

MEMO

To: Yakima City Council
From: Dave Edler, Mike Leita and Bruce Smith
Date: Nov. 14, 2019
Re: Proposed charter change

We were surprised to learn that the City's legal staff – on its own authority and with no direction from Council – drafted and presented to you a version of an elected mayor charter change. Their proposal is, in many ways, similar to our first one (as you would expect since both are based on the 2011 plan), but there were differences.

We took what we think are the best ideas from both plans and combined them into one, which we delivered to City Hall today. We would appreciate your careful consideration of it.

Here's are some of the remaining similarities and differences.

SIMILARITIES.

- Both require the city to change from a city-manager form of government to an elected-mayor structure, in which the Mayor acts as the city's chief executive.
- Both retain the existing City Council and its structure, especially its districting plan and method of election.
- The council, under both plans, selects a Council President.
- Under both plans, the mayor hires and fires all city employees, with Council confirmation required for some management-level employees.
- Both require the mayor to select a City Administrator, who manages City Hall on a day-to-day basis.
- The mayor under both plans has no legislative powers and he or she cannot vote on measures before the council.
- The mayor has veto power over legislation passed by the Council, but his veto can be overridden by a majority-plus-one vote of the body.

DIFFERENCES.

- The staff plan requires Council confirmation of top officials, department heads and assistant department heads; the citizens' plan requires confirmation of top officials and department heads only.

- The city's plan increased from two to four the number of Council members needed to call a meeting. The citizens' plan – which deals with just elected mayor issues -- leaves it at two.

- The city's proposal allows a Council member who has been displaced by redistricting to serve the remainder of his or her term, even if he or she no longer lives in the district. The citizens' plan – which deals with just elected mayor issues – does not.

- Both plans determine the Mayor's pay, but the staff's version also determines the City Administrator's compensation. The citizens' version does not.

- According to the citizen's plan, the mayor (or his designee) must attend every Council meeting. The staff's plan does not.

- Both plans specify that the Mayor has no voting authority on Council matters, but the citizen's plan affirms that the mayor has no extra rights to participate in Council meetings, unless invited to do so.

- The citizens' plan requires a "state of the city" report from the mayor in February of every year and a budget overview in October. The city's plan requires both in October.

- The citizens' proposal also corrected some inaccurate pronoun-antecedent matches and some non-neutral gender pronouns.

We hope you place our version on the February ballot, so Yakima voters are able to decide this important issue.

Thank you for your consideration.