

City of Plattsburgh Charter Review Commission

Proposed Charter Updates: What Voters Need to Know

Public Purpose: The Charter Review Commission has completed its review of the City Charter and is recommending updates designed to strengthen accountability, improve transparency, support long-range planning, clarify governance practices, modernize City operations, and allow practical flexibility in department supervision. These recommendations will appear before voters for consideration in November 2026. The proposed changes do not alter the fundamental form of government; they clarify how City government operates in real-world terms.

The recommendations focus on: accountability, transparency, public engagement, long-term planning, emergency preparedness, and flexible department supervision to help maintain services.

The proposed amendments are intended to modernize the Charter while maintaining the City's existing governmental structure and giving residents clearer, more transparent, and more accountable local government.

Key Proposed Changes

1. Term Limits for Elected Officials Proposed Change: The Charter updates term-limit language to align with current elected terms. - Mayor: No person may be elected Mayor if they have already served eight consecutive years as Mayor. - Councilor: No person may be elected Councilor if they have already served nine consecutive years as a Councilor. Why It Matters: This amendment clarifies and corrects the existing Charter language so that term limits accurately reflect the length of elected terms. The change preserves the Commission's intent to encourage periodic leadership transition while ensuring consistency between Council term lengths and allowable years of service.	6. Council and Administration Roles Proposed Change: Clarifies that Councilors may request information from City staff while preserving the separation between policymaking and day-to-day operations. Why It Matters: Improves communication and oversight while maintaining clear governance roles.
2. Council Attendance Accountability Proposed Change: A Council member who misses three consecutive regular meetings without notice and without being excused may forfeit office. Why It Matters: Ensures elected officials remain engaged in representing residents.	7. Emergency Disaster Relief Services Commission Proposed Change: Creates a commission focused on emergency preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, and public safety planning. Why It Matters: Strengthens the City's readiness for disasters, severe weather, and other emergencies.
3. Orientation and Training Proposed Change: New Councilors would receive orientation on City government, legal responsibilities, and the Charter. Why It Matters: Helps elected officials begin service prepared and informed.	8. Flexible Supervision of Departments Proposed Change: Allows the Mayor flexibility in assigning department supervision instead of requiring one specific person to manage one specific department. More than one person may help oversee a department, and one person may oversee more than one department when appropriate. Why It Matters: Helps maintain department services within budget realities, supports recreation department supervision, and allows Emergency Commission responsibilities to be shared by more than one person.
4. Five-Year Strategic Planning Proposed Change: The Common Council would maintain and regularly review a five-year strategic plan with measurable goals, public input, and financial alignment. Why It Matters: Connects community priorities to long-range planning and investment decisions.	9. Enhanced Budget Transparency Proposed Change: Expands budget message requirements to explain financial policies, major changes, debt information, and public communication. It also recognizes electronic and website-based notices. Why It Matters: Gives residents clearer information about how public funds are managed and easier access to budget details.
5. Public Engagement Opportunities Proposed Change: The Council may hold outreach and informational sessions on proposed ordinances when additional public input would be helpful. Why It Matters: Gives residents more ways to understand and comment before decisions are made.	2026 City of Plattsburgh Charter Commission: Rod Sherman, Chair Theresa Bennett, Secretary Jim Abdalla Paula Calkins-Lacombe Timothy Carpenter Forrest Edwards Michele Friedman Cynthia Gallicchio Anna Hewitt-Channell Ciara LaPointe Sue LeBlanc-Durocher Rick Perry Lynn Schlesinger Hillary Trombley

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Proposed Charter Updates: What Voters Need to Know

The Charter Review Commission has completed its review of the City Charter and is recommending several updates designed to strengthen accountability, improve transparency, support long-range planning, clarify governance practices, and modernize City operations. These recommendations will appear before voters for consideration in November 2026. The proposed changes do not alter the fundamental form of government but rather update and clarify how City government operates.

The Commission's recommendations focus on five primary goals:

1. **Greater Accountability** for elected officials
2. **Improved Transparency** in government operations and budgeting
3. **Enhanced Public Engagement** in local decision-making
4. **Stronger Long-Term Planning** for the City's future
5. **Better Emergency Preparedness** and community resilience

These proposed amendments are intended to modernize the Charter while maintaining the City's existing governmental structure and providing residents with clearer, more transparent, and more accountable local government.

Key Proposed Changes

1. Term Limits for Elected Officials

Proposed Change:

The Charter updates term-limit language to align with current elected terms.

- Mayor: No person may be elected Mayor if they have already served eight consecutive years as Mayor.
- Councilor: No person may be elected Councilor if they have already served nine consecutive years as a Councilor.

Why It Matters:

This amendment clarifies and corrects the existing Charter language so that term limits accurately reflect the length of elected terms. The change preserves the Commission's intent to encourage periodic leadership transition while ensuring consistency between Council term lengths and allowable years of service.

2. Increased Accountability for Council Attendance

Proposed Change:

- A Council member who fails to notify City leadership of an absence and misses three consecutive regular Council meetings without being excused may forfeit their office.

Why It Matters:

Promotes accountability and ensures elected officials remain actively engaged in representing residents.

3. Orientation and Training for Newly Elected Council Members

Proposed Change:

- Newly elected Councilors would receive formal orientation and training regarding City government, legal responsibilities, and the Charter.

Why It Matters:

Helps elected officials be better prepared from the start of their service and supports informed decision-making.

4. Flexible Supervision of Departments

Proposed Change: Allows the Mayor flexibility in assigning department supervision instead of requiring one specific person to manage one specific department. More than one person may help oversee a department, and one person may oversee more than one department when appropriate.

Why It Matters: Helps maintain department services within budget realities, supports recreation department supervision, and allows Emergency Commission responsibilities to be shared by more than one person.

5. Five-Year Strategic Planning Requirement

Proposed Change:

- The Common Council would be required to maintain and regularly review a five-year strategic plan with measurable goals, performance indicators, public input opportunities, and alignment with financial planning.

Why It Matters:

Supports long-term planning, transparency, and better alignment between community priorities and City investments.

6. Stronger Public Engagement Opportunities

Proposed Change:

- The Council would have explicit authority to conduct public outreach and informational sessions on proposed ordinances when public input would be beneficial.

Why It Matters:

Encourages greater public participation and provides residents with additional opportunities to understand and comment on proposed actions.

7. Clarification of Council and Administration Roles

Proposed Change:

- Clarifies that Council inquiries to City staff for information are permissible while maintaining the distinction between policy-making responsibilities and day-to-day administration.

Why It Matters:

Improves communication and oversight while preserving clear governance roles.

8. Emergency Disaster Relief Services Commission

Proposed Change:

- Creates an Emergency Disaster Relief Services Commission and formally recognizes responsibilities related to disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, mitigation, and public safety planning.

Why It Matters:

Provides a stronger framework for responding to natural disasters, public health emergencies, severe weather, and other community emergencies.

9. Enhanced Budget Transparency

Proposed Change:

- Expands budget message requirements to include explanations of financial policies, major changes from prior years, debt information, and clearer communication to the public. It also modernizes public notice requirements by recognizing electronic and website-based communications.

Why It Matters:

Gives residents more information about how public funds are managed and improves access to budget information.

2026 City of Plattsburgh Charter Commission:

Rod Sherman, Chair
Paula Calkins-Lacombe
Michele Friedman
Ciara LaPointe
Lynn Schlesinger

Theresa Bennett, Secretary
Timothy Carpenter
Cynthia Gallicchio
Sue LeBlanc-Durocher
Hillary Trombley

Jim Abdallah
Forrest Edwards
Anna Hewitt-Channell
Rick Perry