



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: 06/29/2022  
TO: Mayor and City Council  
FROM: Eric W. Green, DBA, Management Analyst  
SUBJECT: Charter Commission Best Practices to Reducing Costs

---

A municipality's charter is an essential governing document that outlines the formal operation of the city, obligations and duties of its staff and elected representatives, and allows the citizens to have full faith, confidence, and oversight of its government. To maintain the significance and viability of the city charter, municipalities routinely establish a Charter Commission, comprised of citizens to review and/or edit the charter to create an effective and efficient government. The Charter Commission's ability to perform its essential and critical duty is contingent upon the governing body and city staff to outline the parameters, obligations, and access to resources.

An effective Charter Commission does not necessarily require access to a designated budget or the expenditure of city funds to conduct its function. That is why it is critical for the city staff and governing body to outline and explicitly state the methodology and resources available at the Charter Commission introduction/creation. Ensuring an effective Charter Commission begins with assigning the appropriate staff liaison(s), be that of the City Attorney, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Clerk, etc. The proper city liaison will enable the commission to move quickly and efficiently to serve its potential without burdensome bottlenecks ex., who to contact, legal interpretations. This reasoning also extends to the members of the commission. Knowledge and experience with municipal processes and bureaucracy could lead to advantages and efficiency.

From a publication of the National Civic League entitled the *Guide for Charter Commissions 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, additional approaches to reduce/eliminate costs include:

1. Meetings held at public facilities
  - a. City Council Chamber, Independence Utility Center
2. Use and access to city equipment, resources, and staff
  - a. Computers, phones, staff assistants, copiers
3. Use of online tools ex., Teams, Zoom
4. Invite needed experts and speakers to appear in-person or via an online resource



Upon reviewing the best practices to ensuring a potent Charter Commission, surrounding cities, Lee's Summit, Raymore, and Blue Springs were engaged regarding their experience with recent Charter Commissions. Lee's Summit reported that no extraordinary costs were incurred during the process. The 2016 Charter Commission staff liaisons consisted of the City Attorney and Assistant City Manager. For 2017, Raymore's commission review reported a budget a of \$45,000. The budget consisted of fees for the contracted city attorney, special election costs, the printing and mailing of campaign materials, municipal code updates, and food and snacks. The staff liaisons included the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk. The municipality of Blue Springs reported no additional cost beyond the need for supplies for its review in 2018. The staff liaisons consisted of the Assistant City Administrator, City Attorney, and City Clerk. Blue Springs indicated the commissions composition that included members with government background and knowledge led to a fluency to the process.

While expenditures can be minimized or eliminated completely, there is the potential that an expense may be requested. Those requests are entertained for its appropriateness by the staff liaison(s) and acted upon in accordance with city policy and procedure.

Respectfully,

Eric W. Green, DBA  
Management Analyst

Cc: Zachary Walker, City Manager