

A Message from the Columbus Charter Review Commission

The members of this Commission are honored to follow a long line of Columbus' leaders in reviewing the city's charter in light of changing laws, technologies and societal standards. On the centennial anniversary of our charter's adoption, we set out to conduct a comprehensive review of the charter and make thoughtful recommendations for modernizing our city's constitution.

This report represents the culmination of that work – a summary of the issues we've considered and a compilation of our citizens' recommendations for change. While each issue was vigorously debated, we present these as the unanimous recommendations of our Commission.

As a Commission, we offer our thanks to Mayor Michael B. Coleman and Council President Andrew J. Ginther for entrusting us with the authority and responsibility to weigh in on the document that establishes the powers and limitations of our city government, and governs, in so many important ways, the responsibilities of our government to the people.

We extend our thanks to the many city residents who provided feedback – both formal and informal – on our charter and other city issues. We are also grateful for the support and suggestions of city staff throughout this process.

We are also thankful for the Columbus citizens who, 100 years ago, adopted our first home rule city charter. They did so at a pivotal moment for our city. At that time, citizens and elected officials alike reeled from decades of instability in our form of government, which used city government as a proxy in political battles in the state. The city was rocked by political scandals, widespread graft, and rancorous partisan conflict. The west side of Columbus had not yet recovered from a devastating flood the previous year. And residents would, in mere weeks, witness the first shots of the Great War.

Against this backdrop, the 1914 Columbus City Charter, drafted by an elected commission of Columbus residents, established a balanced, accountable form of government that still stands strong 100 years later.

It is our hope that our recommendations maintain that critical framework, while modernizing our charter in preparation for the challenges and opportunities of the next 100 years.

Marchelle E. Moore, Esq., Co-Chair

State Representative Michael F. Curtin, Co-Chair

Jeff Cabot, Commissioner

City Auditor Hugh J. Dorrian, Commissioner

Dawn Tyler Lee, Commissioner

History of the Columbus Charter Review Commission of 2014

On April 4, 2014, Mayor Michael B. Coleman and Council President Andrew J. Ginther convened and appointed a Charter Review Commission. The mayor and council president charged the commission with conducting a comprehensive review of the Columbus City Charter and making recommendations for potential revisions. The five-member commission was composed of the following members:

- The Honorable Michael F. Curtin, State Representative, Co-Chair
- Marchelle E. Moore, Vice President of Legal & Government Affairs and General Counsel for the Central Ohio Transit Authority, Co-Chair
- Jeff Cabot, Executive Director of Kids Voting Central Ohio, Commissioner
- The Honorable Hugh J. Dorrian, Columbus City Auditor, Commissioner
- Dawn Tyler Lee, Senior Vice President of Community Impact for United Way of Central Ohio, Commissioner

The Charter Review Commission held nine meetings, including seven working meetings and two public hearings.¹ The commission widely distributed meeting notices, videos and materials of each meeting, and links to an online form and an email address for public comment. Staff posted all commission presentations, background documents, draft amendments, meeting minutes, meeting videos, public comment summaries, and bylaws on the Charter Review Commission's webpage.²

To support the work and meetings of the Charter Review Commission, Mayor Coleman, Council President Ginther, and City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. provided resources and staff, including the following:

- Andrea Blevins, Columbus City Clerk, Commission Secretary
- Cheryl Austin, Administrative Analyst for the City Clerk, Support Staff
- Bryan M. Clark, Senior Legislative Advisor, Columbus City Council's Liaison to the Commission
- Joshua T. Cox, Chief Counsel, City Attorneys' Liaison to the Commission
- Sherry R. Kish, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Liaison to the Commission

On Monday, June 30, 2014, the members of the Columbus Charter Review Commission voted to forward XX recommendations to Columbus City Council for consideration. These recommendations arose from the Commissioner's review of all 235 sections of the Columbus City Charter.

This report includes a summary of the Charter Review Commission's recommendations, proposed language for those charter amendments, and ancillary materials associated with the commission's work.

¹ See Appendix for a list of meeting dates and locations.

² www.columbus.gov/charterreviewcommission