

# City of Plattsburgh Charter Review Commission

## 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:**

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