



City of Northfield

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

Meeting Minutes - Draft Charter Commission

Thursday, September 11, 2025

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

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

Vice Chair Oney called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: 5 - Commissioner C C Linstroth, Commissioner Jack Hoschouer, Commissioner James Prichard, Vice Chair Scott Oney and Commissioner Amy Gernon

Also present: Ben Martig, City Administrator; Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. [25-477](#) Approval of September 11, 2025 Meeting Agenda.

A motion was made by Commissioner Linstroth, seconded by Commissioner Gernon, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Vice Chair Oney and Commissioner Gernon

Enactment No: M2025-112

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. [25-478](#) Approval of July 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoschouer, seconded by Commissioner Prichard, to approve the July 10, 2025 Charter Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Vice Chair Oney and Commissioner Gernon

Enactment No: M2025-113

COMMISSION ABSENCES

3. [25-479](#) Excuse meeting absences.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoschouer, seconded by Commissioner Linstroth, to approve the excused absences of Chair Heisler and Commissioner Jensen. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Vice Chair Oney and Commissioner Gernon

Enactment No: M2025-114

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr David Delong commented on Proposed Charter Amendment 4.1. The City Council meeting on January 7 was conducted without a quorum present and " ... no quorum means no meeting, means no business. No business means no swearing in." Rather than follow the Charter, the Council members took another approach and are now trying to justify what they did. Mr Delong distributed a handout with more background information and indicated that he would have more to say in the future.

OLD BUSINESS

4. [25-480](#) Discussion on Status of Charter Section 3.5.

Vice Chair Oney said that Charter Section 3.5 had passed its final reading and would take effect on December 8.

5. [25-481](#) Discussion on Proposed Amendment to Charter Section 4.1.

Discussion of proposed Charter Section 4.1. Vice Chair Oney commented that the proposed amendment might not have affected the January Council meeting that Mr. Delong had commented about.

Commissioner Prichard said that there is some ambiguity between procedural and substantive matters and clarification may be needed. He said that there is a qualitative difference between calling a meeting to order and transacting business. He said that according to the ordinance, the oath of office could be administered by the mayor, the mayor protem or by the city clerk. It is a procedural rather than a substantive issue and he would not consider the January meeting as necessarily invalid. He said it would be good to clarify so there are no questions going forward. City Administrator Martig began to note what the city staff had done on the issue. Vice Chair Oney said that the time for public comment had passed and questioned whether Mr. Martig even lives in the city.

Commissioner Prichard said that he did not see Administrator Martig's input as being bound by limitations on public comment. Oney concurred. Prichard said he considered Administrator Martig's input as a procedural help and not out of order. Commissioner Linstroth asked if she could ask a question of Administrator Martig. Vice Chair Oney said the biggest problem is that the issue is "primarily staff-driven" who wants the change rather than being citizen initiated.

Commissioner Linstroth said that her recollection is that the issue was raised by a citizen and that staff input is desirable. She requested that the City Administrator be allowed to complete his comment.

Vice Chair Oney said the time for public comment was past. As Commissioner Linstroth repeated her question, Oney said there should be a time limit on the comment. He said he felt like there was a "coup" taking place.

Commissioner Hoschouer asked how it is that a member of the City staff attempting to clarify an issue is regarded as an ordinary citizen. Oney disagreed he said it felt it is a top-down movement but agreed to let Administrator Martig speak but adding "we don't now if it's going to be true or not." Commissioner Hoschouer interjected that the comment was "out of line." Commissioner Linstroth called a point of order that there are

rules of decorum.

When he was allowed to speak, Administrator Martig said that 's office had indicated that the League of Minnesota Cities pointed out that Statute 205.07 specifically relates to charter cities as to when an office takes [effect]. It is something unique that even the attorney's office was not aware of. The League basically says that for charter cities terms for city council members expire on the first Monday of January except that they also have to qualify which presumable means that they have to have taken the oath of office.

Vice Chair Oney suggested that it might be best if the commissioners read Mr. DeLong's information hand out at home for discussion at the next meeting. Commissioner Prichard said that he would like more time to explore the information; he questioned whether it would make more sense to have a subcommittee look at it or if a longer work session would be better. Oney noted that if any three members of the Commission discussed the issue with another member, it would essentially become a serial meeting. He said that anyone who has some thoughts could write it up and it would be passed to Chairman Heisler and put in the packet for the next meeting.

Commissioner Gernon said that she prefers a working session to a subcommittee as it would allow more collaborative thinking and no one would be left out. She proposed a working session to ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed. Commissioner Linstroth agreed with Commissioner Gernon's suggestion.

Commissioner Prichard said he wondered what the source for the second markup of the draft was 4.1. Administrator Martig said that he and the city attorney had developed it as a possible alternative. He shared it with Chairman Heisler who approved it for inclusion in the packet.

Both markups say that the oath of office should be administered before the meeting begins.

Commissioner Gernon asked that any commissioner having concerns share them with her so she can think about them. Vice Chair Oney's concern is to be sure that council members cannot take office before January first. He said that it seemed like the discussion at the last meeting was going, as a hypothetical, in that direction.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was addressed.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Prichard, seconded by Commissioner Linstroth, to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Linstroth, Commissioner Hoschouer, Commissioner Prichard, Vice Chair Oney and Commissioner Gernon