

**CITY OF TALLAHASSEE
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**

2024 Final Report & Recommendations

In October 2023, the City Commission initiated a charter review committee (CRC) to review and submit recommendations on the following sections of the City Charter:

- Review the number of electors (voting members) to compose the governing body of the City of Tallahassee as reflected in Section 9 of the City Charter;
- Review the compensation to be paid to the mayor and city commissioners as reflected in Section 1-1 of the Charter-related laws;
- Review Section 120 of the City Charter to clarify if a municipal primary election should be held if only two persons qualify as candidates for the office of mayor or city commissioner; and
- Consider the requirement of an appointed Charter Review Committee at regular interval periods as an amendment of Section 134 of the City Charter.

In December 2023, the following registered electors of the City of Tallahassee were appointed to the 2024 Charter Review Committee:

Hon. Mark Mustian, Chair
Beth Corum
Bugra Demirel
Chantelle Dorsey
Sha’Ron James

Hon. Elaine Bryant, Vice-Chair
Hon. Howard Kessler
Ernie Paine
Dr. Bruce Strouble
Jared Willis

Article II.B of the 2024 CRC bylaws required the committee to complete its review within 90 days of appointment and submit a written report to the City Commission. In fulfillment of its charge, the CRC conducted eight meetings, as outlined below:

Jan. 16, 2024, Renaissance Center, DSEM Conference Room
Jan. 25, 2024, City Hall, Tallahassee Room
Feb. 2, 2024, City Hall, Tallahassee Room
Feb. 15, 2024, City Hall, Tallahassee Room
Feb. 20, 2024, Renaissance Center, DSEM Conference Room
Feb. 29, 2024, Smith Williams Center
Mar. 7, 2024, City Hall, Tallahassee Room

Citizens were afforded opportunities at each meeting to address the committee, both in person and through virtual participation. In addition, public comment was also solicited via an online form.

To foster transparency, all materials related to the meetings, including audio recordings, were posted to the City of Tallahassee Charter Review webpage (www.talgov.com/charterreview).

During the Committee’s deliberations, the following persons made presentations to or assisted the committee:

- Ms. Lynn Tipton, Director of Florida League of Cities University, who provided an overview on municipal charters in Florida including their history, purpose, and common elements and characteristics. She also addressed forms of municipal government, provided charter comparisons to other Florida cities, discussed best practices, and commented on trends.
- Mr. Chris Moore, Deputy Supervisor of Elections, Leon County, provided information relative to election statistics, operation of non-partisan primary elections, and historic voter turnout. Additionally, he provided dynamic online maps depicting precinct-level voter turnout, broken down by race/ethnicity, and political affiliation. In addition, Mr. Moore answered the committee’s questions regarding elections operations and elections statutes.

As a result of the committee’s deliberations and activities, combined with a review of information from comparable Florida cities and other information assembled at the committee’s request, the following recommendations were approved by a majority of the committee:

CHARTER RECOMMENDATIONS

City Charter, s. 9 – Size of the Governing Body

As to the size of the governing body, the committee recommended no change in the size of the 5-member Tallahassee City Commission.

City Charter, s. 340 – City Commission Salaries

The committee recommended that members of the City Commission receive a pay increase. To facilitate an increase, the committee recommended that s. 340 of the Charter be amended and the following compensation model be codified in s. 23 of the Charter:

The city commission may, at any time deemed advisable, establish a compensation committee of not less than five, nor more than seven, registered electors of the City of Tallahassee to conduct a review and make a written recommendation to the city commission concerning the salaries of the mayor and city commissioners. The committee shall report its finding not later than four (4) months after being appointed.

The city commission, upon the receipt of a report from a compensation committee, may set the annual salaries of the mayor and city commissioners by ordinance. Any ordinance amending salaries shall become effective on the date of commencement of the terms of office of the members

elected at the next regular municipal election which follows the adoption of such ordinance by at least six (6) months.

City Charter, s. 120 – Conduct of Primary Elections

The committee recommended, in cases where only two qualified candidates file to run for a particular seat, such 2-person contests should appear on the regular municipal election ballot in November. Heretofore, under certain circumstances, 2-person races could appear on a municipal primary ballot in August.

City Charter, s. 134 – Charter Review Committees

The committee recommended that a full review of the City Charter be conducted in six years, with a review committee convened in June 2029, in advance of the November 2030 general election. The committee additionally recommended that routine periodic reviews be conducted every eight years thereafter.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

At its final meeting, the committee took up additional subjects beyond the four topics delineated in the committee bylaws. After discussion, the committee recommended Charter amendments related to the Ethics provisions codified in s. 60-63 of the Charter. The committee recommended:

- That the Independent Ethics Board be designated as the “appropriate local official” for receipt of whistleblower complaints involving the mayor, a city commissioner or the Inspector General, or their staff, if the alleged violation(s) stated in a complaint is within the jurisdiction of the Ethics Board to investigate.
- That the Independent Ethics Board has jurisdiction over the members of the Tallahassee City Commission when serving as a board member of the governing body of an outside agency by reason of their city commission position.

The committee declined to pursue further discussion or consideration of making the Police Chief a position appointed by the governing body, or abandoning the at-large electoral process in favor of electing city commissioners from single-member districts.