



Carl Vinson Institute of Government UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

P r o p o s a l f o r S e r v i c e s

AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW ASSISTANCE

October 8, 2024

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

In this proposal, the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government is responding to a request from the Augusta-Richmond County Consolidated Government ("Augusta") to provide Augusta's Charter Review Committee with technical assistance in the development, comprehensive review, and editing of the Augusta charter that reflects current operational practice and utilizes modern legal language to clarify intent. The Institute proposes to provide the Augusta Charter Review Committee support, consideration, and analysis of Augusta's government framework and/or suggested changes to the Augusta Charter to improve such structure to best serves its citizens. Under this proposed agreement, Augusta's City Attorney and Clerk will serve as the Institute's primary contacts in the development of an updated city charter and as the Institute's primary liaison with the Mayor and Council.

PROJECT GUIDANCE:

This research will be a partnership between the Institute, the Augusta Charter Review Committee, and the Augusta governing authority. It is contemplated that the Institute will provide staff expertise, documentation of meeting minutes and public comments, track amendments and capture charter proposed revisions, conduct bimonthly cadence meetings, and assist in research requested by the Committee Chairperson. The Charter Review Committee will provide Institute faculty with direction and feedback over the course of the project. To facilitate communication between the Institute and decision making within the Commission, the Institute and the Charter Commissioner Chairperson shall work closely in the coordination of the comprehensive review of the Charter.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The Institute of Government's goals for this study will be to:

1. Initiate activities including a project development meeting to further define project scope and identify relevant sources of data. The meeting time will also be spent coordinating with the Charter Review Committee Chairperson and the Mayor to obtain operational specific data to produce the most beneficial project foundation.
2. Provide staffing support at each meeting and public hearing to transcribe meeting documentation including minutes and public comment.
3. Conduct any research and interviews related to the project as directed by the Chairperson of the Charter Review Committee.
4. Clarify available options for the updated charter.
5. Review data, present findings, and provide associate advisement.
6. Perform brief studies as directed by the Committee related to a charter review.
7. Provide copies of the proposed draft charter.

The development of the updated charter will begin with a review of the current charter including all legislative and home rule amendments to the charter. The Institute will consult with the Committee in identifying specific sections of the existing charter that need to be revised and/or clarified in the new charter to reflect current practice. The Institute will provide copies of drafts to the Committee. The preparation of an updated charter by faculty of the Institute does not constitute legal advice and shall not be deemed to be the practice of law. The Committee shall be responsible for providing a proposed draft charter to the Mayor and Council and the local legislative delegation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

It is expected that the city will respond to any data and interview requests in a timely manner (e.g., within 3-4 business days) and will facilitate data collection and interview scheduling with city officials should they be necessary.

If response times are not feasible because of higher priorities associated with the day-to-day operation of the local governments, the timetable for completion of the study may be changed.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Once the scope of work has been approved, it typically takes two weeks on the University side to complete a legal and administrative review of the contract and to have the contract offer in the hands of local government officials. The Institute foresees this project beginning January 1, 2025, and, assuming full and timely cooperation by all stakeholders, a final report being delivered by December 20, 2025.

PROJECT BUDGET:

The fee is contemplated as being funded by Augusta, through funds appropriated from the Augusta general fund. This is acknowledged as the appropriate source for a project intended to be of county/city-wide benefit. As Augusta is the steward of this fund, it will be the contracting party. Any required compliance with the Georgia Open Meetings Act shall be the responsibility of the Augusta. The Institute will provide the services outlined in this proposal including personnel, operating supplies, travel, report production, and other necessary and requested services at a total fixed fee cost of \$320,174. If a companion proposal for Preliminary Charter Review Assistance is agreed to in the amount of \$34,440, the total cost of this proposal will be reduced to \$286,734. This price is valid for 120 days from the date of this proposal.

DELIVERABLES:

The Institute and its faculty will:

1. Provide an electronic copy (.pdf file) of the final report.
2. Be available to provide consultation on the results of the study to the Charter Review Commission and County officials for three months following submission of the final report.

CAPABILITIES OF THE VINSON INSTITUTE:

The mission of the Institute of Government is to improve governance and the lives of people in Georgia. In carrying out this mission, the Institute can call on the wide-ranging knowledge base of the University of Georgia as well as on 90 years of direct service experience in providing technical assistance, research and policy analysis, and training to local and state governments in Georgia. The Institute is among the most highly rated university-based organizations designed specifically to span the gap between best practices research and the existing practice of government.

The proposed team for this project includes:

Lori Brill

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Lori Brill provides applied research and technical assistance to local governments in the arenas of local regulations, strategic planning, and organizational and operational reviews. Lori brings a wealth of in-depth local and state government knowledge to the Institute of Government. Lori has more than 20 years of experience providing legal, policy and research services at the local, regional and state levels. Prior to joining the Institute of Government in 2022, Lori served as a DeKalb County Senior Assistant Attorney, an Enforcement Attorney at the Georgia Secretary of State's Office, Deputy Legislative Counsel for the Georgia General Assembly and as a regional director for a telecommunications company. She has taught courses, authored papers, and updated legal treatises in her areas of expertise. She received her B.A. from Emory University and her J.D. from the University of Georgia School of Law.

Ms. Brill will be assisted on this project by Institute staff, research professionals, and legal interns.