

Proposed Charter Updates

Submitted by:

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

Councillor Nolan

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- **City Council budget authority**

- *Explanation:*

- Would give the City Council the power to increase parts of the annual budget by up to 10% compared to what is initially proposed by the City Manager—in addition to the Council’s current power to decrease parts of the budget—and as long as the overall budget total proposed by the City Manager remained the same

- *Rationale:*

- Would put the Cambridge City Council in line with the Boston City Council’s budget authority and would give the City Council the same budget authority the School Committee has
- The City Council’s current ability to reduce parts of the budget is ineffective without the ability to also increase funding in other sections
- In Cambridge, residents’ main ability to impact the budget during elections is through the City Council. The mechanisms the Council has to influence the budget are currently not as clear as they could be
- The Council having the power to increase parts of the budget would reduce the likelihood of the Council rejecting a proposed budget altogether, which would cause instability and potential staff layoffs

- *Implementation:*

- Would take effect upon passage for the following budget cycle

- **Solicitor appointed by the City Council**

- *Explanation:*

- The City Solicitor would be appointed by the City Council in a process similar to how the Council currently hires the City Clerk and the City Auditor. The appointment and any reappointment or termination would be the responsibility of the City Council

- *Rationale:*

- The head of the City’s Law Department should be selected by the body tasked with drafting Cambridge’s municipal laws
- The City Solicitor plays an important role in representing City residents and staff and should be chosen by the branch of government directly elected by voters

- A number of other cities including Malden currently have this structure for the City Solicitor
 - *Implementation:*
 - Would take effect upon passage

- **Elected mayor alongside a City Manager similar to Worcester**
 - *Explanation:*
 - City Council candidates would declare on the ballot whether they are also interested in serving as Mayor
 - In addition to appearing on the City Council section of the ballot, these candidates would appear on the Mayor section of the ballot
 - Voters would elect the Mayor via Ranked Choice Voting
 - The Mayor would retain the same powers they wield currently, alongside the City Manager, who would retain the same powers the position wields currently
 - *Rationale:*
 - Having a mayor who is popularly elected—similar to mayors in surrounding communities—would strengthen the mayor’s position in representing Cambridge and speaking on behalf of residents in regional forums
 - Cambridge’s current mayoral system can be confusing for residents
 - Currently, candidates are not asked to explain their vision for chairing the School Committee since it is unclear until after the election who will be potential candidates for Mayor in the following term. An elected mayor would require candidates to explain to voters their vision as chair of the School Committee and lead representative for the City
 - *Implementation:*
 - Would take effect starting with the 2027 municipal election

- **4 year terms, with elections every 2 years**
 - *Explanation:*
 - City Council terms would be extended to four years. Elections would still occur every two years, with five Council seats and the mayor up for election in one cycle, and four seats up for election two years later
 - Other aspects of City Council elections like ranked choice voting and at-large proportional representation would remain constant
 - *Rationale:*
 - Two year terms provide insufficient time for Councillors and City staff to accomplish the work of city government before campaign season begins again
 - *Implementation:*

- Would take effect starting with the 2027 municipal election

2027	2029	2031	2033
5 City Council seats up for election	4 City Council seats up for election	5 City Council seats up for election	4 City Council seats up for election
Mayor position up for election	Mayor position not up for election	Mayor position up for election	Mayor position not up for election

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- **Department heads appointed by the City Manager and approved by the Council**
 - *Explanation:*
 - The City Manager would submit Department Head appointments and reappointments for approval by the City Council in a process similar to how the Council approves appointments to Boards and Commissions
 - *Rationale:*
 - Department Heads play a significant role in collaborating with the Council to achieve its goals and in executing the policies enacted by the Council
 - A number of other cities including Framingham currently have this structure for the appointment of Department Heads
 - The School Committee approves appointments of several director positions including CFO, assistant superintendents, and the head of special education
 - *Implementation:*
 - Would take effect upon passage for new appointments and reappointments going forward