attached an abbreviated summary of some of the responsive data which point to the political development of the City of Minneapolis, from its creation as a municipality in 1856 through 2018. This timeline traces the creation and development of various elected municipal offices as well as changes in the method of election/selection, terms, and other particulars.

The data in this summary was pulled together by my office from the following sources:

1. Charter of the City of Minneapolis – Adopted at the General Election November 2, 1920, and as subsequently amended [original and supplements on file with the Office of City Clerk]
2. "Minneapolis City Charter - History of Amendments," an internal reference document produced and used by the Office of City Clerk
3. Minnesota Election Trends Project, produced by Neal Baxter [<http://electiontrendsproject.org/>]
4. "Minneapolis in the Twentieth Century: The Growth of an American City," by Iric Nathanson [copyright 2010 by the Minnesota Historical Society]

Would you like me to send this information to all Charter Commissioners in advance of the meeting on Wednesday? I assume we should include it with the LIMS file for public access.

Regards,

Casey Joe Carl  
City Clerk

The following timeline provides a high-level synopsis of key dates pertaining to the home rule charter, elected officials, and similar matters for the City of Minneapolis prepared by the Office of City Clerk at the request of the Minneapolis Charter Commission and presented at its regular meeting in April 2019.

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### 1855

The City of St. Anthony is incorporated, established under state law with eight elected officials: mayor, six aldermen (two for each of three wards), and a justice of the peace.

*[Clerk's Note: As part of subsequent charter amendments, a fourth ward was added which increased the number of aldermen to eight and the total of elected offices to ten.]*

### 1856

The City of Minneapolis is incorporated, established under state law with the following elected officials: mayor and eight aldermen (two for each of four wards).

### 1872

The cities of Minneapolis and St. Anthony are consolidated by act of the State Legislature, with a combined estimated population of 18,079. The newly consolidated municipal government includes twenty-three elected officials: mayor, treasurer, and comptroller elected city-wide and twenty aldermen (two from each of ten wards).

### 1872-1889

During this period, the number of wards was increased from ten to thirteen to reflect the expansion of the city's territorial boundaries; as a consequence, the number of aldermen also increased, with a total of three aldermen elected from each of the City's thirteen wards, for a total of thirty-nine aldermen, in addition to the popularly elected mayor, treasurer, and comptroller. In 1889, however, the State Legislature reduced the number of aldermen elected from each district from three to two, which resulted in a City Council comprised of twenty-six members. The term of office was also set at four years, with all officials elected concurrently. The first election under this model was conducted in 1891.

### 1878

The State Legislature consolidated the two Minneapolis-area school districts (East and West) into a single unified school district under the direction of an elected board of education.

### 1883

The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners is created by referendum with 57% of the vote [5,226 in support and 3,911 in opposition]. The Park Board consists of 15 members, with 12 of these elected by voters; the other three seats were held *ex officio* by the mayor and two members of the City Council. The Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners was later incorporated into the first home rule charter adopted in 1920 (*see below*).

### 1885

The Minneapolis Library Board is created by the State Legislature, the organizational meeting of which was held April 21, consisting of seven members. The Library Board was later incorporated into the first home rule charter adopted in 1920 (*see below*).

**1898**

The first proposed home rule charter for the City of Minneapolis, pursuant to the provisions of Article XII, Section 4, of the Minnesota Constitution, was referred to the electorate. The ballot question narrowly failed to achieve the required vote threshold required for passage, with 8,756 in favor and 8,287 opposed.

**1900**

The second proposed home rule charter was referred to the electorate and failed again. Similar efforts to secure passage of a home rule charter for Minneapolis were defeated by voters in 1904, 1906, and 1907.

**1900**

A sixth home rule charter was submitted to the electorate, this time proposing a commission form of local government, which also failed to secure passage by the necessary vote.

**1915**

By an act of the State Legislature, the manner of electing members of the Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners was adjusted to reflect the following:

- Eight members elected from the existing senatorial districts (at that time), serving six-year terms;
- Four members to be elected at-large from throughout the city, serving six-year terms; and
- Three members to continue serving *ex officio* during their elective terms of office: the mayor, the Council's public grounds and buildings committee chair, and the Council's roads and bridges committee chair.

**1919**

The State Legislature creates the Board of Estimate & Taxation to meet three purposes: (1) to relieve the legislature of time-consuming local legislation tied to setting tax levies for the city and authorizing the issuance of bonds; (2) to centralize financial supervision in a single body; and (3) to remove exclusive financial control from the City Council which at that time was considered too political. The Board's membership included—

- The mayor, popularly elected at-large from the entire city;
- The comptroller, popularly elected at-large from the entire city;
- The member chairing the City Council's Ways & Means Committee;
- The president of the Minneapolis Board of Education;
- The president of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board; and
- Two members popularly elected (at-large) from the entire city for four-year terms concurrent with the other municipal officials.

The Board of Estimate & Taxation was incorporated into the first home rule charter adopted in 1920 (*see below*).

*[Clerk's Note: The Board of Estimate & Taxation essentially replaced the Hennepin County Board of Tax Levy which was created by the State Legislature in 1879. However, the Board of Estimate & Taxation was not the equivalent of the County Board of Tax Levy; the scope of authority for the Board of Estimate & Taxation was strictly limited to tax issues by the municipal government and its agencies and did not include the county government. The prior County Board of Tax levy was composed of the chair of the board of county commissioners, the county auditor, the president of the Minneapolis board of education, the Minneapolis comptroller, and the chair of the City Council's ways and means committee. The County Board of Tax Levy was charged with considering, determining, and fixing the maximum rate of taxation for various governmental purposes.]*

## 1920

On its seventh attempt, the voters of Minneapolis adopted a home rule charter pursuant to the enabling provisions of the Minnesota Constitution (Art. XII, § 4), thereby establishing a charter form of local government for the City of Minneapolis. The first home rule charter is essentially a compilation of all laws existing at that time for all cities of the first class in the state together with all special laws adopted for Minneapolis. Prior to the adoption of the home rule charter, the City had operated for many years under the provisions of a compilation of general and special laws applicable to Minneapolis, which is sometimes referred to as a type of “legislative charter.” However, this “legislative charter” was not, in purest sense, the equivalent of a home rule charter. The home rule charter adopted in 1920 marked the first charter for the City of Minneapolis. With the successful passage of the city charter, a standing Charter Commission was established, as required by law, which consisted of fifteen members, all appointed by the district court (by and through its chief judge).

## 1922

Referendum No. 1 fails; it proposed restructuring the City Council as follows—

- City divided into six wards consistent with the principles of compact, contiguous shapes of roughly equal population, with two aldermen elected from each ward, for a total of twelve ward-based members of the City Council;
- Three members of the City Council to be popularly elected at-large from the entire city;
- Terms to remain at four years, concurrent with the other municipal officials.

## 1923

Referendum No. 3 fails; it proposed restructuring the City Council essentially following the same plan as in the 1922 ballot question (*see above*).

## 1928

Referendum No. 6 fails; it proposed a dramatic restructuring of the City Council as follows—

- City divided into nineteen wards, which was the equivalent of adding six new wards in addition to the existing thirteen wards;
- Providing for the election of one alderman from each ward, for a total of nineteen aldermen;
- Increasing the compensation paid to aldermen;
- Terms to remain at four years, concurrent with other municipal officials.

## 1930

Referendum No. 6 fails; it proposed restructuring the City Council essentially the same as in the 1928 ballot question, as follows—

- City divided into nineteen wards, which was the equivalent of adding six new wards in addition to the existing thirteen wards;
- Providing for the election of one alderman from each ward, for a total of nineteen aldermen;
- Terms to remain at four years, concurrent with other municipal officials.

## 1939

Referendum No. 9 fails; it proposed to change elections for school board directors to districts instead of all at-large [which had occurred in prior years].

## 1951

Referendum No. 12 passes; this proposal achieved the following—

- Retained the existing thirteen wards into which the City was divided;
- Reduced the number of aldermen to one per ward, from twenty-six (since 1891) to thirteen, which remains in place today;
- Reduced the term from four years to two years;
- Applied the two-year term to the other municipal officials (mayor, treasurer, and comptroller).

## 1967

Referendum No. 22 passes; this proposal achieved the following—

- Reduced the members on the elected Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners from sixteen to nine, removing those serving in *ex officio* capacity;
- Divided the park district into six districts, with one commissioner elected from each district;
- Provided for the popular election (at-large) of three commissioners.

## 1973

Charter Amendment No. 53, enacted by ordinance, uniformly set the first date of all appointive terms as the first business day in January in even-numbered years.

Charter Amendment No. 54 enacted by ordinance, providing that the organizational meeting of the City Council, during which time its president and other officers are to be chosen, is the first meeting in January following the regular municipal election in November of the preceding year.

## 1974

Charter Amendment No. 56, enacted by ordinance, provided that the Park & Recreation Board of Commissioners should conduct its annual organizational meeting on the first business day in January each year.

## 1975

Charter Amendment No. 67, adopted by referendum, set terms for Park Board Commissioners at four years (reduced from six years), consistent with other municipal offices.

Charter Amendment No. 68, adopted by referendum, provided that all acts of the Park & Recreation Board were subject to approval or disapproval of the popularly-elected mayor, similar to the City Council.

## 1976

With the passage of Charter Amendment No. 59, the elective offices of Treasurer and Comptroller are combined. As a result, the municipal ballot now includes the following elected offices—

- 1 Mayor;
- 1 Comptroller;
- 13 Council Members, each by ward, constituting the City Council;
- 7 School Board Directors, all elected at-large;
- 7 Library Board members (unclear data);
- 9 Park Board Commissioners, six by district and three at-large; and
- 2 Board of Estimate & Taxation Members, elected at-large.

## 1980

Charter Amendment No. 81, enacted by referendum, set the elective term for mayor at four years.

## 1983

Pursuant to Laws of Minnesota 1983, Chapter 160, the elective office of Comptroller-Treasurer in the City of Minneapolis is eliminated, and the duties are transferred to the newly-established appointive position of Finance Officer, which consolidated all accounting, budget, financial management, and related functions into a single position. Under the home rule charter, the Finance Officer is made the treasurer and/or financial officer of all City agencies, departments and divisions, and offices of the City of Minneapolis.

Referendum No. 97 passes; this proposal changes the title of office from “Alderman” to “Council Member.”

## 1984

Charter Amendment No. 102, enacted by referendum, sets the elective term of Council Member at four years.

**1987**

Referendum (unknown number) fails; this proposal was to change the composition of the elected Minneapolis School Board to have a total of nine members, with six members elected from six separate districts and three members popularly elected (at-large) from the entire city. The school board at that time was composed of seven members, all elected at-large.

**1988**

Referendum No. 10 fails; this proposal proposed to reduce the number of Council Members.

**1993**

Charter Amendment No. 135, enacted by referendum, provides for the staggered election of Council Members.

**1996**

Charter Amendment No. 143, enacted by referendum, eliminated staggered terms for Council Members (*see above*).

**2002**

Charter Amendment No. 154, enacted by ordinance, established lines of succession for the offices of mayor and Council president.

**2006**

Charter Amendment No. 161, enacted by referendum, instituted the Single Transferable Vote (*also referred to as Ranked-Choice Voting*) for the election of municipal officials, eliminated a municipal primary, all to become effective with the regular municipal election in 2009.

Representative Jim Davnie (62A) sponsored and secured passage of legislation that gave the Minneapolis School Board two options: (1) voluntarily change the its membership and the manner of their election or (2) have the proposal referred to the electorate directly in 2008.

**2007**

The Library Board, faced with long-term financial difficulties, secured special authorization from the State Legislature to merge its operations with the Hennepin County library system, which became effective January 1, 2008.

**2008**

Referendum No. 2 passes; this was the Davnie proposal (*see above*), and its passage achieved the following—

- Divided the city into six school districts;
- Established the School Board as a nine-member governing board having supervision over the Minneapolis Special School District No. 1 (Minneapolis Public Schools);
- Six directors would be elected from each of six districts;
- Three directors would be popularly elected (at-large) from the entire city.

**2010**

Charter Amendment No. 171, enacted by referendum, transferred all duties associated with the redistricting of political boundaries following each regular or special federal census to be conducted by the Minneapolis Charter Commission.

**2013**

Charter Amendment No. 172, enacted by referendum, adopted a full revision—in plain language—of the Minneapolis City Charter (home rule charter).