



**CHARTER COMMISSION**  
Columbia Heights City Hall, 3989 Central Ave NE, Shared Vision  
Thursday, January 16, 2025  
7:00 PM

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**AGENDA**

***ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC***

*Members of the public who wish to attend may do so in-person. For questions, please call the Administration Department at 763-706-3610.*

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call/Status of Membership**

**Approval of Agenda**

**Approval of Minutes**

**1. October 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**Election of Officers**

**2. President, Vice-President, and Secretary**

**Correspondence**

**Old Business**

**3. Changes to Recall elections Sections 47-52**

**New Business**

**Adjournment**

**Please email President Laine at [carolynlaine@gmail.com](mailto:carolynlaine@gmail.com) if you cannot attend.**

*Auxiliary aids or other accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available upon request when the request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Please contact Administration at 763-706-3610 to make arrangements.*



# CHARTER COMMISSION

Columbia Heights City Hall, 3989 Central Ave NE, Shared Vision

Thursday, October 17, 2024

7:00 PM

## DRAFT MINUTES

### Call to Order

### Roll Call/Status of Membership

Members present: Matt Abel, Kathy Ahlers, Wolid Ahmed, Larry Betzhold, Christine Brown, Bill Hugo, Leo James, Veronica Johnson, Carolyn Laine, Julie Rose, Frost Simula, Gregory Sloat, Marsha Stroik, Susan Wiseman

Members absent: Excused: Unexcused: Ben Harris

Also Present: Connie Buesgens substituting for Council Liaison Rachel James

### 1. Introduction of Commissioner Leo James

#### Approval of Agenda

Motion by Abel, second by Wiseman. Motion passed.

#### Approval of Minutes

### 2. July 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Abel, second by Johnson. Motion passed.

### Correspondence

### Old Business

### New Business

For information only, President Laine handed out the November 1981 announcement by then President Mel Aanerud, in which he briefly mentions the history of the Charter Commission going back to the 1950s.

### 3. Motions offered for changes to Recall section of Charter

a. **Motion** by Simula, Second by Brown to insert a new section between Section 46 and Section 47, adapted from the Charter of the City of White Bear Lake:

“Section [#]. Right of Recall. The people of the City of Columbia Heights hereby reserve to themselves the right and power to remove from office at any time any

or all of the elected officers of the City for malfeasance or nonfeasance in office.  
The exercise of this power shall be designated as “the recall”.”

Discussion: Friendly motion by Wiseman, second by Simula to append “in accordance with state law”.

Amended change reads:

“Section [#]. Right of Recall. The people of the City of Columbia Heights hereby reserve to themselves the right and power to remove from office at any time any or all of the elected officers of the City for malfeasance or nonfeasance in office in accordance with state law. The exercise of this power shall be designated as “the recall”.”

Roll call vote: 13 Ayes (Abel, Ahlers, Ahmed, Betzhold, Brown, Hugo, James, Johnson, Laine, Rose, Simula, Stroik, Wiseman), 1 Nay (Sloat). Motion passes.

**b. Motion** by Ahmed to include definitions adapted from the Charter of the City of Richfield:

“For this purpose, the word ‘malfeasance’ means the performance of an act in his or her official capacity that is unlawful or wrongful, and the word ‘nonfeasance’ means the failure to act where there was a duty to act.”

Discussion: Friendly motion by Sloat, Second by Wiseman to remove the words “or wrongful”.

Friendly counter motion by Johnson, Second by Hugo to keep the words “or wrongful”.

Roll call vote: 8 Ayes (Ahlers, Hugo, James, Johnson, Laine, Rose, Simula, Stroik), 6 Nays (Able, Ahmed, Betzhold, Brown, Sloat, Wiseman). Motion passes.

**c. Motion** by Wiseman, Second by Sloat to add eligibility, as borrowed from a 2019 St. Paul case, to current Section 48:

“Signatures must be from eligible voters who are on active status on the Statewide Voter Registration System.”

Discussion: Friendly motion by Brown, Second by Wiseman to append “at the time of the petition verification.”

Friendly motion by Simula to replace “who are on active status on” with “according to”.

Amended change reads:

“Signatures must be from eligible voters according to the Statewide Voter Registration System at the time of the petition verification.”

Question called by Hugo.

Roll call vote: Aye (unanimous). Motion passes.

**d. Motion** by Simula, Second by Ahlers to replace “his or her” with “their”.

Amended change reads:

“For this purpose, the word ‘malfeasance’ means the performance of an act in their official capacity that is unlawful or wrongful, and the word ‘nonfeasance’ means the failure to act where there was a duty to act.”

Motion passes.

## **Summary**

In complete, the above changes composes a new section which reads:

“Section [#]. Right of Recall. The people of the City of Columbia Heights hereby reserve to themselves the right and power to remove from office at any time any or all of the elected officers of the City for malfeasance or nonfeasance in office in accordance with state law. For this purpose, the word ‘malfeasance’ means the performance of an act in their official capacity that is unlawful or wrongful, and the word ‘nonfeasance’ means the failure to act where there was a duty to act. The exercise of this power shall be designated as “the recall”.”

Discussion will continue in January 2025.

President Laine suggested using the next meeting to discuss whether a recall should continue to include an election for a successor, or simply let the vacancy be “filled as provided by this Charter.”

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion: Ahlers , second Wiseman. Motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 8:11pm.

Next meeting is January 16, 2025 at 7pm.

**CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CHARTER COMMISSION  
2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

**MEMBERSHIP:**

The following members served in 2024:

Matt Abel	Ben Harris	Frost Simula
Kathy Ahlers	Bill Hugo	Gregory Sloat
Wolid Ahmed	Leo James	Marsha Stroik
Ramona Anderson	Veronica Johnson	Susan Wiseman
Larry Betzold	Carolyn Laine	Nick Zeimet
Christine Brown	Julie Rose	

During 2024, Commissioners Sue Wiseman, Larry Betzold, Carolyn Laine, Frost Simula, and Matt Abel were reappointed.

Commissioner Nick Zeimet did not reapply in May, and Commissioner Ramona Anderson did not reapply in June.

Commissioner Christine Brown was appointed in March, Commissioner Julie Rose was appointed in June, and Commissioner Leo James was appointed in August.

Councilmember Rachel James served as the Council Liaison.

**OFFICERS:**

The following members served as officers for the Charter Commission in 2024:

President: Carolyn Laine      Vice-President: Larry Betzold      Secretary: Frost Simula

**MEETINGS:**

The Charter Commission held four meetings in 2024: January 18, April 18, July 18, and October 17.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

The Commission discussed the following issues in 2024:

Changes to Chapter 5, Sections 47-51, Recall Elections

Possible changes were briefly considered in the April meeting; however, the Commission waited until the MN Supreme Court published their written opinion regarding their decision to disallow the recall election that had been set for February 2024. In October, the Commission discussed possible changes in the language, including adding the need to meet malfeasance or nonfeasance, state that petition signatures must be from actively registered voters, and decide whether an election to replace a removed officer occur at the same time as the recall election or the vacancy be filled as provided for in the Charter.