

**Presentation by J. Edward Johnson, Director of Legislative Affairs for Columbus City Council (as prepared for delivery)**

Good evening members of the Charter Review Committee.

My name is Edward Johnson and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs for Columbus City Council. Chair Coe asked me to present on the scope of this committee to give the members and the public context on why we are all gathered here and will continue to gather at locations throughout the City to discuss our City Charter, and our City Council's place within the city's constitution.

Earlier this year, on July 9, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and Columbus City Council announced the formation of a charter review committee, to be convened after the August 2 special election, where Issue 1, a citizen-initiated referendum to amend and enact section of the City Charter to create city council districts, provide for the election of members from districts and change the number of council members elected at-large, was defeated by the electors of Columbus with 14,163 electors voting yes, and 35,456 electors voting no.

The intention of the Mayor and City Council was to provide the framework for an inclusive, community-driven process to explore how the City's legislative branch can best serve all of the City's residents.

The authority to convene a body such as this is contained in section 236 of the Columbus City Charter, however, it is worth noting that this body is NOT a full commission, but rather a "committee," hence the increased members and the narrowed scope.

For historical context, our City Charter has been in effect since 1914 – two years after the Ohio General Assembly authorized municipalities to create home rule charters for themselves, to unburden cities of the passions of state legislators involvement in municipal governance.

Subsequently, the Columbus City Charter has been amended 53 times in its 102-year history. Staff has provided the Committee with a history of those

amendments and other attempts that failed to amend this City Charter in the “HISTORY” tab of your binders.

I will not encumber the committee with a comprehensive history of charter amendments, however, I will simply remark on certain trends, and recent committees and commissions that have been convened to suggest changes to the City Charter. The majority of committees and commissions that have been convened have been episodic and issue-driven – that is to say that the convening of the body was neither at a regular interval, nor was it intended to explore all sections of the charter – this was true of the recent committees and commissions convened in 1998, 1999, and 2010.

The 2014 commission was episodic, yet comprehensive and established that thereafter, charter review commissions would occur in 2022 and then ever 10 years subsequent – thus, allowing the electors of Columbus to regularly and comprehensively review the City Charter. Regardless of the potential recommendations of this committee and subsequent action by the electors, if any, a Charter Review Commission will be convened by City Council and the Mayor in 2022 to examine the City Charter, in its entirety.

This committee falls in the former of the two categories that I have described – its formation is episodic and issue-driven.

The Mayor and Columbus City Council would like this Committee to look at successful cities around the country and state to help determine what is the best way for Columbus’ City Council to be structured (for example district-based membership, at-large membership, or a hybrid system); how many members should be on City Council; the manner in which vacancies are filled; and how that may impact council members’ workload.

In the City Charter, there are currently sixteen sections that comprise the “Council” portion of the Charter that committee members are being asked to focus their attention towards.

The Committee is respectfully asked to deliver a final report to the community, the Council and the Mayor by February 2017.

When the report is delivered to the people, the committee may make recommendations for amendments to the charter, recommendation that Council pass an ordinance, , recommendation for adoption of a best practice, recommendations for further study of an issue, or recommendations for no change.

As outlined, in the “Charter Amendment Process” document in members’ binders, upon receipt of the committee’s recommendations, Council may at its discretion submit, in whole or in part, any of the proposed amendments to a vote of the people. This means that Council will be the body that decides whether or not an amendment proposal will be placed before the electors.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee.