

BALLOT PROPOSAL

UNDERSTANDING THE BALLOT PROPOSAL IN THE UPCOMING ELECTION

WHAT IS THE BALLOT PROPOSAL ON MY BALLOT?

LANSING CITY CHARTER GENERAL REVISION

Shall there be a general revision of the Lansing City Charter?

Yes [] No []

WHAT IS THE CITY CHARTER?

From the Michigan Municipal League: “A charter is similar to a local Constitution—it prescribes procedures to be followed in operating local government, establishes the powers and duties of elected officials, creates safeguards to protect against misuse of authority, and provides opportunities for citizen involvement. Michigan is a home rule state, and home rule gives the citizenry the right and responsibility to form its own government. A charter provides the mechanism for accomplishing the myriad tasks assigned to elected officials to govern their communities. Citizens write the charter and determine what the governmental structure will be to exercise those powers.”

State of Michigan statutory authority on City Charters is given through the Michigan Constitution (Article VII Section 22) and the Home Rule City Act (Act 279 of 1909).

The current Charter of the City of Lansing was adopted by the voters on August 8, 1978, with amendments adopted in 1993, 1994, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2022; however, none of those were the result of a charter revision commission.



WHAT IF THIS QUESTION PASSES?

If voters pass the Charter revision proposal in November, it will set in motion a series of events that are laid out in state law - as outlined below, including special elections, the election of a Charter Commission, and the process of submitting a proposed new City Charter in subsequent special elections. Electors, who have been City residents for 3 years, and are interested in running for the charter commission would file to run to become one of the 9 members of the commission.

The City must fund the Charter Commission and its work. These funding costs will include the pay of the commission members, and the commission’s operating and meeting expenses. (MCL 117.19). This is discussed further below.

Early in 2024, an election would be held to select 9 members of the Charter Revision Commission (MCL 117.18).

The top 9 vote-getters would be elected as the members of the Charter Commission. They would meet and set rules regarding operations, vacancies, and compensation. The City Clerk serves as the Clerk of the Commission. (MCL 117.20)

Once the Charter Commission completes its work, the new proposed Charter will be submitted to the City electors for acceptance or rejection by majority vote. If rejected, the Charter Commission may propose another revised Charter or choose to disband but the commission is limited to 3 revised Charter proposals and 3 years to complete its work following the November election. (MCL 117.18).

IS THERE A COST TO TAXPAYERS IF THE CHARTER REVISION PROPOSAL PASSES IN NOVEMBER 2023?

Yes, there will be costs to hold a special election and fund the Charter Commission. According to the City Clerk, each citywide special election costs nearly \$150,000. Separate from the cost of a special election, the City is legally required to fund all reasonable expenses of the Charter Commission.

If the proposal passes, the administration will introduce a supplemental budget amendment to appropriate an initial \$500,000 to fund the first stages of the process. It does not cover the costs of the special election. The initial appropriation is for the initial costs to hire record taking and record keeping services, consultants, and necessary staff. It also provides compensation for the Charter Commissioners, publication expenses, and other costs associated with administering the Charter Commission and drafting a comprehensive Charter document. The number is based on known costs of the 1978 Charter Commission, adjusted for inflation. Since a Charter Commission can exist for up to 3 years, the cost could easily be higher.

WHAT IF THIS QUESTION DOES NOT PASS?

Nothing changes, and no additional costs are incurred. The Charter remains as currently written and City government continues to operate as usual. The Charter amendment process remains an option for changes to the Charter, and this question will be on the ballot again for consideration in 12 years.

For more information, including registering to vote, polling place locations and where to vote, absentee ballots and drop boxes, and so much more, please visit:

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