



City of Winooski
Vermont's Opportunity City

27 West Allen Street
Winooski, Vermont 05404
802 655 6410
winooski.vt.gov

Charter Commission Agenda

Tuesday, July 7, 2020 - 5:30 PM

- Attend online: <https://zoom.us/j/96266616669>
- Attend by phone: 1 646 558 8656 US
- Meeting ID: 962 6661 6669
- To attend this meeting or make public comment,
 - [View our Remote Meeting Procedures](#)
 - [Fill out our Public Comment Request Form](#) or call 802 655 6410 to schedule
- Need help installing and using Zoom? View their online resources: <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>

I. Call to Order

II. Public Comment

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

6.16.20: https://www.winooski.vt.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_06162020-666

6.23.20: https://www.winooski.vt.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_06232020-670

IV. Receive email comments from the public

Documents:

[Public Comment through July 1.pdf](#)

V. Discussion: Soliciting new charter ideas from the public

VI. Discussion: Outreach Activity on All Resident Voting Report

VII. Discussion: Other Charter Changes Previously discussed: Stepping down from Council to run for Mayor, Self-governance, and Fees by Resolution

Documents:

[Other Charter Changes For Commission v2.pdf](#)

VIII. Rescheduling July 21st meeting

IX. Adjourn

From: [Bria Yazic](#)
To: [Jessie Baker](#)
Subject: All-resident Voting
Date: Friday, June 26, 2020 3:39:47 PM

To the Winooski Charter Commission,

I am writing to say that as a US-citizen resident of Winooski, I wholeheartedly agree with implementing all-resident voting in Winooski. I think that everybody who lives in Winooski should have a say over local politics and local decisions, regardless of their citizenship status.

Thank you for considering this change and for making Winooski more inclusive for all of its residents.

Bria

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Bria Leigh Yazic
M.Ed. TESOL
Pronouns: she/her

From: [MachZ Man](#)
To: [Jessie Baker](#); [Kristine Lott](#)
Subject: Non Citizen Resident Voting
Date: Monday, June 29, 2020 4:19:37 PM

Dear Winooski Charter Commission,

I had truly hoped that the issue of allowing non citizen residents the right to vote in local elections had gone away permanently. With the exception of our citizens with Native American heritage we are all immigrants or refugees from around the world. The right to vote needs to come with some qualifications regardless of whether the vote is at the local, county, regional, state or federal level. The right to vote, as with many other opportunities, needs to be earned not simply handed out because one shows up in this country/city. Simply paying taxes isn't enough. We have part time non resident citizens (snow birds) that by any stretch of the imagination might, in theory, have more vested in our local elections than some full time resident non citizens.

There is growing concern among Winooski citizen residents that the 78% (provided by a City of Winooski employee) and growing number of families that rely on some form of local, state or federal financial aide are tipping the scales during elections because 1) they are being encouraged to vote for specific ballot issues and being told that their taxes will not go up and 2) they don't truly care what the impact is on families that pay 100% of their taxes out of their own incomes with no aid from any level of government. The number of Section 8 recipients in this community alone is mind boggling. Many pay only a small portion of their real rent (indirectly their taxes) and even though many are citizen residents when they vote on issues of money they do not feel the true impact of their decisions.

While there is an income sensitivity component to the school tax portion of local tax bills I am extremely worried about the time when the state of VT realizes that it can't subsidize all these school related costs. What the state gave years ago, it can take away as well. Winooski residents recently and generously approved expenditures for a pool that Winooski did not need and a very expensive school renovation/construction project. Add to that the fact that bill for COVID-19 has not come due yet and when it does I believe we're all going to be in for a shock.

Now is not the time to add non citizen residents to the voter rolls.

- 1) We don't give out high school diplomas simply by showing up at the door. They must be earned.
- 2) We don't hand out driver licenses just for showing up at the DMV. Some basic knowledge must be demonstrated and a test passed.
- 3) College degrees are not awarded based on simply being accepted to the institution.
- 4) Tradespeople don't have their licenses handed to them without education and passing rigorous exams.
- 5) Doctors, lawyers and the like are not gifted the privilege of performing in their respective fields. They must earn it.

I implore you, do NOT hand out the right to vote simply for showing up. Yes, the path to US citizenship may have some obstacles, but like anything worth having in life it does take time, effort and some money. Do not politicize voting any further than it all ready has been. Simply because other municipalities are looking at this issue or have all ready enacted it is NOT good reason to follow suit.

Vermont, politically, in its endeavor to become a more progressive state has lost it's once proud tradition of hard work, common sense and the attitude 'if you ain't got it don't spend it'. Immigrants, both legal and illegal, along with refugees come to this country for a better way of life. We are a beacon of hope but that doesn't mean we should drain the bank account dry attempting to help those from outside our borders. A helping hand shouldn't mean years on the roles of public assistance. Help our citizen hopefuls, yes, give them voting rights without first becoming citizens, absolutely not.

Sincerely,

Robert Larrabee
Winooski, VT

From: [Vito Moro](#)
To: [Jessie Baker](#)
Subject: residents voting
Date: Monday, June 29, 2020 12:38:20 PM

I believe that a person voting in any election is a resident of that community who has shown participation and is actively concerned for the development of the town. The voting person must have a personal conviction on the outcome of the election and has chosen to vote for this effect. Citizenship is as important as voting because choosing for an option is based on residents experience and legal status. Other participants who are not residents will be manipulated by political voices so their vote is influenced by fear. For most of the people new in town who moved in from another culture, are not willing to be involved in local matters, and prefer to keep their own ways. The only way to get their attention is by giving something free. Voting should not be exercised by influence but rather by a personal desire to build a great nation for the benefit of neighbors and future generations.

Citizenship must be a requirement to vote.

Winooski City Charter

Possible Revisions

Last Updated: 11/27/19, 6/10/20 and 6/29/20

Index	Proposed by	Content	For Commission Discussion (Jessie writing)
1	City Council	Allow all residents 18 and older to vote in municipal (city and school) related elections	
2	City Council	Protect our voter checklist from inspection	Commission decided against
3	City Council	Eliminate the term "citizen" from our Charter to more accurately reflect our value of inclusion and access	
4	City Council	Alignment to the School Charter	
5	Staff	Reconsideration of the limit on people signing petitions. (19-205, pg 1-2 of charter, link)	State law has changed now allowing for this. We now need to align the Charter to State Statute.
6	Staff	Update of the language on the Fire Department to remove reference to "volunteer". (19-305, pg 3 of charter, link)	All are compensated if/when they work. I'd also consider them the same as all other employees and therefore recommend removal of this particular language.
7	Staff	Manager should have the ability to appoint or delegate power a Personnel Director (much like is done for an Emergency Management Director.) Of course, all other authority remaining with the manager (ie hiring and firing ultimately.)	
8	Staff	Commercial Assessment language cleanup	§ 19-717. shall be classified as nonresidential property and shall be assessed at 120 percent of fair market value assessed value
9	Staff	Review requirement to step down from the Council to run for Mayor (19-206, pg 2, link)	During the last election cycle, this created a leadership challenge. Given the community's experience you may want to change this.
10	Staff	Oath of Office (19-903, pg 13, link)	Is it necessary to use "so help me God" here? Could it just be "so I solemnly affirm"?
11	Staff	Self-Governance Language from VLCT (related to 19-907, pg 13, link)	Access by local vote to any charter provision the Legislature has already approved. Other communities are considering this. It would be a step toward local control.
12	Staff	Have fees set by Resolution of the Council. (19-401, pg 4, link)	This would ease the process for budget related and program related fee changes. As Gerry has noted, it could also remove some public process. Current fees in Winooski Municipal Code can be found here

Key

- Administrative - propose clean-up language
- Commission Work on All-Resident Voting
- Debate at a future Commission meeting

#9: Review requirement to step down from the Council to run for Mayor

Solution	Pros	Cons
<p>Councilor doesn't have to resign to run for mayor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No vacancy on the council leading up to race • If Councilor loses, still have full council. • Lowers disincentive to run by Councilor in-term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Councilor wins Mayoral race, there is a vacancy that has to be filled by appointment or a special election (Council can appoint). • Councilor appointed or elected by special election misses the first weeks/months of learning. • If Councilor loses, it may be challenging to serve together • If Council opts for a special election, that incurs costs and may cause confusion for voters
<p>Councilor "future-resigns" on Town Meeting Day regardless of whether they win OR Their term is legally converted to end at one year, on Town Meeting Day.</p>	<p>No matter what, councilor's seat is known to be vacant, someone else can run for it, no gap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a disincentive to run for mayor because of risk of losing seat. • Checking ability to enforce.
<p>Leave as it is - councilor has to resign OR Can change the number of days of vacancy that compels an appointment to align to the date at which one must resign to run on TMD.</p>	<p>Creates certainty about what seats are open for Town Meeting Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disincentive for councilor to run for seat, waiting for time to be right. • Creates vacancy on council that has to be filled during budget season. • Potential for 2 Councilors campaigning against each other, and one remaining on Council and the other not, there is some uneven advantage.