

Preliminary Recommendations of the City of Somerville Charter Advisory Committee
November 10th, 2008

Committee suggests that the Mayor write a new City charter that incorporates the following concepts, principles, or processes:

Executive Branch

- To maintain a mayoral form of government.
- To extend the term of office of the mayor from two years to four years.
- To create or reclassify a senior level management position, such as a Chief Administrative Officer, under the executive branch.

Legislative Branch

- To maintain the Board of Aldermen in its current form as the legislative branch of government.
- To rename the Board of Aldermen as the City Council.
- To maintain the existing two year term of office for members of the Board of Aldermen.
- To give the Board of Aldermen appointment power over any position that serves only the Board of Aldermen, while abiding by city-wide personnel rules and regulations.

School Committee

- To maintain current ward-based system of the school committee, but add appointed members to the body.
- To require the appointed members of the School Committee be selected based on specific criteria including educational expertise and diversity.
- To remove the mayor and the president of the Board of Aldermen as members of the School Committee.

Elections

- To allow for the filling of vacancies in elected positions with the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes in the previous election, given a high minimum vote threshold and specific time period.

Annual Report

- To require the executive branch to issue an annual city report and to require the legislative branch to hold a public hearing to discuss the report.

Administrative Code

- To create an administrative code that allows for increased flexibility in the structure, operations and management of City government by allowing certain changes to be made by ordinance rather than the home rule process.

Boards and Commissions

- To require that the annual report include the membership and terms of all Board and Commission members.
- To segregate certain Boards and Commissions as charter entities when mandated by state statute and to outline remaining Boards and Commissions in the administrative code.

Finance and Fiscal Procedures

- To require the mayor to call joint meeting of the Board of Aldermen and School Committee before the commencement of the budget process.
- To require the mayor to submit an operating budget to the Board of Aldermen with a reasonable period of time for the Board of Aldermen to act on the budget before the start of the fiscal year.
- To require the Board of Aldermen to hold a public hearing on the budgets.
- To require the mayor to submit an annual Capital Improvement Program to the Board of Aldermen within a reasonable time period before the start of the fiscal year.
- To require the mayor to annually prepare a long-term financial forecast of city revenue, expenditures and the general financial condition of the city.
- To require the mayor to annually provide for an outside audit of the books and accounts of the city.

Obsolete and Outdated Provisions

- To remove any outdated, obsolete, or other provisions from the existing charter including those that may not be in compliance with modern day law.
- Sec. 3.: [Seven wards established.] It shall be the duty of the city council in joint convention, as soon as may be after the acceptance of this Act, to divide said city into seven wards, containing as nearly as possible and as may be consistent with well-defined limits to each ward an equal number of **male voters**.