



AGENDA
CHARTER COMMISSION MEETING
ST. LOUIS PARK, MINNESOTA
March 13, 2018
5:30 p.m. – City Hall, Council Chambers

The mission of the Charter Commission is to evaluate and propose changes which are warranted in the city Home Rule Charter as provided by State Statute. Home Rule Charters are, in effect local constitutions passed by local voters and cannot conflict with state laws. Commissioners are appointed by the Chief Judge of Hennepin County District Court and serve on a volunteer basis. (Commissioners are not appointed by City Council.) Staff provides assistance to prepare agendas and performs other administrative duties.

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call & Attendance**
3. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. January 10, 2018 Charter Commission Meeting
 - b. February 13, 2018 Charter Commission Expert Q&A Panel
 - c. March 6, 2018 Charter Commission Listening Session
4. **Old Business**
 - a. Proposed Charter Amendment related to Ranked Choice Voting
 - b. Verbal Update on Amendment related to Campaign Finance Contribution Limits
5. **New Business**
 - a. Proposed Annual Report for District Court – Year 2017
 - b. Election of Officers
 - c. Legislative Update - Verbal
6. **Future Meetings**
7. **Communications**
 - a. Public communications received by staff since February 28, 2018
8. **Adjourn**

For more information or questions regarding this agenda,
please contact Melissa Kennedy at mkennedy@stlouispark.org
or Chair Sara Maaske at smaaske@outlook.com

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**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
CHARTER COMMISSION
EXPERT Q&A PANEL – RANKED CHOICE VOTING
ST. LOUIS PARK, MINNESOTA
February 13, 2018
6:00 p.m. – Council Chambers, City Hall**

1. Call to Order

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

2. Attendance

Members Present: Maren Anderson, JC Beckstrand, Gary Carlson, Lynne Carper, Jim de Lambert, David Dyer, Terry Dwyer, Ken Gothberg, Sara Maaske, and Henry Solmer.

Members Absent: Jim Brimeyer, Matthew Flory, Andrew Rose, and Erin Smith

Others Present: Nancy Deno (Deputy City Manager/HR Director) and Melissa Kennedy (City Clerk)

3. Expert Q&A Panel – Ranked Choice Voting

Chair Maaske thanked the panelists for taking the time to share their knowledge about Ranked Choice Voting and elections in general. She stated the purpose of the meeting was for the Charter Commission to get their questions answered as a part of their process to study and make a recommendation to the city council regarding Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). She explained questions were submitted by Charter Commission members in advance of the meeting. The panelists were selected by the Charter Commission. She noted although no public comment will be taken at this meeting, those wishing to comment on the topic are invited to attend the Public Listening Session being hosted by the Charter Commission on March 6, 2018 at 6 pm in the Council Chambers. She stated bio information on each of the panelists was available on the city's website on the Ranked Choice Voting page.

The panelists introduced themselves and provided information on their background in elections.

The panelists included: Loren Botner, Deb Brinkman, Ginny Gelms, Professor David Schultz, Mary Wickersham, Jeanne Massey, and Chris Tholkes.

Question #1 – Ginny Gelms: Has the voting equipment adapted well to RCV and can you describe the steps involved in counting the ballots once the machines can no longer tabulate races?

Ms. Gelms stated the voting equipment used in Hennepin County was not originally designed specifically for RCV, however they have been able to work with their vendor to develop a workaround that will allow the machine to accept and read ranked-choice ballots and perform a preliminary tabulation. She explained the ballot machines can produce a raw vote total of the number of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices that every candidate has received. Depending on rules that the city would need to write and adopt by ordinance, the raw vote totals may be enough to declare official winners for any candidate who passes the 50% threshold in the first round. She added tabulation can get more cumbersome in races in which no candidate reached the required threshold on election night. At that point the information needed to actually perform the RCV reallocation and tabulation – not only the number of first, second, and third choices that each candidate

received, but how each individual ballot was actually marked, which candidates appeared on each ballot and in what order – is not transmitted electronically on election night. The City of Minneapolis retrieves the memory sticks from each vote tabulator and returns them to Hennepin County on election night and staff has to physically download the information off of the memory sticks. The data is downloaded and accumulated overnight and an excel file is generated and provided to the city the next morning. The data in the file is essentially a spreadsheet on which every line represents a single ballot and the candidates appear in the order in which they were marked on each ballot. Staff from Minneapolis then perform a manual tabulation process using the digital data by cutting and pasting the lines in the file to create digital piles of ballots within the excel file to ultimately determine who the winners are in each race.

Question #2 – If a switch to RCV was made in St. Louis Park, what are the possible challenges an election judge might face in terms of being able to successfully administer an election?

Mr. Botner stated the biggest challenge would be making sure that the voters are prepared for the change. Within the polls on Election Day, the biggest piece would be making sure that demonstration judges are adequately trained and equipped to answer questions and explain to voters how to mark their ballot. He stated it ultimately comes down to whether or not voters have enough information to feel comfortable marking their ballot.

Ms. Wickersham added that more time spent with the demonstration judge would be the biggest change that would have the most impact. She stated more than half of voters pay no attention to the demonstration judge and this change would require them to be more engaged at this station within a polling place. She noted along with additional questions, she would also expect judges to receive additional comments related to the change. She stated more personal interaction with the judges is not necessarily a bad thing, however judges and voters will need to be prepared for the change.

Question #3 – How does RCV improve civility among candidates during the election cycle?

Ms. Brinkman stated civility is improved because candidates need to vie for their opponents' second and third place votes. She added candidates will also have to campaign to the majority, not just their base of voters. She stated some of the negative campaigning that has occurred in other cities has actually had negative consequences for that candidate.

Ms. Massey stated RCV is a shift in the culture of campaigning and they work with candidates to make sure they understand that process. She added candidates are generally happy about the shift after their campaign is over because they had an opportunity to get to know more voters. Candidates really run to serve and they like to speak to people in their community and RCV gives them a reason to speak to more people.

Question #4 – Based on your knowledge of elections and campaigns, would RCV benefit non-traditional candidates versus a non-RCV election where the winner would only need the most votes to win?

Professor Schultz stated a lot of times people may want to vote for a non-traditional candidate, but fear that if they vote for that particular candidate it will in fact help elect the candidate they liked the least. Our current voting system creates a disincentive to vote for a spectrum of candidates beyond the top two most likely to be elected. He stated there is pretty good evidence that suggests that RCV gives people the incentive to vote for their first choice candidate and to pick their second

and third choices. It encourages voters to take a larger risk in terms of voting for non-traditional candidates and also seems to encourage a lot of other candidates to run to give voters a broader range of candidates to choose from.

Question #5 – As an election judge in St. Paul, what was your experience with voters using RCV in the last election?

Ms. Tholkes stated she worked at the Ramsey County elections office the week before the election to assist with absentee voting activities and saw a very diverse population of people come in to vote. She noted that although a lot was done to try to educate people in St. Paul on RCV, most of the voters who came in to vote the week before the election did not know that they would be voting on a ranked-choice ballot and they did not understand how to mark a ranked-choice ballot. She stated there was a lot of same-day education that needed to happen, especially through interpreters. She noted the number one question that was asked after the process was explained was “can I still just vote for one choice”.

Vice Chair Dyer asked Ms. Tholkes what could be done to better inform the public to ensure they were prepared when they came to vote.

She stated as a resident of St. Paul she felt there was a lot of good information out there and an effort was made to educate, so she is not sure where the breakdown was for people. She reiterated that there were a significant amount of voters who did not know about the change or how to vote on a RCV ballot.

Question #6 – Do election results take longer to tabulate and post in an RCV election and how long did the process take in the 2017 election in Minneapolis?

Ms. Gelms stated that the results process does take longer than a traditional election. In 2017 the City of Minneapolis was finished with their tabulation process by the end of the day on Wednesday. She noted this was an improvement from what was experienced in the 2013 election when the tabulation process took until the end of the day on Friday. She added Minneapolis has made improvements to their processes after every election with ordinance changes related to their rules for administration of elections, including the tabulation process.

Question #7 – What challenges do voters face when trying to understand our current voting system?

Mr. Botner stated the only difficulty he has seen on a consistent basis is during partisan Primary elections where voters have trouble understanding that they have to vote along party lines. It seems the greatest obstacle is people understanding that they have to pick a party at the Primary versus being able to make selections across party lines at the General election.

Ms. Wickersham agreed that was the main difficulty and reason for spoiled ballots at partisan Primary elections. She stated at health care facilities voters typically have trouble understanding why some offices are partisan and some are non-partisan and judges spend a lot of time with each individual voter explaining how to mark their ballot. She added RCV would be a little more difficult for people at health care facilities and even more time would be needed to help voters understand the process.

Question #8 – Aside from the elimination of the Primary election, why does St. Louis Park need RCV and what is the problem it will solve?

Ms. Brinkman stated it restores majority rule when there are multiple candidates running for a single office and is a much better representation of voters' choices. She added that voters also seem to really like having more choice on their ballot and it reduces the influence of money in elections.

Ms. Massey stated because the decision has already been made to eliminate the Primary, a candidate can win a race without majority support. She added RCV fosters more choice without the risk of the spoiler dynamic and greater diversity in candidates and those that have an opportunity to win.

Question #9 – Are there any negative side effects or unintended consequences of RCV that St. Louis Park should be aware of?

Mr. Schultz responded a lack of preparation in terms of implementation and a lack of understanding of what RCV is supposed to do. When Minneapolis first implemented RCV there was some evidence of voter confusion and one of the recommendations he gave to the city was to put more resources into educating their citizens on what RCV really was and how to participate in the process – such as how to mark a ballot. He stated St. Louis Park would benefit from doing much more targeted and continuous education to certain groups of citizens. If the city does not prepare the proper foundation in terms of education, it will likely run into problems with voters not understanding what to do or the change that occurred. He added it is also important to make sure people understand and have realistic expectations for how RCV works and how the results are processed and communicated.

Question #10 – What steps did election judges take to assist voters who were having trouble understanding RCV and what type of help or other materials did you have available?

Ms. Tholkes stated one of the biggest resources they had available was interpreters to help communicate with voters. She added they had many judges on hand to assist voters so that they could take a little extra time to help educate a voter if needed, and they had educational materials available that voters could look at or take with them.

Question #11 – RCV appears to necessitate the increased use of manual processes to tabulate ballots. Does this increase the opportunity for human error, fraud, or manipulation of results?

Ms. Gelms stated she does not believe that the process introduces additional avenues for fraud. She noted there is the potential for human error with the manual tabulation process. That risk was mitigated in Minneapolis by the way they setup their process with multiple teams performing the tabulation simultaneously. Human error is an element that should be kept in mind and risk mitigation strategies should be developed to address that risk.

Question #12 – How do we support non-English speaking, seniors, and voters with disabilities at our polling places?

Mr. Botner stated the written materials in the polling place are now available in a broad spectrum of languages. Voters with some form of impairment also have the opportunity to mark their ballot using an assistive device (Automark). Additionally, a voter can request assistance in marking their

ballot and two judges from different political parties would perform that service upon request. He noted election judges are a unique community because they all understand implicitly that they are there to help all eligible citizens be able to vote.

Ms. Wickersham stated in the past interpretation services have been used over the phone. She noted a majority of non-English speaking voters tend to bring a relative with them to provide assistance.

Chair Maaske asked Ms. Wickersham to talk about her experiences with assisting senior voters.

Ms. Wickersham stated many seniors are hard of hearing or visually impaired and they typically need assistance from judges or health care facility staff to mark their ballot. She added 90% of the voters in healthcare facilities require some assistance in marking their ballot because the voter is concerned they may have a problem marking it on their own and they don't want to make a mistake.

Question #13 – Can you explain what you mean by voter participation and how it relates, or does not relate, to voter turnout?

Ms. Brinkman stated RCV leads to more voter participation because it makes people feel more engaged in the whole process and voters have a better chance of selecting a winner. She added the increased civility in the campaigns is more appealing to voters.

Ms. Massey stated RCV automatically increases voter participation by combining the Primary and the General election into one single election where turnout is the greatest and most diverse.

Question #14 – Is there a causal relationship between RCV and the higher turnout in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the 2017 election cycle and what other factors can influence voter turnout?

Mr. Schultz stated there are a lot of factors that can influence voter turnout and it is hard to separate those factors to conclusively say that RCV is the cause. One important factor is the perception that there is a close or competitive race. Additionally, a higher number of candidates can increase turnout because they are trying to reach out to their base and get them to vote. He noted media attention is also a big factor and typically the media pays less attention to local elections. He stated RCV does seem to have an impact because it addresses the question of why people should vote or why they should get engaged, but he would be hesitant to say that there is one singular factor that drives turnout.

Question #15 – Had there not been a decisive winner in the last election, what other responsibilities would election judges have had in terms of the tabulation process used in St. Paul?

Ms. Tholkes stated she was not one of the election judges trained in the tabulation process, but there are teams of judges that are trained to participate after the election in performing the manual tabulation process of sorting and counting ballots.

Question #16 – As new ballot tabulating technology emerges, will the cost to St. Louis Park be disproportionately higher because the city will be an early adopter relative to the rest of the United States?

Ms. Gelms stated to the extent St. Louis Park has costs related to RCV, she is not sure that they would be related to the fact they are an early adopter as far as technology is concerned. Hennepin County purchased new equipment in 2013 that has a shelf life of 10-15 years. She noted ranked choice voting capabilities are one thing, among many, that the county considers when they go out for a RFP to purchase new equipment. The last time they purchased there was limited technology available in federally certified equipment for tabulating ranked-choice voting elections. She stated they will have to see what the market has available the next time equipment is purchased, noting it is helpful to them to have cities onboard with whatever their particular algorithm is so that can be put directly into the RFP when they prepare to make a purchase.

Question #17 – What are typical issues you run into on Election Day and how much is understanding how to mark a ballot an issue for voters?

Mr. Botner stated he did not think that understanding how to mark a ballot was a significant issue for voters. He added if there is appropriate education and a voter is prepared when they show up to vote, that can help reduce confusion.

Ms. Wickersham added if RCV was used, new demonstration ballots would need to be developed to help explain that there are RCV races and non-RCV races on a ballot.

Question #18 – Please describe your pre-election education efforts to explain the RCV process to voters.

Ms. Brinkman stated the League of Women Voters is very insistent on adequate voter education with any change in a voting system. Voters need to be educated about any change, no matter what it is. So far, the LWV SLP has held events at which people can “practice” the RCV process. As the process continues, the League would partner with FairVote and the city on voter education.

Ms. Massey stated a concerted effort was made in Minneapolis and St. Paul to raise money for public education on RCV. FairVote can go deeper with a more grassroots effort to educate candidates, voters, and the media.

Question #19 – Is RCV an artificial means of creating a majority out of a plurality? What is wrong with the winner-take-all approach in current elections?

Mr. Schultz stated one of the things that has been seen at the national and state level is situations in which candidates don’t have to appeal to the other side and can get elected by just running base politics. Research suggests that is helping feed pre-existing polarization. RCV is an effort to start to create real majorities by building incentives for candidates to go beyond their base and forcing people to build real government coalitions that involve compromise.

Question #20 – Have you completed any survey of voters who have used RCV to assess their level of satisfaction with the process and what were the results?

Ms. Massey stated she provided the Commission with exit polling results from the last election and noted that Minneapolis also has conducted post-election surveys in the past. She reviewed the results of the exit polling done by FairVote and noted the numbers in Minneapolis were extremely positive. 92% of the voters polled in Minneapolis found RCV was easy to use and the vast majority of voters enjoy the ranking process and want to keep using RCV in the future.

Question #21 – How are recounts handled in Minneapolis – electronically or manually – and what is the county’s involvement?

Ms. Gelms stated this is one area where the city is completely on their own, the county has no involvement in recounts. In Minneapolis recounts are performed manually using physical ballots.

Question #22 – If St. Louis Park switched to RCV what challenges or barriers might need to be addressed to help non-English speaking or senior voters better understand how to mark an RCV ballot?

Ms. Tholkes stated making sure the interpreters have a base level of knowledge regarding the ballot and the process. She added some of the challenges related simply to the volume of people coming in at one time to vote.

Ms. Wickersham stated she would foresee developing and providing multi-language signage or other materials that would specifically address the rules related to RCV itself.

Mr. Botner stated from a logistics standpoint it would be important to ensure that there was adequate space available to provide demonstrations to larger groups of voters at one time versus having to individually help one or two voters at a time which could lead to longer lines.

Question #23 – In any 2017 multi-candidate race, can you indicate the number of races, the number of candidates, how long it took to tabulate results after they were reported on election night, and were computer systems adequate to handle the tabulation?

Ms. Massey stated Minneapolis has very large elections every four years. There are a total of 22 races on the ballot. In 2017, the mayoral race, 8 of the 13 councilmember races, park board at-large, and approximately half of the park board races were competitive and required additional rounds of counting in the tabulation process. The mayoral race took less than 3 hours to count, a vast improvement since 2009 and 2013. The council races took approximately one hour per race. She noted that in order to make the tabulation process efficient, resources (people) are required and a viable tabulation method.

Question #24 – How does RCV work with ballot rotation requirements per Minnesota law?

Ms. Gelms stated it works the same as it would on a traditional ballot. Candidates are rotated on a precinct-by-precinct basis to ensure that the same candidate is not listed first on every ballot.

Question #25 – What does evidence show about voter participation and RCV? Is it increased and is it more equitable?

Mr. Schultz stated the evidence is somewhere between showing positive increases in voter turnout and saying it isn’t any worse than what is seen under traditional voting systems. He noted it is difficult to sort out all of the variables that can impact turnout. Among cities in the United States that have implemented RCV there seems to be some evidence of an uptick in turnout, but that uptick could also be correlated to an increase in the number of candidates running and voter perception that they have more choices.

Question #26 – Please describe the vote tabulation process in a RCV election?

Ms. Massey stated that St. Paul and Minneapolis do use different processes. St. Paul counts the ballots manually using the physical ballots. In Minneapolis they have created a shortcut by using the data file called the cast ballot record. The data is then transferred by staff into spreadsheets that allow the people performing the tabulation to aggregate everyone that voted in exactly the same way on their ballot. She added that some ballots become exhausted in the tabulation process, mainly because voters do not rank beyond the first or second choice.

Ms. Gelms stated a ballot could also be exhausted if all of the candidates ranked by a voter were eliminated in earlier rounds of the tabulation process.

Question #27 – In your experience do most voters actually take advantage of the opportunity to rank multiple choices on their ballot?

Ms. Gelms stated that has varied by election. In the recent Minneapolis mayoral race, only 12% of the voters made just one selection and 25% made just one or two selections.

Ms. Massey added that people are more likely to rank in competitive races.

Question #28 - What is your view on the implication of a majority winner having a clear mandate and increased legitimacy versus a plurality winner and does RCV create clear majority winners?

Mr. Schultz stated this is more of a philosophical question and in his estimation the more we can create real majorities there is a perception that decisions are legitimate in terms of how we think about representative democracy. In general, RCV is going to ensure that there is a numerical majority.

Question #29 – If voters have a difficult time understanding differentiators between candidates in a winner-take-all system, how will voters become more educated with a greater number of candidates for which they may vote for under RCV?

Ms. Massey stated voters need to be educated in any election and there is a broad spectrum of levels of education. Under RCV, the need for education doesn't go away but it eliminates the need for voters to have to vote strategically.

Mr. Schultz added one of the problems is that there are too few resources dedicated to civic education in general. He stated that some say that RCV asks too much of voters, but if they can actually gather the resources they have shown that they can understand the system and rank their choices.

Mr. Botner stated his perception has been that as the society has moved towards polarization, participation has not been diminished. It has energized people to participate, and saying that RCV is too complex is underestimating our citizens.

Question #30 – Based on your general experiences, does RCV make your job as an election administrator harder or more difficult?

Ms. Gelms stated it does make the job more difficult as an elections administrator and if this is something that passes in St. Louis Park the city should consider giving staff in the clerk's office

raises and more resources. She noted that St. Louis Park would benefit from the fact that both Minneapolis and St. Paul have already gone through the process of adopting and implementing RCV. She stated the city would not be able to avoid the difficulty of developing the expertise in-house in order to be able to handle the actual tabulation of the ballots. She added that is a very esoteric thing, and it is something the staff would have to educate themselves on – there is no assistance from the state or the county in that regard. Voter education, outreach, and election judge training are also very important aspects that will require very robust efforts from in-house staff and the trend in Hennepin County and the State is showing that more people are voting before Election Day via absentee ballots which will continue to require increased resources from the clerk's office. She reiterated that St. Louis Park would need to put resources into people, training, and education in order to adequately serve the needs of voters and successfully implement a change such as switching to RCV. All of those requirements combine to make things more difficult for election administrators such as the city clerk.

Question #31 - Please explain the weighted inclusive Gregory method and how it works.

Ms. Gelms and Mr. Schultz agreed that there was no need for the Commission to understand that at this point and it was not applicable to St. Louis Park.

Question #32 – Please describe the county's pre-election education efforts to explain the RCV process to voters in Minneapolis.

Ms. Gelms stated this is another area in which the city is on its own. The city does all of the education efforts related to how to mark the ballot and how votes are counted in a RCV election.

Question #33 – As an election administrator what additional was or would have been helpful for voters in an RCV election?

Ms. Gelms stated it isn't too difficult to educate voters on how to mark a RCV ballot. The more difficult piece is explaining to voters how ballots are counted because it is important for voters to understand what voting strategies make sense in a ranked-choice election. As election administrators it is difficult to remain neutral but also explain the process in a way that is easy for people to understand.

Question #34 - In situations where one ballot contains races using the RCV method and races using the traditional method, do you sense voters are confused or discouraged by having two different voting styles on the same ballot?

Ms. Gelms stated Minneapolis does not have non-RCV races on the same ballot. She explained she could foresee this being a difficulty in St. Louis Park when school board races are on the same ballot because it is a multi-seat race. She stated it would be particularly tough to educate voters on how to vote using two different methods on the same ballot. The ballot design would also be difficult, depending on the number of choices St. Louis Park would allow, because there is only so much space on one ballot.

Ms. Tholkes stated St. Paul has an RCV race on the front side of the ballot and school district races on the back side of the ballot.

Ms. Massey stated both Minneapolis and St. Paul have done a good job of designing the most user-friendly ballots possible.

Questions #35 – Can you speak about the distribution of spoiled ballots in recent RCV elections and are they greater than in previous non-RCV elections?

Ms. Gelms explained a spoiled ballot occurs when a voter in a polling place makes a mistake while completing their ballot and requests a replacement from an election judge. She added that a spoiled ballot represents a voter who knew they made a mistake and received a new ballot. She stated with all of that being said, yes, the number of spoiled ballots does increase if you compare the numbers to the most recent non-RCV election in Minneapolis. The spoiled ballot rate was approximately 1% and that increased to approximately 4% in the 2017 election. She stated this increase from non-RCV to RCV elections has been consistent in that it quadruples, however the number itself is relatively small.

Ms. Massey reiterated that the election with the most spoiled ballots is the partisan Primary.

Question #36 - What is one piece of advice you would give to an organization considering RCV?

Mr. Botner stated to educate voters and personnel.

Ms. Brinkman agreed with and reiterated Mr. Botner's comments.

Ms. Gelms stated she would not underestimate the amount of resources the city would need to put into the administration and voter education components. She noted she is on the panel as an election administrator, not as a policy maker. The goal of all election administrators is to make sure elections are run well no matter what system is used and that does take resources.

Mr. Schultz stated he would advise the city to learn from others that have already implemented RCV.

Ms. Wickersham stated she envisions having a couple of different ballots that could be used in a test mode and then build the education piece from that testing.

Ms. Massey echoed Professor Schultz's advice to learn from others and to find where the holes are in terms of voter education to improve upon those systems.

Ms. Tholkes stressed the importance of voter education and added that the city's election judges are an invaluable resource for in-person voting and she would encourage the city to invest in a variety of modalities to train judges.

Additional Questions from Charter Commission Members

Commissioner Carper questioned why the exit polling numbers from Minneapolis and St. Paul show differences between the number of voters that felt RCV was easy to use and those that said they actually want to continue using RCV in the future.

Ms. Massey stated 92% of voters in Minneapolis said they found RCV easy to use and 84% said they would like to continue using RCV in the future. She explained although it is hard to say why the drop-off occurs, both numbers are very high in terms of voter satisfaction with the system.

Commissioner Beckstrand stated St. Louis Park has not necessarily had the same problems as Minneapolis and St. Paul that have demanded or called for a switch to RCV. He added St. Louis

Park is a relatively small community that has challenges even getting viable candidates to run for office and plurality has generally not been an issue. He asked what the problem is that is trying to be solved and is a switch truly going to be worth it for St. Louis Park given the administrative burdens, costs, and voter education efforts that would need to take place. He asked why the switch is specifically needed in St. Louis Park.

Mr. Schultz stated he would never go in and tell another community what is best for them or what is wrong with them. He added at the end of the day it is a question of values and what is most important to them. Every community has to make decisions regarding their electoral system and what is best for them. He suggested identifying the problems that exist and then determining what policy options are available to help address those problems. He stated the Charter Commission and the City Council have to identify the problem and then determine whether or not RCV will help solve those problems and perhaps enhance some of the other values of the community. He noted in many situations he believes RCV has the ability to address some problems for some communities, but he would not say that RCV is the answer to every problem. He added there is not one correct answer or system that will work or be beneficial for every community.

Mr. Botner stated from a civic perspective, if RCV will allow the citizens of St. Louis Park to feel as though they can participate more fully and back a broader range of candidates, which could be a valuable thing because more people will want to be involved. In the end St. Louis Park needs to determine what values are important to them and his understanding is that at least two of those values are inclusion and diversity.

Ms. Massey stated the conversation about bringing RCV to St. Louis Park started with the decision to eliminate Primary elections.

Commissioner Beckstrand stated the event was extremely helpful from an educational perspective and he thanked the panelists for their time and their thoughtful responses. He added one of the challenges he has had is balancing a broader policy decision with the more detailed tactical questions surrounding implementation.

Chair Maaske thanked the panelists and the Charter Commission members for their participation and for taking the time to share their knowledge.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Melissa Kennedy, City Clerk



**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
CHARTER COMMISSION
PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION
ST. LOUIS PARK, MINNESOTA
March 6, 2018**

6:00 p.m. – Council Chambers, City Hall

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call and Attendance

Members Present: Maren Anderson, Jim Brimeyer, Gary Carlson, Lynne Carper, Terry Dwyer, Ken Gothberg, Sara Maaske, Andrew Rose, Erin Smith, and Henry Solmer.

Members Absent: JC Beckstrand (absence excused), Jim de Lambert (absence excused), David Dyer (absence excused), Matthew Flory

Others Present: Nancy Deno (Deputy City Manager/HR Director), Soren Mattick (City Attorney), and Melissa Kennedy (City Clerk)

3. Public Listening Session – Ranked Choice Voting

Chair Maaske stated the purpose of the meeting was for the Charter Commission to listen to comments from the public on the topic of Ranked Choice Voting. She explained no other discussion would take place and the Commission would not be voting or making any formal decisions at this meeting. She added that the next meeting of the Charter Commission is scheduled for March 13, 2018 at 5:30 pm in the Council Chambers. The meeting will also be broadcast live on ParkTV Channel 17. She stated in order to ensure that everyone is afforded the same opportunity to address the Commission, comments would be limited to three (3) minutes per person and those wanting to speak would be allowed to do so one time. She stated anyone not wanting to address the Commission directly or anyone with additional comments could submit comments in writing to the City Clerk.

John Olson, 2829 Yosemite Ave. S., stated he has been a resident of St. Louis Park for 59 years and he hopes St. Louis Park makes history by adopting Ranked Choice Voting to promote diversity in government. He explained he would like to see more occupational diversity on the Council and he believes that if there were more names on the ballot at a General election voters would be more apt to take a chance on a woman, a minority, or someone who works with their hands. He stated he is an electrician and he would like to see more representation from people like himself.

Jeanne Massey, Executive Director of FairVote MN, read a letter submitted by Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. A hard copy of the letter was also provided to the Commission members. Ms. Massey then introduced a video of voters' experiences in the 2017 election in the City of Minneapolis.

Dorothy Doyle, 3041 Maryland Ave. S., stated an election is a hiring decision made by a lot of people with diverse perspectives and interests. She added that Ranked Choice Voting is better than winner-take-all because it gleans the collective wisdom of all voters. She stated when voters are allowed to rank their choices it is similar to finding the average score among the voters for each candidate. She continued that Ranked Choice Voting encourages consideration of complexity and nuance because it acknowledges that there are more than two diametrically opposed potential solutions to a problem. She stated St. Louis Park has an opportunity to lead by example.

Andi Larsen, 2831 Huntington Ave. S., stated she is very supportive of Ranked Choice Voting for many of the reasons outlined by the speakers before her. Additionally, she believes we are at a time in our history when people are deeply concerned about government and are trying to become better citizens. She stated Ranked Choice Voting provides people with a way to be more committed to voting and thoughtful about candidates. She added that she believes candidates would be more prone to being thoughtful and eloquent about their positions. She stated citizens are looking for candidates that do not reflect the extreme positions of our time and they want leaders who can bridge the gap that keeps us from finding real solutions to serious problems.

Elizabeth Glidden, 4006 Blaisdell, Minneapolis, she stated she attended to share her experiences with Ranked Choice Voting as a resident of Minneapolis, as a candidate in two elections, and as a councilmember. She explained she was first attracted to Ranked Choice Voting because she was ashamed of the low turnout in Minneapolis Primary elections. She stated she is very proud of the election officials in Minneapolis and how they have handled the implementation and administration of Ranked Choice Voting. She explained they are seeing changes in Minneapolis in terms of who is voting and who is running for office. She noted in 2017 they experienced very high voter participation and saw more women and people of color as candidates than ever before. She stated surveys show that voters seem to understand Ranked Choice Voting and take advantage of their opportunity to rank candidates when they vote.

Judith Cook, 4010 Highwood Road, stated she believes Ranked Choice Voting is easy to use and every segment of the population in St. Louis Park will be able to understand the concept. She added people seem eager to make the change. She noted another factor is majority versus plurality and voters will be more accepting of majority winners. She stated in her opinion this question does not need to go to a referendum because citizens will start to demand a referendum on every issue in the city. She asked the Charter Commission to recommend that the City Council move forward with implementing Ranked Choice Voting without a referendum.

Scott Petersen, 3716 Colorado Ave. S., stated he supports Ranked Choice Voting because he likes the idea of being able to vote for the candidate he most believes in, not necessarily the candidate that is most likely to win. He added he would like to use Ranked Choice Voting for all elections, including state and federal offices. He believes that adopting Ranked Choice Voting in St. Louis Park will spur a similar change in other cities and at the state and national levels.

Elaine Savick, 7708 W. 13 ½ St., stated she is very excited about the possibility of adopting Ranked Choice Voting and hopes it will inspire more people to vote. She explained she attended the Expert Q&A Panel and was very impressed with the information that was shared. She referenced comments made by Professor Schultz, and stated that increasing voter turnout should be a goal for anyone who cares about representative democracy. She stated eliminating Primary elections was a good idea and implementing Ranked Choice Voting is the next logical step because it promotes electing candidates with majority support and allows people to vote their conscience.

Zaylore Stout, 4942 N. 6th St., Minneapolis, stated he is a former resident, city council candidate, and member of the HRC in St. Louis Park. He explained the phrase “one man, one vote” was used by people advocating for political equality throughout various election reforms such as universal suffrage, proportional representation, elimination of plurality voting, and gerrymandering. In 1960 the phrase “one person, one vote” was used in a series of legal cases related to equal representation in state congressional districts and he would like to invoke the same for equality in St. Louis Park. He stated the electoral process has evolved over time and will continue to evolve in the future. African Americans were not eligible to vote in the United States until 1870, and women weren’t

eligible to vote until 1919. He added the right to vote means nothing without an equal access to vote, without a diverse array of candidates to vote for, or without the integrity of our electoral system. He stated even though his campaign for city council was unsuccessful he hopes his candidacy is able to inspire other diverse candidates to run for office in the future. He stated it is important to understand how St. Louis Park came to be the way it is demographically and the question of why Ranked Choice Voting is needed is a question of values. He added it is his belief that Ranked Choice Voting will counteract systemic inequalities in the voting system that frequently disenfranchises or discourages minorities from participating in the electoral process either as candidates or as voters. He stated the city's representation needs to be reflective of the population it serves.

Sue Sanger, 4717 W. 28th St., stated she initiated the city council discussion on Ranked Choice Voting several years ago because she was impressed that it incents candidates to connect with more voters. In a traditional voting system, a candidate typically identifies his or her base of supporters and then works hard to get them to show up to vote. She explained with Ranked Choice Voting candidates have to reach out to a wider range of voters to try to get those voters to select them as their second choice, if not their first choice, candidate. This means that more voters have greater contact and more opportunities to interact with the candidates to better understand who they are, ask questions, and provide feedback. This leads to voters being able to make more informed decisions at the polls. She stated from the candidate perspective, it also allows them to hear a wider variety of opinions that will hopefully shape their positions and policies. She noted this would also require candidates to spend more time reaching out to more potential voters. She added using a traditional, winner-take-all election will mean that a winner in a multi-candidate election will not necessarily receive 50% of the vote. Using Ranked Choice Voting would mean that the winner will have majority support and thus more buy-in from a greater segment of residents. She encouraged the Charter Commission to recommend that the city council adopt Ranked Choice Voting this year.

Shelley Colvin, 2811 Aquila Ave. S., stated she supports Ranked Choice Voting for many of the same reasons as those that spoke before her. She added that using this method would allow decisions to be made by a larger group of voters and would not encourage one-issue candidates.

Roger Cruze, 3953 Xenwood Ave. S., stated he is not in favor of Ranked Choice Voting and feels it is a bad idea because it does not promote diversity of thought and instead promotes the current general consensus of thought. He explained someone with a diverse thinking process ends up being at the bottom of the choices and are the first candidates eliminated. They rarely ever get to the top or a position where Ranked Choice Voting could help them. He stated it is more expensive to use a Ranked Choice Voting process than what we have. He added votes cannot be counted at the precinct level and the counting process takes longer and is more prone to fraud. He stated the counting process is so complicated it has to be done by a computer and he does not trust the security of the process.

Susan Niz, 2800 Alabama Ave. S., stated she supports Ranked Choice Voting because it can foster diverse candidates and diverse winners, encourages non-traditional candidates to run and creates more opportunities for them to win, and it also promotes voter engagement. She added that inclusion, diversity, and engagement will not be realized without putting systems in place that promote those values.

Suzann Willhite, 3905 Glenhurst Ave. S., stated she supports Ranked Choice Voting in St. Louis Park and for state and national elections because it engages citizenry and makes people feel like their vote matters.

Eilseen Knisely, 8725 W. 35th St., stated she is committed to making democracy work better. She stated she believes Ranked Choice Voting is good for voters and good for democracy. Local, national, and international surveys of democratic countries show that people are becoming increasingly cynical and less engaged in the democratic process. She stated Ranked Choice Voting will give voters more choice and a more equal voice, will promote increased diversity in representation, and provide more opportunities for underrepresented communities.

Bruce Fisher, 4359 Browndale Ave., stated he is in favor of Ranked Choice Voting for many of the reasons previously stated by others. He added eliminating the Primary election creates a potential problem in a winner-take-all General election because a candidate could be elected without a majority of the vote. He stated if Ranked Choice Voting is implemented, voters will probably find that their relationships with candidates will be much different than they are now under a traditional system.

Rod Harris, 2205 Quebec Ave. S., stated St. Louis Park has an engaged citizenry and he is in favor of making the change and seeing how it works.

Olaf Jorgenson, 2737 Alabama Ave. S., stated he supports Ranked Choice Voting because he believes it encourages quality candidates to run for office and provides more of a chance for non-traditional candidates to be elected.

Catherine Gray, 2700 France Ave. S., stated she believes Ranked Choice Voting is a big reason why Minneapolis is experiencing larger voter turnout across the city. She asked the Commission to move the policy forward to the city council without delay.

Phillipe Cunningham, Minneapolis Ward 4 Councilmember, stated Ranked Choice Voting fosters diversity in candidates. He noted in 2017, 18 of the 22 competitive races had candidates that were either women or people of color and 12 of those candidates were elected. He stated he is the first person of color elected to represent the 4th Ward in Minneapolis. He added there was a 25% increase in turnout in the 4th Ward which shows that low income, people of color, and young people can be engaged in voting. He explained as a candidate he was able to build positive relationships with voters across many bases. He stated Ranked Choice Voting is an opportunity to shift the city's local political discourse and paradigm away from divisive rhetoric being seen at the national level to a more local, community-building, collaborative culture.

Julia Davis, 2810 Xenwood, stated she wrote a letter to the Commission in support of Ranked Choice Voting and she was impressed by the questions and the answers at the Q&A Panel event, and by the attention given to how to fund the change and implement Ranked Choice Voting in St. Louis Park. She stated she understands the increased administrative needs and urged the Commission to consider the potential future benefits of making the change because it will demonstrate the city's values.

Karl Gamradt, 3347 Virginia Ave. S., stated the topic of Ranked Choice Voting is important to the people of St. Louis Park. He stated the city already eliminated Primary elections to give people more choices on the ballot, but if we don't give people more ability to choose, the extra number

of people on the ballot doesn't do any good. He added ranking multiple choices will not be difficult for people to understand.

Jim Leuthner, 3128 Florida Ave. S., stated was a candidate in Ward 3 in 2017 and he found that Ranked Choice Voting was widely supported in the community. He added he believes that more democracy is always better than less democracy and he does not want to see a candidate potentially elected with less than a majority of the vote. He stated he believes it will increase positivity and turnout in elections.

Diane Steen-Hinderlie, 2829 Yosemite Ave., stated Ranked Choice Voting is better for determining a consensus winner and measuring the overall will of the people. She added that government needs to have mechanisms in place to counteract discord and voter apathy. She stated Ranked Choice Voting would be a positive step forward for St. Louis Park.

Gail Dorfman, 4200 Forest Road, stated she strongly supports Ranked Choice Voting. She explained that St. Louis Park is a city of innovation and good government. She stated St. Louis Park is a leader in the region and Ranked Choice Voting seems like a good fit for all of the reasons outlined by those who spoke before her.

Deb Brinkman, 4327 Alabama Ave. S., thanked the Charter Commission for their time and effort in studying Ranked Choice Voting. She requested that the Commission forward a favorable recommendation to the city council. She added that St. Louis Park has the opportunity to drive positive change and ensure that winning candidates have the majority support of the voters.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Melissa Kennedy, City Clerk

TITLE: Proposed Charter Amendment related to Ranked Choice Voting

Since 2006 the City Council has discussed the use of RCV for municipal elections in St. Louis Park on numerous occasions. Following their most recent discussions in 2017, it was determined that a majority of the members of the City Council are interested in implementing RCV for the municipal election in 2019. In order to implement the use of RCV for municipal elections the city would need to authorize its use in the City Charter. Home rule charter cities are not required to seek legislative authorization if the RCV process is incorporated into the city charter.

On October 2, 2017 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 17-153 requesting that, pursuant to M.S. 410.12, Subd. 7, the Charter Commission study and make a recommendation regarding whether the City's Charter should or should not be amended to provide for the use of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in municipal elections.

The Charter Commission met on October 24, 2017, December 6, 2017 and January 10, 2018 to discuss the Council's request. The Charter Commission also undertook a public process to gain information and feedback on the topic of Ranked Choice Voting that included hosting an Expert Q&A Panel event on February 13, 2018 and a Public Listening Session on March 6, 2018.

M.S. 410.12 provides the ways in which a City Charter can be amended. In this instance the City Council has asked the Charter Commission to consider amending the Charter pursuant to the process outlined in M.S. 410.12, Subd. 7. The entirety of M.S. 410.12 is attached for your information and review.

The Charter Commission previously requested that the City Attorney provide draft language of an ordinance that would amend the Charter to provide for the use of Ranked-Choice Voting in municipal elections. The Charter Commission also requested additional information on the use of the language "single transferable voting" in the Charter amendment.

The Charter Commission recommendation to the Council should clearly communicate whether the Charter should or should not be amended to allow for the use of Ranked Choice Voting in municipal elections. The Charter Commission should also provide direction on the language of any proposed ordinance amendment that may be sent to the Council for consideration. A Charter amendment must carry by a vote of not less than a majority (eight) of the commission members.

The City Attorney will be in attendance at the meeting to answer questions regarding the draft amendment and to provide guidance regarding the statutory process to amend the Charter.

Attachments: Draft of Proposed Charter Amendment
City Attorney Memo on "Single Transferable Vote"
Resolution No. 17-153
M.S. 410.12

Prepared by: Melissa Kennedy, City Clerk
Reviewed by: Soren Mattick, City Attorney
Nancy Deno, Deputy City Manager/HR Director

Draft of Proposed Charter Amendment

CITY OF ST. LOUIS PARK
HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA

ORDINANCE NO. 2018-_____

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ST. LOUIS PARK CITY CHARTER

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 410.12, subd. 7 the Charter Commission has recommended to the City Council that the Charter be amended as provided herein; and

WHEREAS, Minn. Stat. § 410.12, subd. 7 provides that upon recommendation of the Charter Commission the City Council may enact a Charter Amendment by ordinance.

THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS PARK ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 4 of the City Charter is amended by adding Section 4.08 to provide:

Section 4.08.Voting method.

The voters elect the City's elected officers by single transferable voting (also known as "ranked-choice voting" or "instant-runoff voting"). The City Council must provide by ordinance the method of counting the votes and of breaking a tie.

SECTION 2. This Ordinance shall take effect on _____, 2018.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2018, by the City Council of the City of St. Louis Park.

Public Hearing	April 16, 2018
First Reading	April 16, 2018
Second Reading	May 7, 2018
Date of Publication	May 17, 2018
Date Ordinance takes effect	August 15, 2018

Reviewed for Administration

Adopted by City Council

Thomas K. Harmening, City Manager

Jake Spano, Mayor

Attest:

Approved as to Form and Execution:

Melissa Kennedy, City Clerk

Soren Mattick, City Attorney