



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 01/06/2026

REQUESTER: City Council

PRESENTER: Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney

ITEM TITLE: DISCUSSION REGARDING POTENTIAL CHARTER AMENDMENTS

BACKGROUND:

During the Council Retreat this past summer, Council discussed possible upcoming election topics. One of the topics discussed included some changes to the Charter. These included increasing the stipend for elected officers (currently a maximum of \$100 per month), changing the beginning date for Councilmember and Mayoral terms to coincide more closely with the election date, and an expansion of possible certifications for the position of City Auditor.

Staff previously provided the rejected language provided to the voters in 2022 related to stipend and terms. Staff also provided proposed language that would provide more flexibility for the type of certifications that would qualify an applicant for the position.

Council last discussed this topic on October 28, 2025. Feedback given at that time was to prepare the amendments related to the City Auditor position for the April election. In order to meet election deadlines for the April election, Ordinance O-2526-35 amending the City Charter and Ordinance O-2526-36 calling an election for such purpose are currently slated for Council consideration on First Reading on January 13, 2026 and Second and Final Reading on January 27, 2026.

Regarding increasing the stipend for elected officers and modifying the beginning date of Councilmember and Mayoral terms, Council desired additional discussion. If consensus is reached on these additional Charter Amendments, they could be added to Ordinance O-2526-35 and O-2526-36 for consideration in time for the April election.

DISCUSSION:

Elected Officers Stipend: A chart comparing Councilmember stipend/salary for other cities was previously provided. An updated version adding data for Tulsa, Broken Arrow and Moore is attached. Additional information is included related to implementation of compensation increases. Article 23, Section 10 of the Oklahoma Constitution prohibits changing the salary or emoluments of any public official after his election or appointment, or during his or her term of office, unless by operation of law enacted prior to such election or appointment. Any change to compensation must become effective during the following term for all elected officials.

Some cities require a vote of the citizens before stipends can be increased because the amount of Councilmember compensation is included in the Charter. Other cities, like Edmond and Lawton, are empowered by their Charter language to adopt compensation increases by ordinance.

Norman's most recent Charter Review Commission ("CRC") considered and ultimately recommended language amendments to the Charter that would provide for a stipend increase. The proposed language set an initial annual rate of increased compensation to take effect with the next term of office - \$8,100 for the Mayor, and \$5,400 for Councilmembers. It also called for the Mayor, with the consent of Council, to appoint a five-member Compensation Commission to determine and set the appropriate monthly stipend for the Mayor and Councilmembers based on the consumer price index, the City's overall budget, and other relevant factors every three years thereafter. The Compensation Commission would be appointed every three years and any increase in stipend approved by the Commission would not become effective until the following Council or Mayoral term, as applicable. The summary from the CRC's Final Report and language previously considered by the voters is attached for reference. Ultimately, it was rejected in 2022 by a vote of 57.2% opposed, and 42.8% in favor.

Term Beginning Date

Prior to 2003, the terms of the Mayor and Councilmembers expired "at the time fixed for the last regular meeting of the Council in April". In 2003, voters approved the current language that sets the expiration of mayoral and councilmember terms on the first Tuesday of July. The most recent CRC considered and ultimately recommended language amendments to the Charter that would essentially revert back to the version pre-dating the 2003 amendments. Rather than fix the expiration date for the last regular meeting in April, the CRC proposed that terms begin the Tuesday following the date of the run-off election, which is held each April. Care was taken to ensure no current terms were impacted by the change, including terms for which candidates had already filed for election. As discussed in October, the dates have been updated to reflect this. The ordinance language is attached for your review.

Staff will be available at the Council Study Session on January 6, 2026 to discuss these items further and answer any questions.