

Council Agenda Report

Date: April 22, 2022

Prepared by: Tom Carroll, City Manager

SUBJECT: Special Election, Possible Charter Amendment

Recommendation: If Council wishes to consider amending the Charter to change the duties of the mayor position, hold a work session prior to May 23rd to consider amendments to the Charter.

Summary

Pursuant to § 3-21A of the Charter, the vacancy in the mayor's position requires the City of Cambridge to schedule a special election "promptly" to fill the unexpired term. Steps will be taken in the coming weeks to set this special election process in motion, starting with the review of proposals for election services due to the City on May 6th.

Earlier this year, Council discussed the possibility of amending the Charter to modify the duties and authorities of the mayor's position, or perhaps eliminate the mayor's position altogether. If Council wishes to change the Charter, it is advisable any changes be decided in May so that the voters have complete knowledge about the future duties and authorities of the next mayor. To discuss Council's policy options, it may be advisable to hold a special council work session in May to determine the pros and cons of a Charter amendment.

Additional Background

The City will receive responses to our request for proposals to assist Cambridge with a special election on May 6th. It is expected that Council will be able to select a firm at its May 9th Council meeting. Between Council's May 9th and May 23rd meeting, City Attorney Thomas and I will be working with the selected firm to develop a special election schedule complying with our Charter. Council may be in position to set the election schedule on May 23rd. If Council acts to start the election process in May, the earliest the special election could be held under the timeframes set forth in the Charter would be in July.

This means Council has a relatively narrow window to consider the pros and cons of amending the Charter before the special election process has begun. While there is no legal reason the Charter could not be modified at a later date, the general public will benefit from knowing what changes, if any, to the mayor's duties are under consideration before the special election process has begun.

If Council wishes to still consider Charter amendments, staff recommends Council hold a work session on May 16th or some other appropriate time that works for all.