

The City of Independence Charter was last reviewed and updated by a Charter Review Commission 40 years ago. Most cities do this periodically, which is why there are a number of proposed changes to the City Charter. The suggested modifications were the result of hundreds of hours of deliberation by the Charter Review Commission, which was comprised of 11 members of the Independence community. They based their recommendations on model charter language, charters of other cities in the area, their own professional experiences with different aspects of City governance, and applicable State statutes. Changes were designed to make the Charter clearer and more appropriate to today's functions of the City of Independence. The following list of recommended changes does not include all recommended changes to the Charter but is intended to highlight and summarize a majority of the changes.

Question 1: amends the Charter throughout, as well as Article 15

- removes gender-specific language
- allows for publication of official notices electronically and not just in the local newspaper
- removes outdated City boundaries and references thereto
- adds references to specific Missouri state statutes that govern or supersede existing City Charter language
- makes grammatical, numbering, and language corrections as needed for clarity and accuracy
- requires a mandatory review of the City Charter every 7 years to ensure the Charter remains current and requires fewer extensive changes in the future

Question 2: amends Articles 1, 2, 4, and 5

- adds a statement for the need for public engagement
- renames the position of Management Analyst to Internal Auditor
- allows the Internal Auditor position to audit City departments as directed by the Audit and Finance Committee
- allows official records to be stored electronically instead of on paper
- allows the City to adopt uniform building code standards
- requires an annual update of the City Code on the City's website
- removes the City residency requirement for municipal judges
- allows for the future transfer of the management of municipal court to the Circuit Court if desirable and after a public hearing and approval of a super majority of the City Council, but requires that the City maintain its own prosecutor
- clarifies the powers of the Ethics Board and provides for a budget for their operations
- clarifies the prohibition on use of public office for private gain and requires the City Council to adopt a Code of Ethics

Question 3: amends Articles 3, 8, 9, and 10

- removes administrative department descriptions in favor of their future placement in City Code (Law, Police, Fire, Public Utilities, Public Works, Parks and Rec, Health, Personnel, Finance)
- removes job descriptions in favor of their placement in City Code or personnel manuals
- clarifies provisions related to the issuance of bonds or notes
- removes provisions related to business licenses because they are covered in current City Code and State law
- removes Article 10 and renames Article 8 to "Financial Management"

Question 4: amends Articles 6, 7, and 13

- removes examples of election forms from the Charter
- clarifies election dates and processes
- establishes that if candidates file nominating petitions on the first day of filing, their names will appear on the ballot in random order
- clarifies that a councilmember must be adjudged incompetent to be incompetent
- clarifies that candidates must be current on all fees and taxes to the City and shall not have unresolved warrants
- clarifies the referendum process timeline
- clarifies that franchise and utilities are subject to State laws

Question 5: amends Articles 11, 12, and 14

- removes provisions relating to special tax bills and special assessments for public improvements
- removes provisions relating to the Planning Commission, and the Board of Adjustment in favor of similar provisions in State law or future placement in the City Code
- removes subpoena powers from the Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment
- clarifies that meetings, records, accounts, and votes shall be open as required by State law

Question 6: adds a provision that prior to the sale of a public utility, the Council must call for an election to determine whether the City shall sell such public utility