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# Analysis of Proposal P

The Proposed Detroit Charter

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- *Proposal P on the Detroit Primary Ballot: The Proposed Detroit Charter [full report](#).*
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# Proposed New Detroit City Charter

- Proposal P seeks voter approval during the August 3<sup>rd</sup> primary election.
- Culmination of three years of work by the Detroit Charter Revision Commission convened in 2018.
- Fate of Proposal P could change depending on how the Michigan Supreme Court rules on its qualifications for the ballot.
- Oral arguments were made before the high court on July 7<sup>th</sup>; a decision is pending.

# What is a city charter?

Has three essential purposes:

1. To outline the election process for city government.
2. To create the structure and powers for providing city services such as establishing the form of government, key departments, commissions, or boards.
3. To provide enough structure to ensure efficiency in city operations.
  - Not be too prescriptive as to limit the ability of elected officials to respond to changing times.

# Detroit City Charter

## Brief History of 2018 Revision Commission

- 14.2% of registered Detroit voters voted on charter question at the 2018 August primary.
- Question to revise charter usually brought to voters every 16 years.
- Charter revision commissions have a three-year span to complete duties.
- Detroit Charter Revision Commission held over 200 formal and informal community meetings and conversations.
- Resulted in approx. 315 proposed revisions for the Commission's consideration.



# Proposed Changes

- Can be broadly categorized as expansive and ambitious progressive policy reforms:
  - Redefinition of elected and appointed positions.
  - Formation of structures and process to ensure increased representation and equity for Detroit residents.
  - Increased access to city services and programs.
  - Inclusion of strategies to increase citizen involvement and government transparency through an equitable development framework.



# Shift in Power Between Executive & Legislative Branches

- Retains the strong mayor-council form of government.
- Diminishment of the mayor's appointment power with public boards and officers as well as executive functions:
  - Advisory commissions
  - Chief of police
  - Proposing and developing a master plan for the city
- Blurring of responsibilities and lines of accountability create confusion in the separation of powers between both branches.

# Transparency

- Proposed charter attempts to increase transparency in city government:
  - Specific directives for executive and legislative agencies or departments to provide reports or post city documents online or to public boards
  - Notifications of hearings about ordinances on non-conforming uses & structures and requests
  - Contractor employee reports
  - City council members required to state for the record basis and reasoning for a vote they make on a matter
  - Mayor required to hold 2 community meetings in each district in 7-month period

# Citizen Involvement in City Government

- Authorizes 47 new elected positions and creates 102 new appointed positions.
- Mayoral & city council appointments must be residents and as demographically representative of the city as possible.
- Eight new advisory commissions and creation of community advisory councils per district.
- Referendum prior to the establishment or participation in a public authority or agency.
- Mayor must annually evaluate the social and economic impact of all public authorities and agencies.

# Social Justice and Equity

- A prominent theme in proposed charter is a focus on providing more government assistance to low income and marginalized residents.
- Public health focus through the Health Department.
- Creation of a health in all policies (HiAP) taskforce.
- New water-rate system and creation of a water amnesty program.
- New tax abatement requirements with organizations.
- Creation of new departments:
  - Department of Disability Affairs, Office of Environmental Justice and Sustainability, Office of Economic and Consumer Empowerment

# Social Justice and Equity

- Reimagining of policing by altering the role of the police:
  - City budget to equitably fund social service programs, project and activities that impact and may decrease costs associated with provision of police services.
  - New police training guidelines and programs.
  - Establishment of civilian rights in police provisions.
  - Removal of qualified immunity provisions from police officer evaluations.
- New tax relief program and a new overassessment relief program.
- New public broadband and technology commission for sustainable development.
- New reduced fare program for all public transportation.

# Other Avenues for Action

- Create ordinances or resolutions for programs and projects.
- Develop public and private partnerships in the city to implement and fund programs.
- Engage the city's broad non-profit sector to assist with the provision and implementation of services and programs.
- Engage the vast number of foundations that work and serve the city on a variety of social justice and equity issues.
- Utilize state and federal resources and programs that are in discussion by the current administrations.

# Government Efficiency

- Prescribing too many departments in a city charter creates potential for overlap and duplication between departments and responsibilities.
- Constrains the ability of the mayor and city council to react to changing service and financial needs.
- Provisions that are overly prescriptive can restrict city government's ability to adapt to changing times.

# Financial Impact

- Mandates new costs, some of which are relatively expensive.
- Incursion of new costs must come at the expense of resources used to fund existing costs or incurring budget deficits.
- Projected cost of charter falls somewhere between city and commission's projections.
- Detroit's opportunities to increase funding rests in expanding its tax base.
- Detroit still legally obligated to the 2014 Plan of Adjustment.
- City must maintain a balanced budget to remain out of state oversight.



# Conclusion

- Before voting on whether to revise the charter, voters should consider a few questions:
  1. Can this problem be addressed by a change in policy or the passage of an ordinance in city council?
  2. Should a solution to this problem be sought by putting new officials in office?
  3. Might state or federal legislation and programming address this problem more effectively?
  4. Can the change be made by charter amendment brought forth by city council as opposed to a charter revision?

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