



City of Winooski
Vermont's Opportunity City

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Charter Commission Agenda

Tuesday, February 4, 2020
5:30 PM - Winooski City Hall (27 West Allen Street)

I. Call to Order

II. Public Comment

III. Approve Previous Minutes

https://www.winooski.vt.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_01072020-604

IV. Review Project Plan

- What do we need to deliver to City Council and by when?
- Public outreach calendar and process
 1. Setting goals, clarifying process, next steps, assign outreach to stakeholder groups and individuals
 2. Materials needed:
 - a) Fact Sheet, Outreach Questions, FAQ
 - b) Shared calendar
 3. Training and preparation for productive outreach by commissioners
 - a) Town Meeting Day presence
 - b) Implicit bias training?

Documents:

[Fact Sheet DRAFT.pdf](#)

V. Review of Proposed 2020 meeting

- 3/3 - 5/5 (public outreach/stakeholder engagement phase).
- 5/5 Regular Meeting - consolidate findings, begin drafting report to council
- 5/19 Regular Meeting - draft report to council reviewed, debated, voted on
- 6/2 Meet if haven't yet finalized and voted on recommendations to City Council

VI. Plan for coordinating with school on project-based learning, outreach to key stakeholders, school charter changes alignment, etc.

VII. Adjourn

Winooski Charter Commission - All-Resident Voting

Winooski Charter Commission info: winooski.vt.gov/1387/Charter-Commission

Meetings: **First and third Tuesdays at 5:30 pm at City Hall**

Email your questions & comments: charter@winooski.vt.gov

Introduction

The Winooski Charter Commission is a task-oriented Commission that advises the City Council on potential changes to the Municipal Charter, the foundational governance document of the City of Winooski. Currently, the Commission is charged with examining options to present Winooski voters with a charter change that would enable all residents to vote in Winooski municipal elections, protect Winooski voter information, align the School and City's charters, and consider additional governance changes identified by the Council, staff, and public. The Winooski Charter Commission needs your input during this important public outreach process and is happy to provide you with the information you need.

Purpose

All of our residents contribute in a multitude of ways: by paying their taxes, buying homes and property, opening businesses, sending their kids to our school system, and by creating the advantageous diversity our community has celebrated for over 100 years - regardless of their citizenship status. A change to our municipal charter would allow any legal resident, who may for various reasons not yet have full citizenship, to vote in (only) our municipal elections – giving a voice to our neighbors in local matters that affect them and their families.

Winooski Population Data 2017 American Community Survey

Total (18+): 6,131

Native U.S. Citizens = 5,041 (82%)

Naturalized Citizens = 472 (8%)

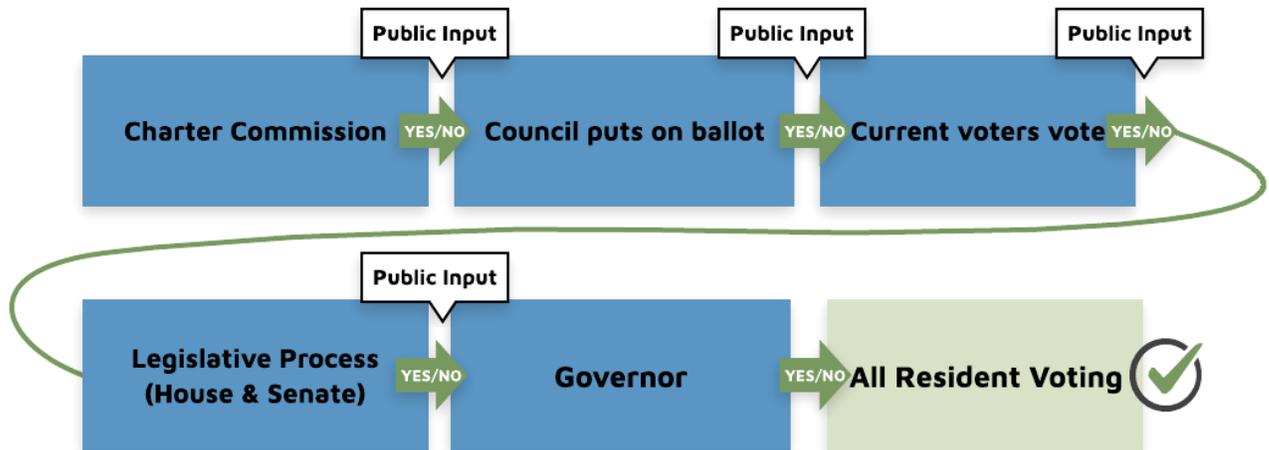
Not a U.S. Citizen = 618 (10%)

Context

All-resident (or non-citizen) voting in elections goes back to the founding of the United States. After the American Revolution, non-US citizens were allowed to vote in many states. By the 19th century, non-citizens in at least 22 US states were voting in local, state, and federal elections. But a flood of immigrants to America at the start of the 20th century fueled a rise of anti-immigrant sentiment - and by 1926, all states had abolished the practice. As of today, non-citizens are allowed to vote in some local elections in Chicago, San Francisco, and in Maryland – a process that has proven successful. Other communities in Vermont are also considering this. It was approved locally in Montpelier in 2019 and is also under discussion in Burlington.

How Would this Work in Winooski?

The Supreme Court of Vermont has stated that Legislature has the ability to change charters for towns and cities. This direction was provided during the 2019 Vermont Legislative session while the City of Montpelier's charter change bill to allow non-citizen voting was discussed. It has yet to be voted on by the Legislature. So, the process is:



Any "no" vote above and the process is over for now.

Questions We've Considered (FAQs): **We welcome your feedback on all of these ideas!**

- **Who would be allowed to vote?** Legal residents defined as people here under a federally sanctioned legal category (such as a green card or a permanent resident visa.)
- **What does resident mean?** Someone who resides in Winooski with the intent to stay – the same as applies to citizen voters.
- **Could non-citizens run for office?** Under the current charter language, they could if we allowed all residents to vote.
- **Would the voter registration lists be public?** Yes. The City would maintain (1) a state and federal voter registration list and (2) a municipal voter registration list. Both would be available upon request.
- **How would non-citizens register?** The same way citizens register. They would come to City Hall or the polling place and swear that they were who they said they were and were a resident of Winooski.
- **Why don't people just become citizens?** It's complicated. There are lots of barriers to gaining citizenship. These could include:
 - Time. You often have to have lived here for at a minimum 3 to 5 years before you can apply.
 - Eligibility or Long waiting lists. Depending on where you are from, only a small number of people are allowed access to citizenship every year.
 - Future access to homeland. Some don't want to give up the right to travel home or move home in the future and citizenship could eliminate that possibility.
 - Cost. The application itself is \$725 plus classes and lawyers if needed.
- **I'm not a citizen. If I register to vote, am I protected?** It would be public information that you were not a citizen and had registered to vote.
- **When is the vote?** If approved by the City Council, current voters would be asked to vote on a Charter change in November 2020.
- **How can I provide more feedback?** Email us at charter@winooskivt.gov.