

Item 3, continued:

Chairman Thompson recognized former Councilmember Robert Castleberry to speak on this item.

Councilmember Castleberry said the City should issue cell phones to Councilmembers just as they provide cell phones to some City employees. He said Councilmembers have personal information on their cell phones that they do not want to hand over to be searched for an open record request. If Councilmembers had a City issued cell phone this would not be an issue as they could just hand over their City cell phone and the records requested could be easily extracted.

Chairman Thompson felt this could be a City policy rather than a Charter amendment and Members agreed.

Member Dillingham said there needs to be a caveat to the policy that personal cell phones are not to be used for City business, which would help with any open record litigation issues.

Member Jungman was concerned the City would be giving Councilmembers a shield as opposed to a tool because there is no way to be 100% sure Councilmembers are not having City business conversations on their personal cell phones.

Items submitted for the record

1. Article II, Section 1 – Reimbursement for Cell Phone Expenses as Additional Compensation
2. Chart of comparable cities – Cell Phone Expenses Included

\*

Item 4, being:

DISCUSSION OF ARTICLE II, SECTIONS 2, 5, 6, AND 14 OF THE CITY CHARTER TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE TERM OF OFFICE FOR COUNCILMEMBERS SHOULD BE CHANGED FROM TWO TO THREE YEARS AND WHETHER THE TERM OF OFFICE FOR MAYOR BE CHANGED FROM THREE TO FOUR YEARS.

Ms. Walker said term increase is a novel issue for CRC with this first being proposed in the resolution to change Councilmember terms from two years to three years and the Mayoral term from three years to four years. She said Staff has provided a chart of comparable cities for Mayor and Council term lengths. She said even wards run on even years and odd wards run on odd years so there is an election every year.

Chairman Thompson said he current system of two years for Council and three years for Mayor is nice because sitting Councilmembers can run for Mayor every other election without giving up their seat.

Member McBride said two years seems like a short period of time to really understand all of the City issues, rhythm, and understanding of the way things get done. He said a four year term seems to be more plausible.

Item 4, continued:

Member Stawicki said Congress and the State House of Representatives have two year terms and their job is much more complex than Council's so he does not think a change is needed.

Vice-Chairman Cubberley said for the purposes of planning, it is hard to do anything in two years because the first year may be planning and the second year may see the start of implementation or the finishing of planning. He said there can be problems in trying to get things done quickly in an election cycle. He said another issue is if someone new comes on Council and does not agree with what previous Council has been planning over the past year or two then that work ends up being delayed or shelved. He said a longer term gives more stability to Council as well as more time to accomplish things so he would suggest at least three years if not four years.

Member Jungman is concerned that a longer term takes a Councilmember further away from the voter.

Member Jennings agreed with Member Jungman and said two year terms makes Councilmembers focus on the voters while longer terms may cause them to disengage.

Member Dillingham said she did not think current term lengths should change and if a Councilmember wants to stay in office then they need to do their job and stay in tune with their constituents who will continue to vote them into office.

Member Bates said there is an argument to be made that longer term lengths could actually improve voter turnout because voters would not have to vote as often. He felt that too many elections create voter fatigue and felt term lengths for Mayor and Council should be three years and staggered differently.

Member Stawicki felt voter apathy was not due to too many elections, but to voters feeling like they have no say.

Member Eller said the learning curve for a Councilmember is long so he would support a three year term.

Chairman Thompson said he likes the current system of alternating odd/even ward elections because each ward is always on a ballot with the Mayor at some point.

Member Jungman said the voters solve the problem because so many members are re-elected, but occasionally someone may not be re-elected. He said most of the time if your constituents like the job a Mayor or Councilmember is doing they will re-elect that person.

Chairman Thompson asked if the CRC should recommend a change in term lengths and the consensus was to leave the terms as is.

Item 2, continued:

YEAS: Members Bates, Cubberley, Dillingham, Griffith, Jungman, McBride, Pipes, Stawicki, Vinyard, Williamson-Jennings, Chairman Thompson

NAYES: None

Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried and the minutes approved; and the filing thereof was directed.

\*

**Item 3. Continued discussion and possible action of Article II, Sections 2, 5, 6, and 14, of the City Charter to consider whether the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor should be changed from two years to three years.**

Ms. Walker said during the last meeting, Member Bates requested this issue be revised in order for Staff to prepare language for three year terms for elected officials, with odd-number ward elections continuing to occur together in the same year, even-numbered ward election occurring the next year together, and the Mayoral election occurring every third year as a standalone election. She said Staff prepared a chart. She said to achieve this without affecting current terms, the language is drafted to begin in 2023 as follows:

	Current Term	New Term
Odd Wards	July 2, 2019 – July 7, 2021 July 7, 2021 – 2023	2023 – 2026 (Tuesday following election results)
Even Wards	July 3, 2019 – July 7, 2020 July 7, 2020 – July 5, 2020 July 5, 2022 – 2024	2024 – 2027 (Tuesday following election results)
Mayor	July 2, 2019 – July 5, 2022	July 5, 2022 – 2025 (Tuesday following election results)

Item 3, continued:

Member Bates said the current timing sometimes does not allow a sitting Councilmember to run for Mayor without losing their seat, whereas other Councilmembers can run without giving up their seat. He is trying to make it more equitable for all Councilmembers. He said almost all elections for higher offices occur on even years and changing the terms would allow for better time management if running for a higher office. He said the Mayor has a leadership role that is different from the rest of Council, but when it comes down to their ability to be involved and understand the issues there is really no difference in decision making power. He would not want to shorten the Mayor's term, but adding one extra year to the term of the Councilmembers will give them more time to be involved and understand the issues they are voting on.

Member Stawicki said the Mayor does a lot more City activities outside of Council meetings than other members of Council, which means they are only equal in terms of their vote on Council. He suggested creating nine (9) wards which would be one-third of the Council each year being elected each year and the Mayor would not vote at the Council meetings.

Member Pipes said if the Mayor does not vote then a big chunk of accountability is gone.

Member McBride said he supports three year terms for each member of Council including the Mayor and Member Pipes agreed.

Member Dillingham said she was not excited about three year terms because of the loss of engagement with the voters. She said the City is known for its engagement with voters and complacency may creep in with a three year term. She said it is critical to stay in touch with constituents because the demographics do change and it is Council's responsibility to understand what voters are thinking and it puts more pressure on the Councilmember to make sure they have ward meetings or other types of communication. She said face to face communication is important and the best way to do that is keeping Councilmembers engaged is to keep the two year terms.

Member Williamson-Jennings agreed and said two year terms keep representatives accountable and engaged with constituents wants from their representatives.

Councilmember Stawicki asked if any other cities separate Mayor and Council elections as Ms. Walker said she would research that for the Committee.

Member Griffith and Member Jungman support two year terms for Councilmembers.

Member Cubberley said he supports three year terms because it takes time to build relationships and get things done. He said larger City issues can take over a year of Committee and/or Council discussion before making it to Council for a vote so an extra year can make a big difference. He said three years is really not that long and Councilmembers can always be responsive to constituents.

Item 3, continued:

Member Bates said there is an interesting dynamic in a Mayoral race that could potentially be heavily influenced by the fact that there are four wards up for election at the same time. He said by separating the Mayor and Council races it makes it very clear to the public what type of race will be taking place.

Chairman Thompson said issues the Council was working on when he was sworn in as a Councilmember were not the same issues candidates running for office were talking about in the ward races. He voted on issues Council had been discussing for a very long time that he was uneducated about. He said when Council turns over quickly it lacks consistency of knowledge. He said it takes time to get new Councilmembers “up to speed” and new Councilmembers may not agree with the direction current seated Councilmembers are going.

Member McBride moved that the proposal to change the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor from two to three years be approved, which motion was duly seconded by Member Cubberley,

Items submitted for the record

1. Proposed Article II, Section 2 – Mayor and Councilmember’s Term Expiration

and the question being upon approving the proposal to change the term of office for Councilmembers and the Mayor from two to three years a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS: Members Bates, Cubberley, Griffith, McBride,  
Pipes, Chairman Thompson

NAYES: Members Dillingham, Jungman, Stawicki,  
Williamson-Jennings, Vinyard

Chairman Thompson declared the motion carried the proposal term of office for Councilmember and the Mayor from two to three years was approved.

\*

**Item 4. Discussion of Article II, Section 11, to consider whether to allow partisan elections for municipal office.**

Member Cubberley said City items are more issue focused than party focused.

Member Dillingham said it makes it so much easier to knock on a door, answer the phone, and answer an email when you are focusing on the issue and talking about the roads, water, stormwater, etc.

Member Pipes felt the City should stay status quo on this issue.

Item 3, being:

CONTINUED DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, POSTPONEMENT OF ARTICLE II, SECTIONS 2, 5, 6, AND 14 OF THE CITY CHARTER TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE TERM OF OFFICE FOR COUNCILMEMBERS AND THE MAYOR SHOULD BE CHANGED FROM TWO TO THREE YEARS.

Article II, Section 2 – Term of Office

Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said the Charter Review Commission (CRC) discussed the potential for a lengthy period of time between election and officially seating the newly elected member and expressed a desire to reduce that time. The Commission like the approach used in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where seating newly elected officials is tied to the certification of the election results. During the September meeting, the CRC reviewed proposed language and expressed concerns about the term of office not being exactly two years as set forth in the existing Charter language. Staff prepared options to reflect a two-year cycle for Councilmember election and a three-year cycle for Mayoral elections. During the October meeting, Commissioner Bates requested that this issue be revisited in order for Staff to prepare language for three year terms for all elected officials, with odd-numbered ward elections continuing to occur together in the same year, even-numbered ward elections occurring the next year together, and the Mayoral election occurring every third year as a stand-alone election. To achieve this without affecting current terms, language was drafted for three-year terms to begin in 2023. On November 4, 2019, the CRC voted six to five to move forward with amendments to Section 2 that would implement three-year terms for members of Council. She said tonight, the CRC will review and vote on ancillary amendments also needed to implement three-year terms for all members of Council.

Approved. Moved by Commissioner Stawicki, Seconded by Commissioner Pipes. Ayes: Vice-Chairman Cubberley, Commissioners Ali, Bates, Dillingham, Eller, Griffith, Pipes, and Stawicki. Nays: None.

Items submitted for the record

1. Article II, Section 2 – Term of Office

Article II, Section 5 – Municipal Elections

Ms. Walker said Staff drafted language that states, “Beginning in 2023, and every third year thereafter, elections for the following wards should be held, provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office: wards one (1), three (3), five (5), and seven (7). Beginning in 2024, and every third year thereafter, elections for the following wards should be held, provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office: wards two (2), four (4), six (6), and eight (8). Beginning in 2025, and every third year thereafter, elections for Mayor shall be held, provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office.”

Item 3, continued:

Approved. Moved by Commissioner Dillingham, Seconded by Commissioner Stawicki. Ayes: Vice-Chairman Cubberley, Commissioners Ali, Bates, Dillingham, Eller, Griffith, Pipes, and Stawicki. Nays: None.

Items submitted for the record

1. Article II, Section 5 – Municipal Elections.

#### Article II, Section 6 – Municipal Runoff Elections

Ms. Walker said Staff drafted language for municipal runoff elections and Commissioners requested language be amended (stricken) as follows:

By resolution duly adopted each year, the City Council shall designate a date in the following year that is subsequent to the date chosen for Norman's municipal election described in Section 5 herein, which is approved under then-current state law, for the holding of Norman's municipal runoff election, at which time there will be runoff election contests, if necessary, conducted by the Cleveland County Election board for each of the following positions: ~~for which two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office~~ wards two (2), four (4), six (6), and eight (8) in even-numbered years; wards one (1), three (3), five (5), and seven (7) in odd-numbered years; and Mayor in 2007 and each third year thereafter. Beginning in 2023, and every third year thereafter, elections for the following ward should be held: provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office: wards one (1), three (3), five (5), and seven (7). Beginning in 2024, and every third year thereafter, election for the following wards should be held: provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office: wards two (2), four (4), six (6), and eight (8). Beginning in 2025, and every third year thereafter, elections for Mayor shall be held, provided two (2) or more qualified (as described above) registered voters have filed for office. If allowed by then-current state law, the date for the municipal runoff elections shall be in April.

Approved as amended. Moved by Commissioner Stawicki, Seconded by Commissioner Eller. Ayes: Vice-Chairman Cubberley, Commissioners Ali, Bates, Dillingham, Eller, Griffith, Pipes, and Stawicki. Nays: None.

Items submitted for the record

1. Article II, Section 6 – Municipal Runoff Elections.