



**City of Winooski**  
Vermont's Opportunity City

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**Charter Commission Agenda**

Tuesday, February 11, 2020  
5:30 PM - O'Brien Community Center – Conference Room in Community Services Office (32 Malletts Bay Ave.)

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Public Comment**

**III. Approve Meeting Minutes From February 4, 2020**

**IV. Finalize Fact Sheet**

Documents:

[Fact Sheet Draft.pdf](#)

**V. Outreach Plan**

- A. Schedule and Events
- B. Groups to do Direct Outreach to
- C. Tracking Interactions

Documents:

[Memo\\_ Charter Commission 2\\_7\\_20.pdf](#)

**VI. Adjourn**

## Winooski Charter Commission - All-Resident Voting Factsheet

Winooski Charter Commission info: [winooskivt.gov/charter](http://winooskivt.gov/charter)

Meetings: **First and third Tuesdays at 5:30 pm at City Hall  
(from mid-March to mid-May)**

Email your questions & comments: [charter@winooskivt.gov](mailto:charter@winooskivt.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. We pay our taxes, buy homes and property, open businesses, and send our kids to our schools. Together we create the advantageous diversity our community has celebrated for almost 100 years - regardless of our citizenship status. A change to our municipal charter would allow any qualified Winooski resident, who may for various reasons not have US citizenship, to vote in (only) our municipal elections – giving a voice to our neighbors in local matters that affect them, their families, and their lives.

#### Winooski Population Data 2017 American Community Survey

**Total (18+): 6,131**

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

Naturalized Citizens = 472 (8%)

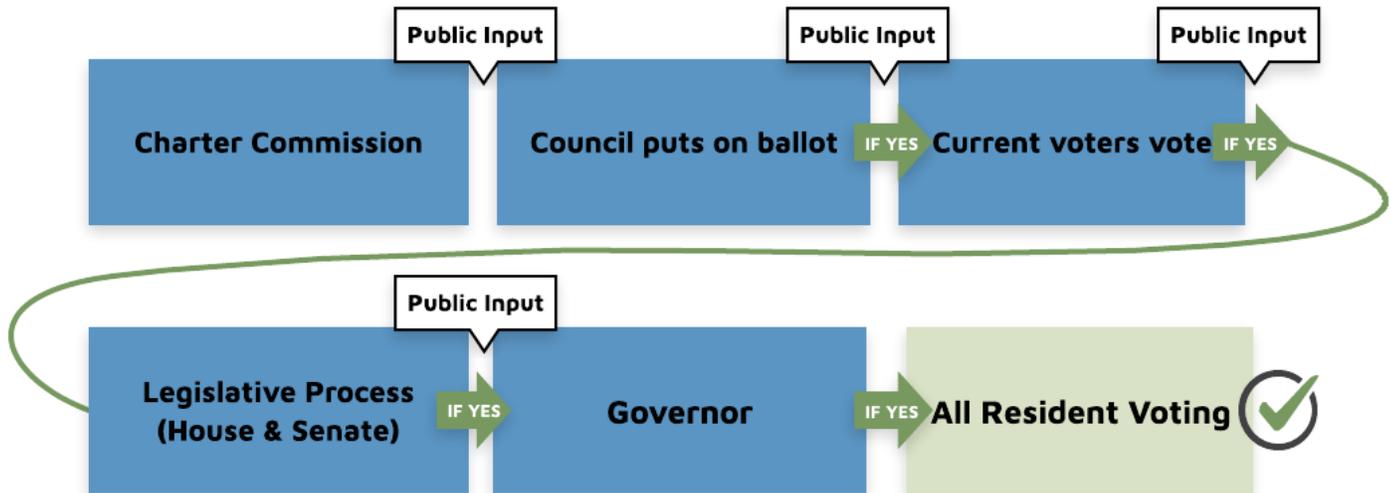
Not a U.S. Citizen = 618 (10%)

### Context

All-resident 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.

## What are the steps to allow for all-resident voting?

The Supreme Court of Vermont has stated that the Legislature has the ability to change charters for towns and cities. This is a multistep process:



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

- **Who would be qualified to vote?** Residents here under a federally sanctioned legal category (such as a green card or a permanent resident visa, etc.) and who will be 18 years of age or older on or by election day.
- **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 of all qualified Winooski voters. Both would be available upon request.
- **How would non-citizens register?** The same way citizens register. They come to City Hall or the polling place and swear that they are who they say they are and are 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 US citizenship could eliminate that possibility.
  - Cost. The application itself is \$725 plus classes and lawyers if needed.
- **I'm not a US citizen. If I register to vote, is my information public?** Yes. Your standard voter information is on the list. Your citizenship status is not.
- **Will this prohibit me from applying for citizenship status?** To date, this has not inhibited citizenship applications.
- **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](mailto:charter@winooskivt.gov).

## **Memo**

To: Charter Commission  
From: Liz Edsell, Chair, Charter Commission  
Date: 2/7/2020  
Re: Status Update and Prep for 2/11/2020 Meeting

### **Attachments:**

- Draft Fact Sheet (see latest version from Jessie) - content updated 2/4; final review approval 2/11
- [Project Plan](#) - last updated 2/4; updated on an ongoing basis
- [Presentation Talking Points](#) - drafted and shared on 2/4; not yet reviewed
- [Outreach List](#) - template created; review together

### **Status Update**

Charter Commission members have deliberated key questions posed by City Council. In commission discussion, we've come to consensus around key policy questions and crafted a fact sheet that will be used in public outreach (attached). The commission is preparing to launch public engagement phase and has much to discuss and finalize. Key questions and preparatory materials to discuss laid out below.

### **Discussion of Public Engagement Process for Charter Commissioners**

See outlined below links and questions for our public outreach. There are a lot of components to discuss, so please try to review prior to our 2/11 Charter Commission meeting.

From our discussion of "What Success Looks Like" in the Project Plan, we've agreed, in principle, on some components of *how* our outreach will be done. My summation:

- We are going to meet with community members in groups (at least to start),
- We have some idea of who those people will be (as outlined by key stakeholders)
  - Among stakeholders, we will prioritize outreach to the residents who are not US Citizens and would be enabled to vote in future local elections should voters authorize it
- In these meetings we are presenting our initial recommendations and seeking reactions, questions and feedback, etc.), then move on to the questions.
- We will use inclusive language, using "all residents," "all Winooski residents," or "all qualified residents" (and avoiding defining people by what they are not, i.e. US citizens; legal or illegal, etc; "from here")
- We will correct misinformation (specifically about legal authority for Winooski to take this step and about the process).

Our goals for this meeting are to further nail down the next steps to move forward the work:

1. Finalize Fact Sheet
  - a. What's process for translation?
2. Firm up Outreach Plan

- a. Confirm the 'how' points above and review content of presentations and process for tracking interactions
  - i. See question 1 section below
- b. Scheduling and events; groups to do outreach to
  - i. See Question 2 section below

In preparation for the outreach I've prepared a number of outreach documents and proposed next steps for us to discuss:

1) What does the presentation and tracking of events look like?

<p><a href="#">Draft Talking Points</a></p>	<p>Please review, thoughts/questions for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is everyone OK having a bit of interaction to start and in the middle?</li> <li>- Having a specific example of a current Winooski resident who's not currently able to vote, but would like to and why is really helpful and powerful.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prashant - are you comfortable with us sharing your story?</li> <li>- We can do a short video of you, or you can write it out so we can share accurately.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Should we circulate a sign in sheet?</p>	<p>Thoughts/Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It would seem helpful as a means of tracking the number of attendees at any given meeting, but I don't know if that's how public meetings typically work.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Also, if we don't plan to do anything with the list, then probably not worth collecting contact information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- If we don't have an official sign-in sheet, then it's just on the presenter(s) to get an accurate head count at each presentation.</li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">Event Report</a></p>	<p>Please review and let me know if you have any recommended changes.</p>
<p>Translation &amp; Interpreters</p>	<p>Which languages can/should fact sheet be translated into? What's the process for that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can we get a copy of the New American Voting Event flyer from Eric or Hal as reference?</li> </ul> <p>For presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does the City or City Council have go-to interpreter services?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a list of community groups should we reach out to? Kristine has sent a couple contacts -- from AALV and USCRI. I can start a list, but it'd help to build off something that already exists.</li> <li>• How do we coordinate with the school district's resources, community liaisons, etc?</li> </ul>
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2) Should we present in pairs or solo? How do we coordinate scheduling presentations?

<p>Pairs vs solo</p>	<p>Thoughts/Questions:</p> <p>How important/valuable do you think it is to have each presenter have a supporting presenter or volunteer join them?</p> <p>I've been thinking it'd be helpful to have two presenters from the commission at most meetings for a few reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It'll make it logistically easier to gather feedback in a systematic way;</li> <li>• It'll feel more supportive to have a partner there if questions or feedback are challenges,</li> <li>• Presenters can get feedback on their presentation -- was it clear, did they stick to the talking points and responses, how they handled questions, etc,</li> <li>• We can have more than one perspective and stakeholder in the presentation.</li> </ul> <p>The drawbacks to requiring two commissioners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our time is limited -- we could potentially reach more people if we all present individually</li> <li>• Coordinating two people's schedules can be logistically challenging, making it harder to schedule</li> </ul> <p>What do others think?</p>
<p><a href="#">Outreach List</a></p>	<p>To-Do/Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm list of intended outreach targets/groups complete. Assign outreach to commissioners/others.</li> <li>• Commissioners can populate independently outside of meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create a standard scheduling email to make it easy</li> <li>○ Does anyone know how to link the dates on the Google Sheet to a Google Calendar? I know there's a way to do so, but don't know how.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What other materials do we need for outreach that could be prepped outside of meetings?</li><li>● Create assignments to schedule.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ How do we determine who will do each one?</li><li>○ What level of time do commissioners have available beyond regularly scheduled meetings?</li><li>○ Do we continue to hold regular charter commission meetings during outreach phase or utilize that time for outreach?</li></ul></li><li>● What outreach beyond trying to setting up events with businesses/organizations should we be doing?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Should we incorporate a couple of canvassing dates for later in April?</li><li>○ Can someone compile of list of events that are already happening in Winooski (or just reference the City Calendar) and have a table.</li></ul></li></ul>
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