



# City of Northfield

City Hall  
801 Washington Street  
Northfield, MN 55057  
northfieldmn.gov

## Meeting Minutes - Draft Charter Commission

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Thursday, September 14, 2023

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### 6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

*The meeting was called to order at 6:05PM.*

*Also present: City Administrator Ben Martig, Meetings Associate Edward Malnar*

**Present:** 7 - Commissioner Scott Jensen, Commissioner C C Linstroth, Commissioner Jack Hoschouer, Commissioner James Prichard, Commissioner Scott Oney, Lance Heisler and Commissioner Amy Gernon

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. [23-1431](#) Approval of September 14, 2023 Meeting Agenda.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Prichard, seconded by Commissioner Hoschouer, to approve the meeting agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

**Not Present:** 1 - Commissioner Jensen

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. [23-1432](#) Approval of July 13, 2023 Charter Commission Meeting Minutes

**A motion was made by Commissioner Linstroth, seconded by Commissioner Prichard, to approve the July 13 minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

**Not Present:** 1 - Commissioner Jensen

### CITIZEN COMMENT

*No one presented a public comment.*

### OLD BUSINESS

3. [23-1433](#) Remote Appearance at Charter Commission Meetings.

*Commissioner Jensen arrived at 6:09PM.*

*City Administrator Martig noted that remote/interactive participation could be done in the*

*same manner as is done for City Council meetings. Must know the public location where members not physically present will be and the site publicized on the Friday before the Commission's Thursday meeting. At least one member of the Commission would have to be present in the Council chambers. Remote access can be technically accommodated with the current staff and some extra training. The Commission could modify the rules used by the City Council for remote access.*

*Commissioner Oney said that a laptop in the middle of the room would probably be adequate. The meeting would work like a Zoom meeting.*

*Commissioner Hoschouer asked about the amount of effort and time needed to set up the remote meeting. Administrator Martig said that perhaps fifteen minutes to a half hour would be all that would be needed.*

*Chairman Heisler said that if he is notified in advance that a Commissioner will not be present that should give sufficient time to set up the remote.*

*Chairman Heisler said that he would coordinate with Administrator Martig for a list of requirements and bring it to the next meeting for discussion and, if needed, adaptation to Charter Commission needs.*

**A motion was made by Commissioner Linstroth, seconded by Commissioner Gernon, to approve permitting remote attendance with advance, published notice compliant with public meeting law, and to use City Hall technology resources and staff assistance to facilitate any commissioner attending remotely. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 7 - Commissioner Jensen, Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

#### **4. [23-1434](#)**

#### **Committee Report on Charter Section 3.5.**

*Commissioner Prichard said that the Charter is unclear about a few dates regarding replacement of missing Council members. Also, the Charter language does not match the language of the State Statute and the committee tried to bring the Charter, as much as possible, into conformity with the Statute. Deadlines for candidacy should be as reasonable as possible to match those for the next regular election.*

*The possibility exists that the mayor could be the missing member, resulting in a potential tie among the other Council members. Section 3.9 provides that a mayor pro-tem be selected to perform the mayoral duties. An evenly divided Council might not be able to agree on a pro-tem. The committee could not come up with a good way to deal with the issue of mayoral absence. If there is a tie, the situation would have to wait until the next election. It was decided to leave the situation as is and deal with it if it were to actually occur. As presently written, there are four days which are omitted from the guidelines for registration.*

*Commissioner Oney suggested that the Commission postpone acting on the committee suggestion until next meeting to give all Commissioners time to study and reflect on the issue. He also suggested that the situation must have arisen somewhere else in Minnesota and there might be ways to handle a tie.*

*The issue will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.*

5. [23-1435](#)

## Committee Report on Review of Charter Commission Policies.

*Chairman Heisler noted that there are two areas in which the Commission does not have a policy: 1) there should be a structured way to ensure that all citizen comments are fairly and equally considered. Need defined rules that any citizen can understand and follow when addressing the Commission. Motion to add policies for citizen comment to Charter Commission rules. Hoschouer moved, Linstroth seconded. Proposed that citizens be allowed a one-time per meeting to address the Commission for a maximum of three minutes. Commission members would be able to ask questions which could result in exceeding the three minute limit, the chairman can cut off discussion if it were to go too long or get off the subject.*

*Commissioner Linstroth asked what should happen if a person had questions on two different agenda items. Should the citizen have a separate three-minute time per item or be allowed to address both items at the same time?*

**A motion was made by Commissioner Prichard, seconded by Commissioner Jensen, to approve the proposed policy guidelines for one period of public comments at the beginning of each meeting as amended by clarifying the chair's discretion to permit commissioners to address to the speaker, to enable the speaker to answer, and to decide the appropriate amount of time for such an exchange. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Jensen, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

**No:** 1 - Commissioner Linstroth

**Committee Report on Review of Charter Commission Policies - Staff Liaison**

*Charter Commission liaison with the city. As proposed in the packet, the liaison would act in a technical rather than a policy capacity. Commissioner Oney suggested that the person should be a technical advisor and also should provide statistic about how many persons are watching the Commission meetings on video. Administrator Martig said that it should be possible to track how many citizens are watching the meetings either live or archived. He will report back at the next meeting.*

*Hoschouer said that the proposed duties of the liaison are already being done by the staff. Heisler said that there should be a policy to ensure that the liaison person is clear about their responsibilities. Heisler said that he thinks the person should be the City Administrator who could then designate staff persons responsible for the appropriate tasks. Jensen stressed that the role of the liaison should be restricted to purely technical issues. The technical advisor would be asked to provide statistical information concerning viewership of the Commission meetings. Passed unanimously without further discussion.*

*Agenda item on Rules of Decorum will be taken up at the next meeting.*

**A motion was made by Commissioner Hoschouer, seconded by Commissioner Prichard, to approve the proposed policy empowering the Commission to designate a technical advisor, as amended by removing parliamentary process advising and adding reporting on public usage of the Commission's digital archive. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 7 - Commissioner Jensen, Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon

6. [23-1436](#) Charter Provisions on Citizen Petitions

*Due to time constraint, this item was postponed until the next meeting.*

7. [23-1437](#) Use of Committees for Charter Commission Business.

*Commissioner Oney is skeptical of a three-person subcommittee who, he feels, may have worked out a solution to an issue and only need to get one more commission member to pass the issue. This would amount to limiting discussion and quick passage by the whole Commission on an important issue. Commissioner Gernon noted that it takes a lot of time to properly study and issue and bring a proposed solution back to present to the whole Commission and then vote.*

*Oney expressed concern that the subcommittee's proposal would take place out of the public eye and lead to lockstep acceptance by the whole commission. Linstroth said that she was on the subcommittee for Commission policies and still voted no on the resulting motion.*

*Prichard said that Oney's question reinforced the responsibility of Commission members to study the packet and be able to question issues that are unclear or difficult to understand.*

*Chairman Heisler asked Commission members who want to make a motion on the topic to put it together and bring it to him two weeks before the next meeting so it can be included in the packet.*

## ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Commissioner Prichard, seconded by Commissioner Jensen, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20PM. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 7 - Commissioner Jensen, Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Commissioner Oney, Chair Heisler and Commissioner Gernon