

November 15, 2018

TO: Members of the Saint Paul Charter Commission

FROM: Joseph Mansky  
Ramsey County Elections Manager

SUBJECT: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE CITY CHARTER

Over the past several years, there has been increasing interest in submitting petitions to place city questions on the ballot. As a result of my office processing these petitions and interacting with the petitioners, we have several suggested changes to the city charter that would help make the petition circulation and examination process clearer and easier to implement.

1. Specify the date on which the number of signatures on initiative and referendum petitions are determined; and
2. Specify the manner in which petitions are to be examined.

I have attached suggested language for your consideration.

Please let me know if you have any questions about these proposed changes to the charter.

Sec. 8.02. - Petition.

Initiative, referendum or recall shall be initiated by a petition

(1) signed by registered voters of the city equal in number to eight (8) percent of those who voted for the office of mayor in the last preceding city election in the case of initiative or referendum, or

(2) signed by registered voters of the city equal in number to twenty (20) percent of those who voted for the office of mayor in the last preceding city election in the case of recall of the office of mayor, or

(3) signed by registered voters of the relevant council ward equal in number to twenty (20) percent of those who voted for the relevant office of councilmember in the last preceding city election or fifteen (15) percent of the registered voters in the relevant council ward, whichever number is greater.

The number of signatures required for an initiative petition submitted up to 30 days after a city election shall be determined using the required percentage of votes cast for mayor at either that election or the previous election for mayor, whichever had the fewer voters.

The number of signatures required for a referendum petition shall be determined as of the date on which the ordinance is published.

Sec. 8.03. - Determination of sufficiency.

Any petition seeking initiative, referendum and recall hereunder shall be deemed received by the council when it is filed with the city clerk, for which filing there shall be no fee. Immediately upon receipt of the petition the city clerk shall examine the petition as to its ~~sufficiently~~ sufficiency and report to the council within twenty (20) calendar days, except that in the case of a recall petition it shall be thirty (30) calendar days. Upon receiving the report, the council shall determine by resolution the sufficiency of the petition.

On the day that a petition is submitted, the city clerk shall obtain a public list of registered voters from the statewide voter registration system. Using this list, the city clerk shall match the name, address and year of birth from the petition to the corresponding voter record for each person signing the petition. Any signature for which the city clerk cannot match this information must be rejected. The city clerk shall maintain a log of all rejected signatures, listing the page and line number of each rejected signature and the reason for the rejection. The voter registration list used for the examination of the petition and the log of rejected signatures must be made available for public inspection.