

MINUTES OF MEETING
2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
May 27, 2026

Members Present: Chris Aiola, Andy Bemer, Elizabeth Gerstenhaber, Collen Hauer, Chris Klym, Dr. Al Melton, Michael O'Donnell, Pat Roberts, and Peter Sullivan Jr.

Chairman Bemer opened the meeting at 6:08 PM and acknowledged that all members are present for the meeting. He asked if anyone had any revisions to the minutes from last week's meeting and no one made any recommendations to them. Charter Member Roberts did ask for a copy of the minutes because she stated she must have overlooked them in her email. Secretary Greco then printed off a copy for her to review. Chairman Bemer then asked if anyone had any more questions and then the minutes were accepted as prepared.

Chairman Bemer then thanked Charter Member Sullivan for meeting with him and Secretary Greco for meeting the day before to help with the proposed language for the charter changes. With that, the group focused on **Article II – Mayor – Section 1. Term** and the proposed language regarding the length of term change from two-year to four-year term. Chairman Bemer asked the group if the first sentence of the article should be deleted now because it does reference the year 1961 for the current language. Secretary Greco then clarified for the group that the Board of Elections stated that the mayor is currently elected under that language and if the new language is adopted, then you can then consider that language obsolete and then delete it after the new language is in effect. Chairman Bemer stated that was great to hear. Discussion then proceeded on where the vote goes after tonight and Chairman Bemer stated this then goes to city council for consideration. He stated that they cannot change any language and it is just a ministerial vote to adopt. He stated that city council has no discretion to deny any favorable votes tonight. Chairman Bemer then took a vote of each member as to whether or not to pass this language and then send it to city council for a vote. The following votes were:

Hauer – No, Sullivan - Yes, Roberts – Yes, O'Donnell – Yes, Bemer – Yes, Klym – Yes, Gerstenhaber – Yes, Aiola – Yes, Melton – Yes. Motion passes 8-1.

Charter Member Hauer was asked why she voted no and she stated that she agreed with the mayor and that the term for the office should remain at two years.

Chairman Bemer moved on to **Article II Mayor – Section 2 Qualifications** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. The chairman pointed out that language was added to further define on what types of employment the mayor is allowed to hold. Charter Member O'Donnell stated that he does agree with the sentiment of the proposed language but does not feel that is worthy going to ballot. It does with full-time employment and his is favor of the notion but to him, it is not worthy of going to the ballot in November. Charter Member Klym agreed with Charter Member O'Donnell in regard to not passing on to the ballot. Chairman Bemer did ask the group for other considerations and then he stated he wanted to table this Article until next week with further discussion to follow. Tabled until next week.

Chairman Bemer moved on to **Article II Mayor – Section 3. Removal** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. He stated they have deleted the first full sentence of the article, and the new language provides a process of reference to executive session vote of council in order to file a removal file petition with the court. Charter Member Sullivan stated next that this language is doing more than clarifying process. He stated that we are proposing tossing out the current removal provision and implementing a brand-new removal provision. He went on to state that what this does is expand the removal powers of the city council and also expand the grounds upon which the mayor can be removed. The practical effect is that if it is approved by the voters, we are expanding the powers of council. Charter Member Sullivan pointed out as well that the removal process will not be quick and will be a lengthy process going through the county court. Charter Member Klym then stated that he did not know how he felt about city council going into executive session regarding the removal vote. He stated that our own charter states the opposite in that it should be an open meeting when it comes to the discipline or dismissal of an elected official. Charter Member O'Donnell asked what if we left the final decision with city council in regard to removal. He felt that this language is making it more complicated and making it clearer on the process. With the way it is proposed right now, he would like to have it go back to the way it was. Charter Member Sullivan agreed with Charter Member O'Donnell. Discussion continued then on what the language should look like and if executive session should be kept and what does the removal process look like. Charter Member Klym suggested that the commission look at the language in the City of Westlake's charter on their removal process. It includes a public meeting, witnesses, and the 2/3 vote to summarize what he stated. Charter Member Klym, Chairman Bemer, Charter Member O'Donnell then discussed what the court process would like if this process fell into their jurisdiction and what the home rule process would like for the city. Chairman Bemer then stated the whole purpose of this language is to have a more expeditious process. He then stated he wanted to table this article and wanted to do more research. Member O'Donnell stated he would like it be more like Westlake's removal language which was updated in 2020. Chairman Bemer asked Secretary Greco to delete the proposed language and drop in Westlake's language for removal of mayor for consideration next week. Tabled until next week.

Chairman Bemer moved on to Article III – **Council – Section 2. Term of Office** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. He reviewed the current language with the committee, and he clarified this would be four-year terms for ward and at-large positions. Members discussed how the calendar would work with the positions and Charter Member O'Donnell mentioned that city elections do not usually have a high turnout and if the mayor is not on the ballot, then who would actually come out to vote for ward council positions just by themselves as the new language stands. Charter Member Sullivan then suggested that how about we have the ward council seats run for a four-year term in 2027 with the mayor and law director and then in 2029 we have the at-large council seats then run as they would be city wide. Charter Member O'Donnell said that would be better because the at-large would be city wide and on their own in their election year. Everyone agreed with that change and felt that would be a better fit. Chairman Bemer asked if everyone was comfortable with that change and then asked for an official vote. The following votes were:

Hauer – No, Sullivan - Yes, Roberts – Yes, O'Donnell – Yes, Bemer – Yes, Klym – Yes, Gerstenhaber – Yes, Aiola – Yes, Melton – Yes. Motion passes 8-1.

Chairman Bemer moved on to **Article IV – Administrative Departments – Section 2. Law** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. Secretary Greco began the conversation by stating if it was alright with the group, he would just insert the same verbiage as the mayor in regard to new language addressing the four-year term. Member O’Donnell stated that is fine as long as the wording “in each odd numbered year” is deleted because of the way the calendar fell. Secretary Greco agreed he would make that change. The members then asked that the commission vote on the four-year term change of the Law Director and then table the removal language for next week. Chairman Bemer agreed and then asked for the vote. The following votes for changing the Law Director’s term to four years were:

Hauer – No, Sullivan - Yes, Roberts – Yes, O’Donnell – Yes, Bemer – Yes, Klym – Yes, Gerstenhaber – Yes, Aiola – Yes, Melton – Yes. Motion passes 8-1.

Chairman Bemer stated that they are going to table the removal language for the law director and just drop in the language from Westlake’ charter. Charter Member O’Donnell did point out that the commission should agree that the language for removal for the mayor is going to be virtually identical for the law director. Chairman Bemer agreed. This section was tabled for next week.

Chairman Bemer moved on to **Article VIII – Initiative and Referendum – Section 2. Recall** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. Chairman Bemer went on to explain to the commission that in regard to the 20-day period in determining that recall signatures are valid, that time period also includes the delivery of defective petitions and the reason why it is defective to the petitioners. Chairman Bemer stated that Secretary Greco called the Board of Elections for this clarification. Chairman Bemer then focused on the second paragraph in which the Board of Elections respectfully asked that 30 days be added to the scheduling of a recall language. This is so they can consider overseas ballots and absentees stated Secretary Greco. Before the vote, Charter Member Gerstenhaber asked how the changed language is going to appear on the ballot. Charter Member O’Donnell then explained how the language will look to the voter on the ballot. Charter Member Hauer then asked about posting the ballot language at the polling locations and was wondered if anything has to be posted. Charter Member O’Donnell stated that he is in favor of this change but is pretty low on his priority list and if there is a number of changes going to the ballot, he would recommend not sending this one. Chairman Bemer then asked for a vote for these changes. The following votes were:

Hauer – Yes, Sullivan - Yes, Roberts – Yes, O’Donnell – Yes, Bemer – Yes, Klym – Yes, Gerstenhaber – Yes, Aiola – Yes, Melton – Yes. Motion passes 9-0.

Chairman Bemer moved on to **Article IX – Nominations and Elections – Section 3. Declaration of Candidacy** and the proposed language that is in front of the committee this evening. Charter Member Sullivan began the conversation stating that there needs to be addition language added to the proposed article change that is in front of the committee this evening. He reviewed the specific language dealing with whether or not the city needs to hold a primary or not. He suggested that the additional language needed should address the specific office. Committee members then discussed the logistics of how the primary should look under the proposed non-partisan language. Charter Member O’Donnell asked a quick clarification question asking if the language voted on tonight is able to be changed by the Board of Elections or does

what the committee votes on tonight stay the way it is. Secretary Greco stated the Board of Elections does have the authority to change logistical language like deadline dates, language for staggering office for example but does not have the authority to change the overall authority of the article. Charter Member Aiola asked if there is a possibility of the voter getting confused over the term “office” or “seat” when talking of an elected position. Chairman Bemer then explained that the vernacular of “office” and “seat” of the charter means basically the same thing. Charter Member Hauer asked about the date of the primary and why it is in September. Discussion continued about the cost of the primaries and eventually submitted a request for Secretary Greco to ask the Board of Elections about the September primary date and does it have an effect on cost. Discussion continued regarding the language regarding Section 2 and it was ultimately decided that Charter Member Sullivan will submit new language for this section. The commission would then vote on this article next week.

The topic then focused on whether or not Article IX’s changes would be two separate ballot initiatives for the public to vote on or would be combined for one vote. Chairman Bemer asked Secretary Greco to seek clarification from the Board of Elections regarding this question. With that decision, Chairman Bemer asked for a consensus as to whether we should table this article until next week and the consensus was yes. This article was tabled for next week.

Charter Member Roberts commented that she does support the non-partisan proposal because she would like to hear about what candidates would do for the city rather than repeat what a party platform stands for. Charter Member O’Donnell did point out that there was one more change that the committee did need to clarify and that was the number of signatures needed for the petitions for ward and at-large positions. Discussion continued about the total needed for each office and it was settled on 50 for ward council and 150 for at-large positions. Charter Member Sullivan did point out that the reason for the increase in signatures is that since they would be going non-partisan then it would be easier for a candidate to get signatures and everyone agreed to that point.

Secretary Greco then summarized the votes for the evening and then requests of the commission for further discussion items:

1. Ask the Board of Elections regarding the cost of holding primaries in the city.
2. Ask the Board of Elections if the cost associated with the primaries is affected by being partisan vs. non-partisan.
3. Ask the Board of Elections if the having the primary in May vs. September make any difference in cost.
4. Can Article IX be voted on as one ballot initiative or does it have to be two separate votes.
5. Question asked by Secretary Greco regarding the qualification section for the mayor in regard to clarifying if adding full-time employment was necessary.

Secretary Sullivan did reiterate that he would draft language for Article IX in regard to the primary language for the commission. He would get that to Secretary Greco this evening for consideration at next week’s meeting.

The final meeting of the Charter Review Commission will be held at 6:00 p.m. on June 3, 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.