



Amarillo Charter Review

June 6 Citizens Committee Meeting

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Welcome and Introductions



City Council Representatives and Committee Members

Councilmember Scherlen	Councilmember Simpson
Chair Freda Powell	Vice Chair Gary Pitner
Kim Benson	Rodney Hill
Audrey Castillo	Toby Hudson
Dean Crump	Sandra McCartt
Michael Haning	Donna Ward



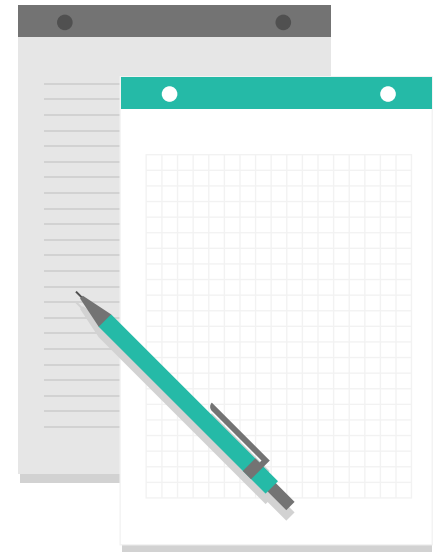
Baker Tilly Team

Dennis Hawkins, project lead	Mary Locey
Al Zelinka	Shauna Clark



June 6 Agenda Review

- Public comments
- Overview of Voting Rights Act
- Review and discuss
 - the number of Mayor and Councilmembers,
 - the length of terms, and
 - election methods
- Wrap up and next steps



Overview of Voting Rights Act

- Section 2 challenges
- Single-member District or Ward method
- One-man one-vote
- Cumulative Voting



Review and Discuss – Length of Terms

Amarillo Charter Article V Section 2 – Term of Office

“The mayor and each councilmember shall serve for a term of two (2) years until a successor is elected and qualified; unless sooner removed from office as herein provided.”

Review and consider other terms:

- Two-year staggered
- Three-year staggered
- Four-year
- Four-year staggered

ICMA Data*	
Mayor's Term	Percentage of Cities
One year	14%
Two years	35%
Three years	6%
Four years	45%
Other	<1%

*Source: International City Manager's Association (ICMA)



Length of Terms – Two-Year Staggered

Two-year Staggered Terms

Advantages

Disadvantages

Prevents the wholesale turnover of the entire council

Those running during the even-year (presidential or gubernatorial) election cycle may find it exceedingly difficult to be noticed

Staggered terms may increase stability **to City operations**

Staggered two-year terms would **double the cost** of elections

Correction to the committee report, page 3, two-year staggered terms section:

- **Remove:** There was no city among the ten comparison cities that had two-year staggered terms.
- **Replace:** Of the comparison cities, only two (Waco and Killeen) have two-year terms for its members that are staggered on odd and even years.



Length of Terms – Two-Year Staggered

Comparison Cities

Killeen (Mayor + 7)

Four councilmembers represent **single member districts 1, 2, 3, and 4** elected in **odd-numbered years** for a two-year term by **registered voters residing in each district**.

Mayor and three councilmembers represent the city **at large** elected in **even-numbered years** for a two-year term by plurality vote of the city at large.

Waco (Mayor + 5)

The **mayor** represents the city at **large AND** is elected in **even-numbered years** for a two-year term.

Two councilmembers from single member districts, District 1 and 3, elected in **even-numbered years** for a two-year term.

Three councilmembers from single member districts, Districts 2, 4, and 5, elected in **odd-numbered years** for a two-year term.

Length of Terms – Three-Year Staggered

Three-year Staggered Terms

Advantages

- Longer than two-year terms thus adding stability to City operations
- Allows for staggering
- Might be more palatable to voters
- Even-year elections would produce a higher turnout, consolidated with state and federal elections

Disadvantages

- Confusing to voters who do not typically vote for a city candidate every year
- Throws off election cycles
- Candidates running in even years compete with federal and state candidates
- City would have an election (maybe two) every year, doubling the cost of elections
- Councilmembers may be in a constant state of campaigning, diverts time/attention away from governing
- Shorter terms may result in a less experienced council
- May not provide enough time to implement and see through long-term projects and policies



Length of Terms – Three-Year Staggered

Comparison Cities

Arlington (Mayor + 8)

Five councilmembers represent **single member districts** 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 by **registered voters residing in each district.**

The mayor and three councilmembers from **Districts 6, 7, and 8** represent the **city at large.**

Grand Prairie (Mayor + 8)

Six councilmembers represent **Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6** by **registered voters residing in each district.**

The mayor and two councilmembers represent the **city at large.**



Length of Terms – Four-Year Non-Staggered

Four-year Non-staggered Terms

Advantages

- Councilmembers have more time to **focus on governing**
- More willingness to take on multiyear projects
- More likely to make unpopular but necessary decisions
- Reduce City election expenses
- Have more time to get to know constituents
- More time to learn about governing
- Less turnover **adds stability** for a well-run organization

Disadvantages

- Voters may feel they have lost the ability to replace a non-performing councilmember
- May be **hard to find people** to make a four-year commitment
- May lead to vacancy on the council (Charter has a process for filling vacancies by appointment)



Length of Terms – Four-Year Staggered

Four-year Staggered Terms

Advantages

Disadvantages

- All advantages of four-year terms
- Reduces opportunity for a complete turnover
- **Experienced officials** are always on the dais, can provide guidance for new members
- While one half of the council is running for office, the other half remains focused on City business

- All disadvantages of four-year terms
- Harder for the public to keep track of whom is on which election cycle
- Due to the failure of Proposition B, proponents (other than the City) would **need to educate voters** about the enactment of four-year terms

Proposition B (measure failed 48% to 52% in 2020)

To amend Article V, Section 2 of the Amarillo City Charter to provide for a four-year term of office for mayor and each councilmember, with those terms being staggered as provided by ordinance.



Length of Terms – Four-Year Staggered

Comparison Cities (1 of 2)

El Paso (Mayor + 8)

Eight councilmembers represent districts by **registered voters residing in each district.**

Mayor represents the city **at large.**

Plano (Mayor + 7)

Four councilmembers elected at large but must live in a specific geographic area.

The mayor and three councilmembers elected **at large.**

Laredo (Mayor + 8)

Eight councilmembers elected by **district.**

Mayor represents the city **at large.**

Brownsville (Mayor + 6)

Four councilmembers represents **districts 1, 2, 3, and 4** elected by voters residing in each district.

Mayor and two councilmembers representing Districts 5 and 6 elected **at large.**

Lubbock (Mayor + 6)

Mayor represents the city **at large.**

Six councilmembers elected by **district.**



Length of Terms – Mayor Only

Lubbock (Mayor +6)	
Mayor	Councilmembers
Elected at large for a two-year term	Six councilmembers represent Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 , elected by registered voters residing in each district .

Note: Of the ten comparison cities, only Lubbock had different term lengths for its mayor and councilmembers, all of which are staggered.



Term Limits

Term Limits

Advantages

- Seven of the nine comparable cities have enacted term limits
- Reduces advantages of incumbency
- Encourages **fresh perspectives**
- May **provide balance** between new and experienced officeholders
- May **reduce risk** of corruption or complacency

Disadvantages

- More turnover, disrupt continuity with constant learning curve
- May prematurely remove experienced, effective officials
- **Limits institutional knowledge, experience, and expertise on Council** – less effective governance
- Potential greater influence by special interests



Review and Discuss – Term Limits

Comparison Cities	Term Length	Term Limits
El Paso	4-years	Mayor and councilmembers, three elected terms, max nine years
Arlington	3-years	Mayor and councilmembers, two full consecutive terms
Plano	4-years	Two consecutive terms, person who served two council terms may run for mayor; one year gap before eligible to run again
Lubbock	Mayor 2-years Council 4-years	No term limits
Laredo	4-years	Mayor and councilmembers, two terms
Amarillo	2-years	No term limits
Brownsville	4-years	Mayor and councilmembers, two terms
Grand Prairie	3-years	
Killeen	2-years	Mayor and Councilmembers, three successive terms, except if running for a different office than currently held
Mesquite	2-years	Mayor and councilmembers, four consecutive terms, two-year break in service
Waco	2-years	Mayor, three term limit, councilmembers no term limits

Discussion About Length of Terms

- Questions and clarification
- Other considerations for length of terms and term limits
- Straw voting
 - Two-year staggered
 - Three-year staggered
 - Four year
 - Four-year staggered
 - Different term for Mayor
 - Other term lengths
 - Term limits



Review and Discuss – Number of Members

- Reasons for increasing Councilmembers as mentioned on May
 - Heavy workload for volunteer elected officials
 - Constituents vocal of lack of representation
- Average ratio of local elected official to resident 1:40,000
- Proposed growth of Amarillo is expected to reach 250,000
 - If remain at five elected officials, ratio will be 1:50,000



Review and Discuss – Number of

Comparison Cities	Population	Elected Officials	Constituents per Representative
El Paso	683,577	Mayor + 8	75,953
Arlington	398,864	Mayor + 8	44,318
Plano	291,296	Mayor + 7	36,412
Lubbock	264,000	Mayor + 6	37,714
Laredo	263,640	Mayor + 8	29,293
Amarillo	201,234	Mayor + 4	40,247
Brownsville	199,062	Mayor + 6	28,437
Grand Prairie	197,590	Mayor + 8	21,954
Killeen	156,261	Mayor + 7	19,533
Mesquite	150,184	Mayor + 6	21,455
Waco	141,377	Mayor + 5	23,563



Review and Discuss – Number of Members

Expand to Seven Member Council

Advantages

A larger council would reduce the council-to-constituent ratio and increase responsiveness to constituents

Would be easier to deal with any vacancies on the council

Constituents, staff, and the mayor and council would have the ability to talk to an additional council member without violating the Open Meetings Act

Disadvantages

Due to the Voting Rights Act, expanding to seven council members might force the City into single-member representation (district elections)

The City would need to make physical changes to the dais and city hall

Demands from two additional council members could increase staff workload



Review and Discuss – Number of Members

Alternative to increasing councilmembers, **hire staff**

- Support workload
- Schedule meetings
- Process expense reimbursements
- Respond and take messages

Reporting structure for hired staff

- Report to mayor, support mayor and council
- Report to City Manager or City Secretary, support mayor and council

Other considerations?



Discussion About Number of Members

- Questions and clarification
- Other considerations for number of members
- Straw voting
 - Increase the number of councilmembers
 - Hire staff



Review and Discuss – Election Methods

Options

- Mayor elected at-large, citywide voting
- Council elected on a citywide basis; all residents vote for at-large members
- Council elected on a citywide, at-large basis, but requiring some Councilmembers to reside in specific special geographic, single-member districts
- Hybrid, some councilmembers elected at-large (citywide) and some by specific geographic districts, voting limited to residents of that area
- Mayor elected at-large, citywide voting. Each Council member elected by a specific geographic district, only voters in that area vote for their representative.



Review and Discuss – Election Cycles

Comparison Cities	2024	2025	2026	2027
El Paso	Mayor, Districts 2, 3, 4, 7		Districts 1, 5, 6, 8	
Arlington			Mayor, Districts 3, 4, 5, 8	Districts 1, 2, 6, 7
Plano		Mayor (Place 6), Places 2, 4, 8		Places 1, 3, 5, 7
Lubbock	Mayor, Districts 2, 4, 6		Mayor, Districts 1, 3, 5	
Laredo	Districts 4, 5, 7, 8		Mayor, Districts 1, 2, 3, 6	
Amarillo		All seats		All seats
Brownsville		Districts 3, 4		Mayor, Districts 1, 2
Grand Prairie	Districts 5, 6, 8	Mayor, Districts 2, 4	Districts 1, 3, 7	Districts 5, 6, 8
Killeen	Mayor, three at large	Districts 1, 2, 3, 4	Mayor, three at large	Districts 1, 2, 3, 4
Mesquite		All seats		All seats
Waco	Mayor, Districts 1, 3	Districts 2, 4, 5	Mayor, Districts 1, 3	Districts 2, 4, 5

Discussion About Election Cycles

- Questions and clarification
- Other considerations
- Straw voting
 - Mayor election cycle
 - Council election cycle



Meeting and Project Schedule

• Charter Review Committee

- Every Thursday
- 5:30 p.m.
- In person or via Teams
- Dates:
 - June 13
 - June 20
 - June 27



• City Council Action

- July 9: Review committee recommendations
- July 23: First reading of ordinance
- August 13: Second reading of ordinance

• Ballot Initiative

- August 19: Deadline per Texas Election Code
- November 5: Election



Questions?



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Thank you

Next meeting, June 13



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