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MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCILMEMBERS
FROM: JOSHUA TETZLAFF, CITY ADMINISTRATOR
SUBJECT: MAYORAL TERM
DATE: NOVEMBER 1, 2024

*** UPDATE ***

At the last City Council meeting, the City Council held a public hearing for the public share its thoughts on changing the mayoral term starting in 2026 for two-years to four-years. No comment was given from members of the public. The City Council then voted unanimously to pass the ordinance on first reading.

*** PREVIOUS MEMO ***

At its regular meeting in August 2024, the Charter Commission voted unanimously by those present to change the City Charter for the New Prague mayor to serve a term of four years, instead of the two-year term that is currently stated.

Through this process, the Charter Commission has two paths. The Charter Commission can either have the change go to the ballot to be voted on by residents, or it can send the question to the City Council. For the change to pass at the City Council level, the vote would need to be unanimous. Upon recommendation from City Attorney Scott Riggs, the Charter Commission decided by resolution to send the question to the City Council for vote.

The section that this applies to is Section 2.03 of the City Charter. This section currently reads:

Section 2.03. City Council Composition and Election. The City Council shall be composed of a Mayor and four (4) Council members elected at large. Each City Council member shall serve a term of four (4) years and have until the successor is elected and qualifies. The Mayor shall serve for a term of two (2) years and until the successor is elected and qualifies.

When reviewing surrounding communities, it is pretty split on how many have mayors elected to two-year terms and how many have mayors elected to four-year terms. The surrounding counties are as follows:

SCOTT COUNTY

Shakopee – 4
Prior Lake – 4
Jordan – 4
Savage – 4
Belle Plaine – 2

LE SUEUR COUNTY

Le Sueur – 4
Le Center – 2
Waterville – 2
Montgomery – 2
Kasota – 2
Cleveland – 2

RICE COUNTY

Faribault – 4
Northfield – 4
Morristown – 2
Dundas – 4
Nerstrand – 2
Lonsdale – 2

The main advantage that I see of this is that with a new mayor in a two-year term, it may take almost two years before the mayor starts to feel comfortable in their duties before they have to defend their position. The City does not require this of the other elected positions, instead allowing those members to learn and grow in their role over a four year time period.

Other than allowing more people to consistently run for mayor, which is an argument that could be used to say that all Council positions should be two-year terms instead of four-year terms, I do not believe there is a good argument for the mayor to be on a two year term cycle while the councilmembers are on four year cycles.

Of note, changing the mayoral term will not affect the 2024 elections. Due to timelines required by the State, a change now in the Charter for Mayoral terms would take effect with the 2026 election.

Recommendation

I recommend approving the First Reading of Ordinance #352, Amending Chapter 2 of the City Charter.