

KING COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW

We want to hear from you!

CharterReview@kingcounty.gov

"What about our growing population?"

"Are we able to promote affordable housing?"

"What about campaign financing?"

"I have an idea to improve elections."

OVERVIEW OF THE CHARTER

Thank you for joining us today and for participating in the charter review process.

WHAT IS A CHARTER AND WHY DOES IT NEED TO BE REVIEWED?

Under Washington State law, counties are allowed to become "Home Rule" by enacting a charter, which sets forth how the government should be structured and run.

A "charter" is similar to a "constitution" for local governments. The King County Charter was first adopted in 1970.

Every 10 years, the Charter requires a "Charter Review Commission" to review the charter and recommended changes. The Commission is an independent body, appointed by the Executive and confirmed by the Council.

QUICK GUIDE

- 1 The Charter is like our county's constitution.
- 2 The Charter Review Commission is reviewing potential updates to the King County Charter and would like your feedback.
- 3 Please read about the types of issues the Commission is discussing on the back of this handout.

HOW CAN I PROVIDE INPUT?

AT THIS MEETING: Today's town hall will be comprised of two parts. The first will be small groups facilitated by Commissioners and staff. These groups will discuss issues and report out to the entire group. The second portion of the meeting will be a town hall style where anyone wishing to address the Commission will have an opportunity to do so.

ONLINE: You can provide feedback by emailing us at CharterReview@kingcounty.gov. You can also read more about the King County Charter and join our online town hall on our website at: kingcounty.gov/independent/charter-review-commission



King County

TYPES OF ISSUES CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED

1

CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

The County has a civilian-led Office of Law Enforcement Oversight with the ability to investigate and report on certain events and areas of the operation of the King County Sheriff's Office.

- Should the official powers of the office, as described in the charter, be expanded to include subpoena power and/or other improvements to give the office more ability to investigate and report?

2

WHICH COUNTY OFFICIALS SHOULD BE ELECTED?

The County has a number of positions like the Sheriff, Elections Director and Assessor that are elected positions, meaning the public directly chooses the person to fulfill the role.

- Should these positions continue to be elected or should an official be chosen through a more traditional job application process?
- Should the Public Defender become an elected office?

3

PUBLIC FINANCING OF CAMPAIGNS

Mounting a successful campaign for office can sometimes be an expensive undertaking. Currently candidates must raise all campaign funds themselves.

- Should the County have some form of public financing of campaigns for County Council or other County elective offices?

4

SURPLUS LAND FOR HOUSING

The County owns a large number of properties throughout the County. Typically, when those properties are no longer needed, they are sold to the highest bidder.

- Should the County consider selling property for less than fair market value when the law allows and the purchaser commits to using the property to build affordable housing?

5

REPRESENTATION OF THE DECEASED FAMILY IN INQUESTS

In King County, when a member of law enforcement is involved in a fatality, a process called an inquest is held. This process operates similar to a trial, but the goal is to establish facts, not innocence or guilt. The families are provided with legal representation according to county code, but that is not a right established in the County Charter.

- Should this guarantee of legal representation be added to the County Charter?

6

RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Currently all county elections are decided by the use of a primary election to narrow candidates down to two that then face each other in the general election. Ranked Choice Voting is a method for selecting the winner of an election based upon the ranked preferences of the voter. Voters in ranked choice elections will rank candidates instead of just choosing one. The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated and each vote cast for that candidate is transferred to the voter's next-ranked choice among the remaining candidates until one candidate is declared the winner.

7

SIZE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Currently the County Council has nine members. The size of the Council was reduced from thirteen down to nine in 2005. The population of the County has grown significantly since then.

- Should the Council be increased in size? Reduced in size?
- Should at-large members be added (new members that represent the entire county rather than districts)?

8

MEETING THE DEMAND

The Changing Demographics of King County. King County is one of the fastest growing Counties in the United States. With this population growth, the County is becoming more diverse every year.

- How should County government change to be able to best serve the population?