

Brief

- Columbia Heights has a weak Mayor system. The Mayor and City Council members have equal powers.
- Past Mayors have reported that 1-2 years of experience is needed before a Mayor is fully effective.
- Columbia Heights City Council members have 4 year terms. The Columbia Heights Mayor has a 2 year term.
- Mayors of similar surrounding cities such as Golden Valley, New Hope, South St. Paul, Fridley, Crystal, and White Bear Lake all have 4 year terms.
- The cost of campaigning is a barrier to candidacy. Frequent campaigning ensures that only extremely well-funded candidates can afford to stay in office.
- Considering the equal powers of the Mayor and Council members, the inequality in term length is unjustified.

Record

- On July 20, 2017, the Charter Commission overwhelmingly agreed and approved an amendment to the Charter to change the term of the Mayor from 2 years to 4 years.
- The Council rejected the amendment on Feb 12, 2018 and added the question to a public referendum.
- The referendum failed to pass a November 6, 2018 vote by only 9 points.

Referendum results - November 6, 2018

Question 1

Shall the Columbia Heights City Charter be amended to change the mayoral term from a two-year term to a four-year term, with the change being effective January 1, 2021?

Vote	Totals	Percent
YES	3,587	42.86%
NO	4,783	57.14%

Question 2

Under the current city charter, the Police Department is under the control of the Mayor. Shall the Home Rule Charter of the City of Columbia Heights be amended to place control of the Police Department under the City Manager? If approved, this change shall take effect 30 days from the date of the election.

Vote	Totals	Percent
YES	2,911	36.50%
NO	5,064	63.50%

Proposal

(underlined):

CHAPTER 2

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Section 7, ELECTIVE OFFICES

The council shall be composed of a mayor and four council members who shall be qualified electors, and who shall be elected at large in the manner hereinafter provided. The Mayor and the four council members shall serve for a term of four years and until their successors are elected and qualified. The council shall be judge of the election of the mayor and council members.