

November 6, 2015

TO: Members of the Saint Paul Charter Commission

FROM: Joseph Mansky  
Ramsey County Elections Manager

SUBJECT: NUMBER OF SIGNATURES REQUIRED ON PETITIONS

The Charter includes several provisions that enable the voters to submit petitions as a part of the overall elections process. These petitions include the following.

<u>Petition</u>	<u>Signatures Required</u>
Initiative or referendum	8% of total voting for mayor at the previous city general election
Recall - mayor	20% of the total voting for mayor at the previous city general election
Recall – council member	Either 20% of the total voting for council member at the previous city general election or 15% of the number of registered voters in the ward, whichever is greater

All the petitions listed here rely, in whole or in part, on the number of persons voting in city elections. That number has been in decline for the better part of two decades. To illustrate this point, the number of persons voting in the most recent city general election on November 3 was the smallest in recent memory, representing approximately 12.5% of the city's eligible voters. In 1999, the total voting in the city general election was approximately 36% of those eligible.

There is also considerable variation in the number of votes cast from one ward to another. At the November 3 general election, more than three times as many votes were cast in Ward 2 (5,807), than were cast in Ward 7 (1,879).

The consequence of these trends is that, in many instances, the number of signatures required by petitions is significantly smaller than originally envisioned when the Charter was adopted.

To restore the signature formula to the effect that it had when the charter provisions on petitions were originally adopted, it may be more useful to use a percentage of the number of persons registered to vote at 7:00am on the date of the most recent general election conducted in the city. Such an election occurs every year – the state general election in even-numbered years and the city general election in odd-numbered years. This number has been far more stable over the years, ranging from a high of 162,873 in 2006 to a low of 138,198 since 1990. The current registration in the city is 150,614.

To accomplish this, the charter could be amended as follows.

<u>Petition</u>	<u>Signatures Required</u>
Initiative or referendum	3% of the number of persons registered to vote at 7:00am on the date of the most recent general election conducted in the city, or alternatively 4,500.
Recall - mayor	8% of the number of persons registered to vote at 7:00am on the date of the most recent general election conducted in the city, or alternatively 12,000.
Recall – council member	2% of the number of persons registered to vote at 7:00am on date of the most recent general election conducted in the city, which could be collected only in the affected ward, or alternatively 3,000.

Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this matter.

cc: Jerry Hendrickson  
Shari Moore