

Winooski Charter Commission - All-Resident Voting

Charter Change info page: winooski.vt.gov/charterchange
Email your questions & comments: charter@winooski.vt.gov

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

Introduction

The Winooski Charter Commission is a task-oriented Commission who 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%)

Total Foreign-Born (18+): 1,090 (18%)

43% of the total foreign-born population are naturalized U.S. citizens

57% of the total foreign-born population are not U.S. citizens

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 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.

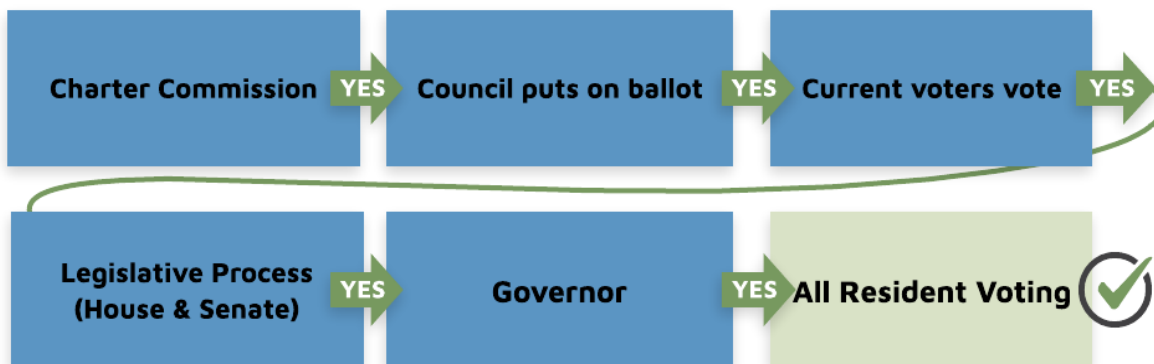


An idea as old as America itself (via CNN): As the city clerk in the capital of one of the nation's most liberal states, Vermont, John Odum had been asked the question dozens of times: Why can't non-citizens vote in elections? After all, they own land and pay taxes. "I always acted like it was a strange question," Odum, the city clerk in Montpelier, Vermont, told CNN. But after doing some research Odum determined it's not such "a crazy question" after all. Odum discovered that non-citizens voted in American elections for more than 150 years, from around the time of the American Revolution up until after World War I.

cnn.com/2018/04/10/politics/vermont-noncitizens-vote-trnd

How Would this Work in Winooski?

The Supreme Court of Vermont has stated—when voting qualifications differed in general and local elections—that the qualifications to vote and hold office in local elections are an issue within legislative, not constitutional, control, giving Legislature the ability to change charters for towns and cities. These laws were applied in the 2019 Vermont Legislative session for the City of Montpelier's charter change bill to allow non-citizen voting. The following outlines the process for such a bill to be made into law for the City of Winooski:



Questions We Are Considering:

? Less than 80 words

