



## CHARTER COMMISSION

Columbia Heights City Hall, 3989 Central Ave NE, Shared Vision

Thursday, January 15, 2026

7:00 PM

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## MINUTES

### Call to Order

#### Roll Call/Status of Membership

Members present: Matt Abel, Kathy Ahlers, Wolid Ahmed, Larry Betzold, Bill Hugo, Leo James, Veronica Johnson, Carolyn Laine, Julie Rose, Frost Simula, Gregory Sloat, Marsha Stroik, Sue Wiseman

Members absent (excused): Ben Harris; (unexcused): Christine Brown

Also present: City Attorney Travis Lutz, City Manager Aaron Chirpich, Council Liaison Justice Spriggs

#### Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve by Ahlers, second by Betzold. Motion passes.

#### Approval of Minutes

##### 1. October 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve by Wiseman, second by Sloat. Motion passes.

#### Election of Officers

##### 2. President, Vice-President, and Secretary

President: Laine

Nomination by Wiseman, second by Stroik. Motion passes.

Vice President: Simula

Self-nomination by Simula, second by Wiseman. Motion passes.

Secretary: Wiseman

Nomination by Laine, second by Ahlers. Motion passes.

#### Correspondence (None)

#### Old Business

##### 3. Second Hearing on change to mayoral control over police (see addendum)

Roll call vote: Ayes (11): Ahlers, Ahmed, Betzold, Hugo, Johnson, James, Laine, Rose, Simula, Stroik, Wiseman; Nays (2): Abel, Sloat. Second hearing passes.

#### **4. Motion on mayoral term of office**

President Laine proposed returning the mayor's term to four years in alignment with similar charter cities in Minnesota, and noted the advantages of such a change. A 2023 memorandum from outgoing City Manager Kelly Bourgeois also recommended changing the mayor's term to four years for continuity, efficiency, and stability in working with city staff and the public at large.

The proposal included the following changes:

**Section 7. ELECTIVE OFFICES.** *The four council members and the Mayor shall serve for a term of four years and until their successors are elected and qualified. ~~The Mayor shall serve for a term of two years and until a successor is elected and qualified.~~*

Motion to approve by Laine, second by Rose

Roll call vote:

Ayes (8): Betzold, Hugo, Johnson, James, Laine, Rose, Simula, Wiseman; Nays (3): Abel, Sloat, Stroik; Abstain (2): Ahlers, Ahmed. First hearing passes.

#### **New Business**

##### **5. Approval of Annual Report (see addendum)**

Motion to approve by Johnson, second by James. Motion passes.

##### **6. Short discussions: no action to be taken.**

- Commission working procedures, including parliamentary procedure; length of meeting time, agreeing not to have an arbitrary limit of one hour for a meeting; and frequency of meetings
- Action previously taken on shortening timeline for council to appoint
- Utilizing city technology and services to record the meeting, take minutes, and generate agendas

#### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Abel, second by Betzold. Meeting adjourns at 7:36pm.

Approved April 16, 2026

## Addendum

### 3. Second Hearing on change to mayoral control over police [Charter changes]

**Section 10. THE MAYOR.** The mayor shall be the presiding officer of the council, and shall exercise all powers and perform all duties conferred and imposed upon the mayor by this charter, the ordinances of the city, and the laws of the state. A president pro tempore shall be chosen who shall serve as president in the mayor's absence, and who shall, in the mayor's absence, exercise all powers and perform all duties conferred and imposed upon the mayor by this charter, the ordinances of the city and the laws of the state. In the absence of both the mayor and the president pro tempore, the council member with the most seniority (as determined by consecutive uninterrupted years of service to date) shall exercise and perform said powers and duties. The mayor shall ~~have the appointment, control, and direction of all police officers of the city, and shall~~ be recognized as the official head of the city for all ceremonial purposes, by the courts for the purpose of serving civil processes, and by the governor for the purposes of the military law. In the event of a vacancy in the office of mayor, whether by death, resignation, or any other cause, the council shall order a special election to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term except in the case of a recall, the vacancy shall be filled in the manner provided by this charter.

**Section 53. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE CITY MANAGER.** Subject to the provisions of this charter and any regulations consistent therewith which may be adopted by council, the city manager shall control and direct the administration of the city's affairs, ~~except that the police department and the enforcement of the laws pertaining to said department shall be under the sole control of the mayor.~~ The city manager's powers and duties shall be: (a) To see that this charter and the laws, ordinances and resolutions of the city are enforced; (b) To appoint and, except as herein provided, remove the city clerk, all heads of departments, and all subordinate officers and employees in the departments, all appointments to be upon merit and fitness alone; (c) To exercise control over all departments and divisions of the city administration created by this charter or which may be hereafter created by the council except as herein provided; (d) To attend all meetings of the council, with the right to take part in the discussions but having no vote; but the council may at its discretion exclude the city manager from meetings at which the city manager's removal is considered; (e) To recommend to the council for adoption such measures as the city manager may deem necessary for the welfare of the people and the efficient administration of the city's affairs; (f) To keep the council fully advised as to the financial condition and needs of the city, and to prepare and to submit to the council the annual budget; (g) To prepare and to submit to the council for adoption an administrative code incorporating the details of administrative procedure, and from time to time to suggest amendments to the same; and (h) To perform such other duties as may be prescribed by this charter or required of the city manager by ordinances or resolutions adopted by the council.

## 5. Approval of Annual Report [sent to Chief Judge of District Court]

### CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CHARTER COMMISSION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

#### MEMBERSHIP:

The following members served in 2025:

Matt Abel	Ben Harris	Julie Rose
Kathy Ahlers	Bill Hugo	Frost Simula
Wolid Ahmed	Leo James	Gregory Sloat
Larry Betzold	Veronica Johnson	Marsha Stroik
Christine Brown	Carolyn Laine	Susan Wiseman

During 2025, Ben Harris was reappointed in March; there were no other changes in membership.

Councilmember Justice Spriggs served as the Council Liaison.

#### OFFICERS:

The following members served as officers for the Charter Commission in 2025:

President: Carolyn Laine      Vice-President: Larry Betzold      Secretary: Frost Simula

#### MEETINGS:

The Charter Commission held four meetings in 2025: January 16, April 10, July 17, and October 16.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

The Commission discussed the following issues in 2025:

##### Changes to the Charter regarding Recall Elections and related issues

Dates and timing for elections were changed to reflect state statutes by stating: “at the soonest date that conforms with state law.” Identifying petition signatures was clarified by adding on “active status” in the SVRS. The election to replace a recalled officer was separated from the recall election; instead, the filling of a vacancy should the officer be recalled will be filled “according to the existing process,” which is by council appointment if under two years remain in the term. The second hearing of all of the work on this area, as one motion, was unanimous.

##### First hearing on Mayoral Duties

Motion passed to change the duties of the mayor to remove the mayor’s “appointment, control, and direction of all police officers” and instead add that to the City Manager’s powers and duties to control and direct the administration of the city’s affairs.

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Carolyn Laine, Commission President