

NORTHFIELD CHARTER COMMISSION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A new set of officers for the charter commission was elected. Unlike some years past, we had a full compliment of 7 Charter Commission members. Our commission this year was blessed with dedicated members who brough a brad variety of experience and skills to the commission, and who put in many, many hours of dedicated work both at commission meetings and on appointed committees.

The Commission prepared and approved the 2024 annual report which was provided and accepted by the Chief Judge of the third judicial district.

The Commission continued its discussion from 2024 regarding a need to clarify Section 3.5 of the Charter which addresses filling vacancies in the City Council and the office of Mayor. Amendment to any section of the Charter is a monumental task. It requires a great deal of work, and requires input from multiple sources – e.g. comparisons to similar provisions in other city charters; examination of state statutes which address similar issues; input from the Minnesota League of Cities, and Minnesota case law which often guides and establishing boundaries for what is legally permissible and what is not. In the end no Charter provision can be adopted without the unanimous consent of the City Council and the Mayor.

After much work and discussion, the Charter Commission forwarded to the City Council a proposed amendment to Section 3.5 which clarified provisions dealing with the specific times when vacancies occur; when elections will be help to fill those vacancies; and specifying the time at which a term filled by a vacancy will end. After presentations to the city council at public hearings, this proposed amendment was adopted unanimously by the city council and the Charter was amended accordingly.

ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

In 2024 the Charter Commission began work on a possible amendment to Charter section 4.1. After some public and city administration input, the issue as to the specific time when council and mayoral terms begin and end may need clarification. The examination of this issue, as with any issue which may lead to a Charter amendment, may require an extensive effort which would occupy much of the 2026 calendar year.

The Charter Commission, as always, will remain open to any proposals from the commission, the city administration, and the public which will assist the commission in its duty to keep the Charter clear, understandable, and timely.

DATED: January, 2026

Lance Heisler
Chairman, Charter Commission