

Minutes from the City Council Special Meeting on Tuesday October 3, 2023, at 5:30 pm in the Auditorium are as follows:

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| Laflamme, Frank N., President | At-Large Councilor | Present |
| Roy, Gerard (Jerry) A. | At-Large Councilor | Present |
| Tillotson, James K. | At-Large Councilor | Present via Zoom |
| Zygarowski, Robert J. | At-Large Councilor | Present |
| McAuliffe, Joel D. | Ward 1 Councilor | Present |
| Brooks, Shane D. | Ward 2 Councilor | Present via Zoom |
| Lopez, Delmarina | Ward 3 Councilor | Present |
| Balakier, George A. | Ward 4 Councilor | Present |
| Krampits, Fred T. | Ward 5 Councilor | Present |
| Dobosz, Derek Gregory | Ward 6 Councilor | Present via Zoom |
| Courchesne, William C. | Ward 7 Councilor | Present via Zoom |
| Labrie, Gary R. | Ward 8 Councilor | Present |
| Pniak-Costello, Mary Elizabeth | Ward 9 Councilor | Present |

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Question 1

Shall the term of office of the Mayor of the City of Chicopee be four years?

Question 1 Summary

This is a non-binding question aimed at gaining the public’s perspective on the issue. The City Council is considering amending the term of office for Mayor from two years to four years effective at the start of the next Mayoral term beginning January 2026. Chapter 144 of the Special Acts of 1917 defines the term of office for Mayor of Chicopee as two years. To be changed, the City must hold an election for a Charter Commission, or the City Council must pass a home rule petition to be sent to the state legislature and Governor for adoption.

Question 2

Shall At-Large City Councilors serve four-year terms with two being elected every two years?

Question 2 Summary

This is a non-binding question aimed at gaining the public’s perspective on the issue. The City Council is considering amending the term of At-Large City Councilors from two years to four years. The municipal election in the year of 2025 would provide the two candidates receiving the highest vote totals with a four year term, and the other two elected with two-year terms. Those two-year term seats would then be up for election in the 2027 municipal election with a set term of four years. The At-Large Councilors would then be set with four-year terms. Chapter 10 of the City Charter defines the term of office for all City Councilors as two years. To be changed, the City must hold an election for a Charter Commission or the City Council must pass a home rule petition to be sent to the legislature and Governor for adoption.

--Motion made by Councilor McAuliffe that question 1 be approved and placed on the 11/7 ballot. Councilor McAuliffe stated transparency is talked about a lot here in these chambers. To gauge the publics feeling on this. Recommendation of the Charter Committee. Different routes could take several years to take on the modernization of the changes. There is no negative to hear from the public. Will help the Council on how to go into the future. Think would be beneficial for the voters to weigh in on how they feel. Encourage everyone to vote positive on this. Respect the work of the Charter Review Committee.

--Public input, Lisa Bienvenue, 34 Everett Street, amazed at how quickly the council has gotten this together. Not going before the full council meeting tonight. Realize Mayoral appointment was

recommended by the Charter Committee. Term of council was fast tracked. Only other time seen this much activity was to get raises. Wish there was as much activity to move with the traffic issues. Protect the citizens of this city. Not saying shouldn't be extended/let's not hoodwink the voters to think they know what's going on.

--Motion made by Councilor McAuliffe to return to the regular order of business and close public input. Motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. Councilor Pniak-Costello stated understand what the constituent is saying. Many citizens agree with Clerk Rattell to have this in a bigger voting year. Councilor Roy stated agree with Councilor McAuliffe to let this be up to the voters. If they want this to happen, let it happen. Councilor Labrie stated non-binding, will find out one way or another. Find out from the voters. Councilor Tillotson stated agree with Councilor Labrie, opportunity to get a non-binding question. Vote tonight. Councilor Balakier stated non-binding, get the public's response on the issue. Councilor Zygarowski stated let the voters decide. Councilor Courchesne stated not a lot of turnout in this election. Conflicted, want the public input, truly the voters opinion matters, feel a little rushed. No notice. Put something out by the city. In favor because public opinion matters. No reason to rush this, most of the council was opposed in 2013. Councilor Lopez stated conflicted on this one. Resident transparency provides information. Don't believe there is enough time. Should have had conversation weeks ago. Conversation is healthy, residents expressed they felt. Should be on a presidential year. Should have as much voter turnout. Clear as day, most turnout in a presidential election. Agree with Councilor Courchesne non-binding question. Not use community in this way. Just feels too rushed. Motion about Council makes even less sense. No actual recommendation by the Charter Review Committee. Residents don't agree with this being so rushed. Was supposed to be used, council moving this forward. More time to educate the public. Shouldn't move so hastily. Councilor Dobosz stated agree with sending to the ballot, but not this ballot, rushed. Councilor Brooks stated has a degree in political science and local government. Fair democracy. Believe the term shall be extended with a recall provision. Darned if we, darned if we don't. There is a distinction of municipal vs presidential voters. Think this may drive the interest of the average voter to come out and have their voice heard. Data driven by rank and file voter. Councilor McAuliffe stated high level of experience in this room. Chance to gauge the perspective of voters. Could die in the ballot box. This is too fast. How can the council only give voters 30 days? Offering a chance to give their perspective. Most transparent thing we have ever done. Have also had ballot questions defeated. Works in a democracy. Councilor Pniak-Costello stated want to have the transparency. Want to educate the public. Send postcards to residents about different issues. This is from a committee, husband also served on this committee. Don't know how many votes of the committee were favorable. Want to inform residents. See both sides. Did have residents that would prefer it being on the presidential ballot. Councilor Krampits stated kind of conflicted, know want on the ballot, don't know if we want it this fast. Want all as one. Without a recall provision we may have a change of heart. Poll is a good thing. Questions, debate with the public. Input is limited at this point in time. Councilor Roy stated still in favor, let the voters decide. Councilor Labrie stated non-binding is the key, what's the harm to put it on this ballot and the presidential? Can discuss faster. Municipal voters who we strive to get out and vote. Don't know if I want the four-year term for Mayor. Shows the committee we put together. See the fruits of their labor. Councilor Tillotson stated agree to put it on as a non-binding and see what we get from the public. Councilor Balakier stated non-binding question, good idea to put it out there. Can put on a presidential ballot as well. Councilor Zygarowski stated hear wait till the presidential election. Heard people aren't going to vote. In favor four-year terms for Mayor and Council, twenty years ago there were five new members. Put on the ballot, is there enough time? Cut off is tonight? Don't rush to do this. Should have more dialogue. Let the voters decide. Don't see a big rush to do this tonight. Don't rush into it. Councilor Courchesne stated conflicted, don't think when the voter gets there they won't know there is a question, rushed. Kicking around after the committee recommended it. Voter won't know this is on the ballot. Non-binding, won't get accurate data, can't make informed decision. Not rushed. Councilor Lopez stated agree this is too rushed. Not against hearing from the public, not enough time to educate the public. Can get pulse by polling, speak to the voters. Get multiple residents taking a larger pool for the

presidential election. Councilor Brooks stated in favor of moving tonight. Voter weigh in is important, don't see the value of waiting. Talk to constituents. Not always forthcoming, won't share how they vote. Don't feel inclined to share how they vote. Non-binding does that.

--Motion made by Councilor McAuliffe to allow Councilor Laflamme to speak. Motion passed by a roll call vote of 11 yes, 1 no, 1 abstained. Councilor Laflamme abstained. Councilor Zygarowski voted no. Councilor Laflamme stated listened to everyone tonight, we have a meeting at 6:30 Please don't be repetitive. In favor, non-binding. In favor of putting on in a presidential year too. Gives a year to work on it before the next election. Got vibes either way communicate what's coming up. Tough tool to work with because it involves elected officials. Vote for tonight.

--Motion made by Councilor McAuliffe question 2 be approved and placed on the 11/7 ballot. Councilor McAuliffe stated will try to be brief. Most comments have been that the recommendation did not come from the Charter Review Committee don't have to agree with everything in there. There will be new articles, worthy of consideration. Works well on the school committee. Wisdom and guidance adds stability. Disagree with this being rushed. Say we're going to fast to delay. Beneficial thing. Allow the public to vote. Councilor Pniak-Costello stated the situation is last minute, last day to vote. Believe in transparency. Send postcards at our own family expense. Serious about transparency. Would have preferred to debate longer. Councilor Krampits stated same reasoning, should go on the presidential. Four-year term, staggered, out of step, continuity. Right to review this. Councilor Roy agrees with a four-year term. Don't wish to debate as would advance his position. Councilor Labrie stated talking about the four-year term staggered. Not for all four at-large on the same year. Won't vote on this one. More complicated, not in favor of this one. Councilor Balakier stated non-binding get the publics perspective. Public should take a look at this. Councilor Zygarowski stated believe councilors at large should be four-year terms. In ballot box can educate the public. Councilor Lopez stated similar to the last one. Self-explanatory, don't believe this is transparent. Not enough time to educate. Recommended by Mike Pise not the committee. Large debate back and forth. Thought out, incredibly rushed/moving so quickly. Much conversation for years and years about the Mayoral term.

--Motion made by Councilor McAuliffe to recess at 6:29. Motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

--Motion made by Councilor Lopez to return to the Special City Council meeting at 6:31. Motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote. Councilor Courchesne stated perspective, tired of Councilors bashing other Councilors. Has nothing to do with voters. A recall provision will save the city a lot of money. Councilor Brooks stated a recall provision will be arbitrary at best. Some sort of tool to weaponize. Just to put that out there. Not as easy as the general public things it is. Current at large don't have to abstain. Strongly believe at large should be four years. Could have many new board members. Like the idea of staggering to keep the additional experience. Motion made by Councilor Labrie to allow Councilor Laflamme to speak. Councilor Laflamme stated talk about the Charter Committee. Thirteen members of the council are elected to bring what the constituents want forward. Gives some leeway. Can help with the process. Will not vote on this tonight. Little more time, thank Mike for bringing this forward.

--Motion to place question #1 on the 11/7 ballot passed by a roll call vote of 8 yes, 5 no. Councilors Lopez, Krampits, Dobosz, Courchesne, & Pniak-Costello voting no.

--Motion to place question #2 on the 11/7 ballot was defeated by a roll call vote of 4 yes, 9 no. Councilors Tillotson, McAuliffe, Brooks, & Labrie voting yes.

Adjournment: --Motion made by Councilor Labrie to adjourn at 6:38. Motion passed by a roll call vote of 12 yes, 1 out of chair. Councilor Dobosz out of chair.

ATTEST:



Keith W. Rattell, City Clerk