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TO: Charter Commission
FROM: Corrine Heine, City Attorney
DATE: June 9, 2020
SUBJECT: 2nd Addendum to June 9, 2020 charter commission meeting

This addendum contains the following changes and additions to the agenda.

Item 3 – Approve minutes of May 26, 2020 meeting

Corrections have been made to the minutes

Item 4 – City Attorney report on June 8, 2020 council meeting

Ordinance No. 2020-12 is attached.

Item 5 – Question and answer session with election officials

The following corrections are made to the Agenda:

- The Hennepin County elections manager is Ginny Gelms, not Ginny Helms.
- Minneapolis City Clerk Casey Carl will also attend the meeting.

Attachments

- d. Additional public comments have been received



UNAPPROVED
DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE
MINNETONKA CHARTER COMMISSION**

May 26, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Northrup called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Dick Allendorf, Karen Anderson, John Cheleen, David Larson, John Northrup, Terry Schneider, Linnea Sodergren, LuAnn Tolliver, Brad Wiersum.

Members absent: None.

2. APPROVE MINUTES OF NOV. 12, 2019 MEETING AND JAN. 28, 2020 MEETING

Anderson moved, Cheleen seconded, to approve the minutes of the Nov. 12, 2019 meeting. By roll call vote, all voted in favor.

Anderson noted that she had identified some typographical errors, which the city attorney had corrected. Anderson moved, Larson seconded, to approve the minutes of the Jan. 28, 2020 meeting. By roll call vote, all voted in favor.

3. DISCUSSION OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING STUDY PROJECT AND WORK PLAN FOR PROJECT

City attorney Corrine Heine presented the staff report. Northrup stated that the commission had scheduled a meeting for March 17 that had been canceled, and he invited the commission to discuss the work plan going forward.

City attorney Heine informed the commission that the speakers for the March 17 meeting had been rescheduled to the June 9 charter commission meeting and that it might be difficult to reschedule them for another date. Schneider and Larson each commented that hearing from the election officials was necessary and that June 9 was an appropriate meeting for that purpose. Anderson concurred that the background put together for March 17 meeting was valuable and raised a lot of questions. She felt that election officials would provide a neutral view.

Northrup asked about other topics. Allendorf asked for information about cost comparisons, including a realistic comparison between conducting a primary and

ranked choice voting. Anderson asked to add the costs in a broader sense, including costs of informing voters and the public and the ongoing costs. She noted that the information from Minneapolis mentioned nine different items, including a voters guide, survey, outside consultant, independent analysis, publication of the amendment, and a new election website. Northrup stated that he wanted to understand the cost savings better, looking at a payback analysis of ranked choice voting over time. Allendorf indicated that some of the information had shown a need to increase staff, and he wanted to consider that ongoing cost. Wiersum suggested that the city could come up with a historical cost of primaries to come up with an annual average cost.

Schneider thought the commission should hear from both sides about the unintended consequences of approving ranked choice voting. He mentioned the potential to essentially disenfranchise a segment of voters who might find the process confusing. He questioned how the commission could verify that it would not be making the voting process unduly difficult, and how could those consequences be mitigated. He mentioned that when the charter was amended to change the mayor's term, there was due diligence by the commission and council in reaching out to the public before it went to the voters.

Tolliver asked whether the commission could identify issues for election staff to address on June 9. Northrup stated that the elections officials would not be giving presentations but will respond to questions. Schneider suggested that they should have a list of questions in advance of the meeting so the elections officials could be prepared. One of his questions was how you do recounts with ranked choice voting. He asked commission members to submit questions to the city attorney. The city attorney suggested that the questions be submitted by June 2 so that the officials would have time to prepare. Northrup expressed interest in the details on the recount that had occurred in Minneapolis.

Allendorf said he was interested in Dr. Morris's review of Minneapolis elections. He noted that the group that preferred the traditional method was the over-64 age group. He would like to hear more about that. Cheleen said it would be interesting to have information about those under age 64 and whether ranked choice voting would draw those voters in. Sodergren said it would be helpful if elections staff would comment on what they would have done differently, whether they encountered any snags that Minnetonka might avoid.

Northrup expressed interest in a voter outreach and education plan that would accomplish what Minnetonka wants to accomplish. Anderson wanted to know how the voter outreach plan would be handled with the pandemic still in place versus the traditional method. Going back to the cost issue, she thought the work plan should consider the cost of technology and equipment that might be needed, as well as

personnel costs. Northrup indicated that software is not available for fully automated ranked choice voting. One of his questions would be when a fully automated and certified system might be available for Minnetonka's use.

Schneider said he felt the commission needs to clearly define what problem the city is trying to solve. Then, once the problem is defined, the commission should look at whether there is evidence that ranked choice voting will solve or improve that problem. As a corollary, Cheleen said the commission should ask whether the city has enough time to really educate people before the November election. Larson asked whether this is a solution in search of a problem and noted that Minneapolis and St. Paul are much larger than Minnetonka. He would like to see whether St. Louis Park voters were happy with ranked choice voting.

Schneider said that raised another thought. As he recalled, there is no limit on how many candidates can run. He noted that when the city council has appointed to fill a vacancy, the city has received 25-30 applicants. He wondered how you manage the process.

Wiersum said the commission needs to make sure that there can be robust input. The commission needs to look at the issue from a number of sides and make sure it has considered all issues. Northrup said that Prof. Schultz had suggested that ranked choice voting gets new faces to run. He noted that incumbency has two sides – someone can be in office too long, but incumbents also have wisdom. He would like to know if the process encourages or discourages incumbency, and what value Minnetonka places on incumbency.

Schneider stated that it is not an all or nothing proposal. The commission should consider whether there are applications where ranked choice voting would be useful.

Schneider said the council could look at education and voter outreach could mean educating voters before they vote, but he wondered how the commission could do outreach to get direct feedback on how this might impact them. He wasn't sure how a community forum could be conducted during a pandemic. He felt the decision should not be rushed but should be thoughtful. He wondered if there was an ability to do a survey or sampling.

Wiersum said that the time table cuts out the notion of broad discourse and community input, and he is concerned because residents typically ask for more opportunity to comment. Allendorf said the commission needed to educate themselves, then determine how to educate council on why commission recommends what it does, and finally there would be a need to educate voters. The commission does not have time to do that by November.

Anderson said the commission needs to move ahead in good faith and schedule meetings. She said the issue has been driven by FairVote, and the commission needs to devote some time to hear other points of view. She noted that there is no organized opposition and the FairVote has advertised for paid advocates. She also said the commission should find out what the status was on legislative efforts to allow ranked choice voting. Schneider said that some residents had raised questions about ranked choice voting and they should be invited to attend and participate. There should be one meeting focused on the opposing point of view.

Norhrup said he would like to understand more about how voter intent would be determined and how that impacts the ranked choice voting environment. He noted that Minneapolis and St. Paul have different processes for tabulation and also different ballot design, and he would like to understand why those cities do things differently. Anderson noted that Minneapolis allows three choices and St. Paul allows more.

Anderson said an overall question she has is whether ranked choice voting actually improves voter turnout. She noted that information from Minneapolis that had been in the March 17 packet indicated that might not be the case.

Schneider asked whether there was a consensus on the commission that Aug. 10 is not a realistic timeline for getting the study done. He asked whether the commission should ask the council not to adopt the ordinance. Allendorf stated that he would favor that idea and would like to get the work done without being under pressure. Schneider said he did not see a consensus for the idea so that it might be best to let it ride. Wiersum said he would withhold opinion but he is curious about what others think. Northrup said he thinks the process will be informative and he doesn't think rushed a process is a good idea. He wants to do a diligent job and with the right amount of citizen input. Anderson said she felt a sense of pressure but wants to move forward in a good faith effort. She would like the council to know the commission is feeling rushed but will do the best it can within the time the council gives it. Tolliver said everyone wants to do a good job and is feeling rushed, and maybe the commission needs to have meetings in July. The commission also has the ability to extend the time if needed.

Wiersum said that the pandemic and ability to hold meetings remotely may provide more flexibility than if there were no pandemic. The city attorney noted that commission can meet remotely only because of the pandemic. Because the pandemic is unpredictable, she needs to schedule meetings on dates when a room is available at city hall, because it is not possible to predict a month in advance whether the commission will be able to meet remotely in the future.

Northrup said voter outreach is important. He felt the commission needed to work on a

plan for that right away. Schneider said that public engagement is one of the most important parts of the process. He wondered if there were other ways to get voter feedback. Anderson said she thought the commission's job was to get as much information as possible and report to the council, and the council would need to get voter input. Cheleen said the commission could move ahead to gather information and report to the council, but the commission could let the council know that the ability to get information to voters should be considered. Northrup said he was interested not as much in voter feedback as in ideas.

Heine said there is a difference between getting resident input to help the commission make a decision and providing information to voters to assist them in voting on the issue. She suggested that she might be able to provide an outline of a communications plan at the June 9 meeting.

Sodergren asked what the downside would be if the issue didn't go on the ballot in November. Larson said he thought it would be November 2021. Heine said the council could put the issue on the ballot in November 2021 or at a special election.

Wiersum said he wanted to be mindful of staff bandwidth. There is a presidential election, and the pandemic has stretched the resources for the communication staff. He wants the commission to be realistic in what it is asking of staff.

Northrup asked whether there were other topics to be added to the work plan. Schneider suggested that the chair work with staff to set a work schedule and game plan that the commission could review on June 9.

Anderson wanted to know what cities have rejected or repealed ranked choice voting and why. The commission reviewed the work plan notes and completed its review of the plan. Wiersum wondered if there is a demographic look at whether exhausted ballots are more common with certain groups. Tolliver wondered whether undervoting is more common with an older demographic. Schneider said he had heard comments that some candidates focus on being placed as a second choice. Northrup mentioned the use of strategic voting. Allendorf would like to know if ranked choice voting brings in new candidates. A copy of the completed work plan is attached to these minutes.

4. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

Northrup recapped the meeting schedule, with the elections staff on June 9. Schneider indicated the June 23 meeting would be a good time for unintended consequences and people with opposing viewpoints. For July meetings, Heine will determine room availability and poll commissioners on their availability. Northrup reiterated that the opportunity for resident input is important.

The next meeting of the commission is scheduled for June 9, 2020.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Anderson moved, Sodergren, to adjourn the meeting. By roll call voted, all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LuAnn Tolliver
Secretary

ORDINANCE NO. 2020-12

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS 2.06 AND 4.02 OF THE MINNETONKA CITY CHARTER, REGARDING ELECTONS; REQUIRING USE OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING; ELIMINATING USE OF PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The City of Minnetonka Ordains:

Section 1. Preamble. The city council adopts this ordinance pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 410.12, subdivision 5.

Section 2. Section 2.06, subdivision 5 of the Minnetonka city charter, relating to special elections to fill vacancies in the city council, is amended to read as follows:

Subd. 5. Special Election Requirements.

a. Except as provided in subdivison 5.b. below, special elections must be held at the earliest date possible under state law. ~~The following provisions apply:~~

~~—(1) candidates~~ Candidates must file for office no later than four weeks before the election;

~~—(2) no primary will be held; and~~

~~—(3) the candidate receiving the highest number of votes is elected.~~

b. If a special election occurs in the same year as a regular municipal election, the council may at its option schedule the special election to occur in conjunction with the regular municipal election rather than at the earliest possible date under state law. ~~If adequate time exists to conduct a primary in compliance with state law for the special election, the provisions of subdivision 5.a. above will not apply, and the special election will be conducted in the same manner as regular municipal elections.~~

Section 3. Section 4.02 of the Minnetonka city charter is amended to read as follows:

Section 4.02. Primary ElectionsMethod of election.

~~If one or two candidates file for a particular office, they are declared the nominees, and no primary will be held. If three or more candidates file for a particular office, a primary election must be held to determine the nominees for that office. The primary for that office must be held according to the schedule for a primary before a state general election, except that it will be in the year of the city general election. In a primary, the two candidates receiving the most votes for each office are the sole nominees for that office at the regular city election. The voters shall elect the mayor and council members by the method of Single Transferable Vote, also known as Ranked Choice Voting or Instant Runoff voting. The city council must provide by ordinance the ballot format and the rules for counting the votes and breaking a tie.~~

Section 4. The city clerk is directed to submit this ordinance to the charter commission for its review, as provided by law.

The stricken language is deleted; the underlined language is inserted.

Section 5. The council hereby reserves its discretion to determine, after receiving the charter commission's recommendation, whether to submit this charter amendment to the voters at a general or special election or whether instead to rescind this ordinance.

Section 6. This ordinance and the charter amendments herein shall not take effect until 30 days after approved by 51 percent of the votes cast at a general or special election as determined by the city council.

Adopted by the city council of the City of Minnetonka, Minnesota, on June 8, 2020.

Brad Wiersum, Mayor

ATTEST:

Becky Koosman, City Clerk

ACTION ON THIS ORDINANCE:

Date of introduction: May 18, 2020
Date of adoption: June 8, 2020
Motion for adoption: Kirk
Seconded by: Carter
Voted in favor of: Carter-Calvert-Schaepfi-Coakley-Kirk-Schack-Wiersum
Voted against: None
Abstained: None
Absent: None
Ordinance adopted.

Date of publication:

CERTIFIED COPY:

I certify that the foregoing is a correct copy of an ordinance adopted by the city council of the City of Minnetonka, Minnesota, at a meeting held on June 8, 2020.

Becky Koosman, City Clerk

Date: _____

Corrine Heine

From: Susan Boren [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 2:11 PM
To: Corrine Heine
Subject: Please move RCV Forward

Members of the Minnetonka Charter Commission,

We urge you to act expeditiously and make a recommendation to the Minnetonka City Council to place Ranked Choice Voting on the November 2020 ballot. 2020 is the best year for voters to weigh in, during a Presidential election when voter turnout is highest and most diverse. We hope you agree and will move the process forward so that voters can have their voices heard.

Sincerely,
Susan S Boren
16523 Black Oaks Circle
WAYZATA, MN

Sent from my iPhone

Corrine Heine

From: carina <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 2:18 PM
To: Corrine Heine
Subject: Please move RCV Forward

Members of the Minnetonka Charter Commission, We urge you to act expeditiously and make a recommendation to the Minnetonka City Council to place Ranked Choice Voting on the November 2020 ballot. 2020 is the best year for voters to weigh in, during a Presidential election when voter turnout is highest and most diverse. We hope you agree and will move the process forward so that voters can have their voices heard. Sincerely,

carina jensen
spring lake neighborhood

we need this more than ever!!!

Corrine Heine

From: Diana Klein <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 2:18 PM
To: Corrine Heine
Subject: Please move RCV Forward

Members of the Minnetonka Charter Commission,

Thank you for your consideration tonight to make a recommendation to the Minnetonka City Council to place Ranked Choice Voting on the November 2020 ballot. 2020 is the best year for voters to weigh in, during a Presidential election when voter turnout is highest and most diverse. We hope you agree and will move the process forward so that voters can have their voices heard.

Ranked Choice Voting is more representative, promotes civil campaigns, increases diversity and saves the city resources. I think this is important to preserve our democracy. Thank You!

Sincerely,
Diana Klein
Minnetonka Resident

Corrine Heine

From: Jeanne Lutgen <[REDACTED]@ma[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 2:21 PM
To: Corrine Heine
Subject: Please move RCV Forward

Members of the Minnetonka Charter Commission,

We urge you to act expeditiously and make a recommendation to the Minnetonka City Council to place Ranked Choice Voting on the November 2020 ballot. 2020 is the best year for voters to weigh in, during a Presidential election when voter turnout is highest and most diverse. We hope you agree and will move the process forward so that voters can have their voices heard.

Sincerely,

Jeanne
Sent from my iPhone

What is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a simple change that gives voters more voice and more choice in our elections and democracy. It is a popular, commonsense reform that ensures elected officials earn the broadest support possible in a single cost-saving election and allows for more candidates to run for office, giving voters more choice and more power at the ballot box.

How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

With Ranked Choice Voting, voters cast a single ballot, ranking the candidates in their order of preference (first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on). Ballots are counted in rounds. If a candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, that candidate wins. If no candidate has a majority of first choices then the last-place candidate is eliminated and those ballots are reassigned to the second choices on those ballots. This process continues until one candidate reaches a majority and wins. It works like a traditional two-round election, but occurs in a single, less expensive, higher turnout election. See details [here](#).

Why should Minnetonka adopt Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting is a better way to vote because it promotes elections that are:

- More efficient
- More representative
- More participatory, inclusive and diverse
- More civil

RCV is more efficient and saves taxpayer dollars because it eliminates the costly low-turnout primary and combines the primary and general elections into one election in November when turnout is much higher and representative of our residents.

Minnetonka currently runs two elections for city council and mayor: a primary in August which narrows the field of candidates down to two, and a general election between those two candidates in November. Local primary elections have very low voter turnout, about 4%, and that tiny slice of the electorate currently decides who advances to the general election ballot, preventing the larger voter pool in November from weighing in on all the candidates.

This two-step process is costly to taxpayers and candidates, and time-consuming for staff, candidates, election judges, and voters. Further, very little media is focused on primaries, and candidates typically campaign only to the sliver of voters who attend them. Very few voters are aware of primaries and few show up. In city council elections, the last four August primary elections have averaged just 4% turnout, with general elections around 15%. Both seem pathetically low in a city that routinely attracts 85% of voters for national elections.

With RCV, there is just one election in November. This saves time and money for the city, candidates and voters, and is easier and more convenient for voters to turn out just once.

RCV is more representative because it gives voters more choice at the ballot box, and more people participate in the entire process and are able to vote on all the candidates at once. We wouldn't have a small fraction of voters prematurely winnow the field of candidates in a low-turnout, early August primary.

RCV empowers all voters to weigh in on the full slate of candidates, in a single decisive election in November when turnout is higher and more representative of the community.

Increasing effective voter participation in this way is especially key for communities of color who are underrepresented in primaries. With RCV, a greater number of voters that are more broadly representative of the community are choosing our local officials.

RCV is more participatory, inclusive and diverse. Under our current system, many aspiring candidates are discouraged from running because it is expensive to run both a primary and general election campaign or they worry that the primary electorate, which skews older, less diverse, and more affluent, could be less receptive to their candidacy.

RCV levels the playing field for candidates. All candidates are on the ballot in November, giving new candidates more time to campaign and allowing a broader, more diverse electorate the chance to weigh in. Voters can express their true preference knowing that their second choice will count if their first choice doesn't continue in the runoff. This encourages more competitive elections, since RCV allows more candidates to run without fear of being a "wasted vote."

RCV also encourages candidates to talk to all voters and seek support beyond their own base, resulting in office-holders who more fully represent the views and desires of the broadest swath of voters possible. See outcomes in Minneapolis, St. Paul and St. Louis Park since 2009. Further, a 2016 study of RCV in California shows how RCV results in greater representation by women and people of color. Election experts, polling data and academic literature refute the idea that RCV harms low income voters or communities of color.

RCV encourages civility and discourages negative campaigning: While it's often said that Minnetonka hasn't had negative or partisan campaigns, that doesn't mean it never will. Many other cities are experiencing an increase in the partisanship of their elections, and it would be unwise to pretend it can't happen here. RCV is proven to diminish the effectiveness of negative campaigning, where candidates try to convince voters that their opponent is terrible, so voters will cast ballots against the candidates they don't like, instead of for the candidates they do like, while the undecided voters stay home and don't vote out of disgust for the negative system.

In contrast, RCV incentivises candidates to campaign positively on ideas and positions that matter to voters. Since candidates are motivated to secure second-choice votes from their opponent's supporters, RCV:

- Rewards candidates who appeal to a broad base of voters

- Reduces the incentive for candidates to attack their opponents and promotes more civil, issue-oriented campaigns
- Fosters coalition-building and compromise

Candidates behave differently knowing that being someone’s second choice is a tangible benefit. Once in office, a winner who has built a broad coalition of support can more easily reach beyond their base to forge compromises and problem-solve the critical issues facing their communities. In an era of hyper-partisanship and divisive politics, RCV is a key response to our nation’s growing polarization. See national study comparing voters’ perceptions of civility in cities using RCV and in those that do not.

Polling by Edison Research in Minneapolis, St. Paul and St. Louis Park following RCV elections shows that voters believe the campaigns have been very civil. In fact, 93 percent of Minneapolis voters and 90 percent of St. Paul voters in 2017 said that candidates spent little time criticizing each other -- and these were in cities with hotly contested mayoral races. In 2019 in St. Louis Park, 71 percent of voters said the same. See RCV By The Numbers and video testimony from voters here.

How did Ranked Choice Voting get started in Minnesota and in Minnetonka?

In 2004, the League of Women Voters Minnesota conducted an exhaustive, two-year study of voting systems and reached a consensus that endorsed Ranked Choice Voting as an option for local and state elections in Minnesota. See summary position on LWV-MN website here. In 2006, FairVote Minnesota, with the support of the League of Women Voters Minneapolis and former Minneapolis Mayor Don Frazer, led a grassroots campaign to adopt RCV in Minneapolis that was approved by a 2-to-1 margin by voters in 2006. St. Paul voters adopted Ranked Choice Voting in 2009 following the Minnesota Supreme Court ruling that RCV is constitutional.

In Minnetonka, a group of resident volunteers began learning about RCV and started to advocate with city council members in 2018. They reached out to Fairvote Minnesota for technical assistance (city charters and processes are complicated!) and to connect with other RCV supporters in their community (there were already several hundred). Two years and thousands of volunteer hours later, there is a true grassroots movement to improve our local elections process.

What has been the experience of Minnesota cities that use Ranked Choice Voting?

More than 545,000 Ranked Choice Voting ballots have been cast in Minnesota since 2009 when Minneapolis began using RCV. It has also been used in St. Paul since 2011 and in St. Louis Park since 2019. By all measures, RCV has been a resounding success in all three cities. Voter participation has increased, more candidates are offering voters more and diverse choices, and voters overwhelmingly say that RCV is easy to use and that they like it better than the old system. See more information regarding the results, turnout, voter opinions, and impact of RCV elections in Minnesota cities here.

Where is Ranked Choice Voting used?

Ranked Choice Voting has been used in major democracies around the world in countries like Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand. In the U.S., it is used in several southern states

(Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) for military and overseas voters, and in nearly 20 cities in states across the country from California to New Mexico to Utah to Colorado to Minnesota to Maine. It is slated for use in several other local jurisdictions, including New York City beginning in 2021.

Here in Minnesota, RCV is used in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Louis Park, and is being considered in a growing number of other cities, including Bloomington, Minnetonka, Red Wing and Rochester.

Maine became the first state to use RCV in 2018 and will be using it for presidential elections starting in 2020. Five states successfully used RCV in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary.

Does Ranked Choice Voting lead to higher voter engagement and turnout?

Ranked Choice Voting automatically increases voter participation by eliminating the low-turnout primary and allowing voters to consider the full slate of candidates in the general election when turnout is higher and more diverse. In other words, even if general election turnout stays the same, those same voters (75% of whom don't vote in the primary) will have more fully participated in the elections process. Having one decisive election in November encourages more candidates to engage with more voters over a longer period of time, and allows more people to fully participate in the entire election process. Plus, voters have to show up at the polls only once, which is easier and less expensive for everyone.

Turnout in any election is determined by a variety of factors, but most importantly by the competitiveness of a race, media attention and candidate get-out-the-vote efforts. The Minnesota experience demonstrates that RCV fosters more competitive races and has helped to boost turnout. Last year, when St. Louis Park first used RCV, voter turnout increased by nearly 50% in the November general election, from 4,436 to 6,619 voters citywide, over 2015, the last similar election with the Mayor and both at-large council seats on the ballot. In 2017, turnout in Minneapolis was 43%, the highest in 20 years and a more than 32% increase over the relatively high turnout in 2013. A similar trend was seen in St. Paul and in other cities across the country with the implementation of RCV.

One reason more residents are voting is an increase of candidates and competitive races that create awareness of the election within the community. Conversely, without a competitive election, there is no "choice" for the voters, so they simply don't vote. Potential candidates will be more likely to run when they don't face the 2-step primary and general election process, and they know they'll have more time to campaign for an election day with the greatest turnout. More candidates leads to greater competition, which leads to more active campaigning and election awareness, which leads to greater voter turnout, and more engaged communities.

Is Ranked Choice Voting confusing for voters?

This is by far the most frequently asked question and the answer is, no, based on extensive polling of voters who have actually used Ranked Choice Voting. In elections with three or more candidates, voters have the option to simply rank their choices instead of voting for just one candidate. RCV makes voting simpler by asking voters to come out once and eliminating the need to be "strategic" with their vote.

Just because it's a change on the ballot doesn't mean it's difficult for voters to use. In fact, the valid ballot rate in the most recent Minneapolis election in 2017 was 99.96 percent, demonstrating high levels of voter confidence and proficiency in ranking their ballots.

Evidence has shown time and time again that voters find RCV simple to use, and they like the greater choice and freedom of expression that they are given. Over 100 million people use RCV across our country and around the world. In the first highly competitive RCV mayoral race in Minneapolis in 2013, an astonishing 88 percent of voters ranked their ballots. Last year in St. Louis Park, where Edison Research polled voters on election day, 92% of polled voters said they found RCV simple to use, including 93 percent of people of color and 90 percent of those aged 55 and older. These results are remarkably consistent with previous RCV election polls in Minneapolis and St. Paul across different levels of income, age and education. Because other cities have already adopted RCV, it will be easier for Minnetonka to re-apply the process and implement it efficiently and effectively.

Is Ranked Choice Voting constitutional?

Yes. In 2009, the Minnesota State Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Ranked Choice Voting is fully constitutional: "Every voter has the same opportunity to rank candidates when she casts her ballot, and in each round every voter's vote carries the same value." *Minnesota Voters Alliance v. FairVote Minnesota*, June 11, 2009. Federal courts have also ruled that RCV meets all tests under the U.S. Constitution.

Does Ranked Choice Voting allow some voters to vote more than once?

No. With Ranked Choice Voting, you have the option to rank your choices, but your vote only counts for one candidate in the final round. The same is true for all voters. As the Minnesota Supreme Court case made clear: Every voter gets an equal vote. In each round of counting, your ballot counts as one vote for your highest-ranked candidate still in the running. If your candidate is still viable, your vote will count for your favorite candidate in the runoff round. If your candidate has been eliminated – just as in a traditional runoff election – you need to settle for one of the remaining candidates. Your vote automatically counts for whichever continuing candidate you prefer.

Under our current primary-general election system, a voter may vote for a candidate in the primary and then vote for a different candidate in the general election, if their preferred candidate loses the primary. Or they may vote for the same candidate in the general election. RCV is like a primary and general election on a single voting day. If a voter's candidate is eliminated, and no other candidate has a majority of support, that voter's next-ranked vote can be reallocated toward another choice.

What is the cost of implementing Ranked Choice Voting?

The cost of implementing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is different in each city, depending on the voting equipment and outreach efforts they have in place when making the switch and whether or not the elections are held in odd or even years.

Minneapolis was the first city in Minnesota to adopt Ranked Choice Voting over a decade ago. Their pioneering work on ballot design, voting machine compatibility, and voter education made it easy for cities to follow their example, and with only a fraction of the effort.

- Minnetonka is in a good position to implement RCV cost-effectively:
- Since Minnetonka municipal elections are held in odd years when we don't have federal or state elections, RCV will eliminate the cost of the primary altogether, saving the city that \$50,000 expense.
- Minnetonka already uses the same tabulators to scan paper ballots as those used to scan the RCV paper ballots in Minneapolis and St. Louis Park.
- Minneapolis and St. Louis Park have a blueprint for implementing RCV and tabulating the results that Minnetonka can use to avoid unnecessary startup costs.
- Software certified to instantly tabulate results is expected as early as 2021, which will reduce the cost of ballot tabulation.

While the city may provide voter education about the new process, this cost should not be significantly higher than what the city is already doing for voter education, such as printing sample ballots and posting information about the election and voting process on the city website and in communications to voters. Community organizations, including FairVote Minnesota and League of Women Voters, also provide grassroots voter outreach and education, reducing voter education costs.

Given that the blueprint and equipment for conducting RCV elections in Minnetonka is already in place elsewhere in Hennepin County, there should not be a significant cost to implement RCV. The elimination of the primary will result in cost savings to taxpayers.

Of note for community leaders who may still be concerned about voter confusion and wonder whether great expense is needed to explain to voters how to rank their choices: the State of Maine successfully implemented RCV for the first time in a statewide election with a high voter turnout and spent only \$83,000 state-wide on implementation, or less than \$0.08 per voter.

Does Ranked Choice Voting require a majority to win?

Yes. In a Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) election for a single race, it is always the case that the winner receives a majority of ballots cast (50%+1) in the final round.

Is it common for candidates to ultimately win who finished in second-place in the first round?

No. To date, of the 24 Ranked Choice Voting elections in Minnesota in which winners were decided in a runoff (with second- or third-choice votes), the second-place finisher won in only two of those elections.

This is similar to the second-place finisher in the current primary system winning the general election. It doesn't happen often, but it can happen in highly competitive races. Twenty-four percent (25 of 102) of all races using RCV in Minnesota have been decided with second or third-choice votes, and that outcome is accomplished in a single cost-effective, high-turnout election. For the vast majority of

elections that are decided without the need for more than one round of tabulation, no money is wasted on an unnecessary primary.

What is the process for adopting Ranked Choice Voting in Minnetonka?

The adoption of Ranked Choice Voting for mayoral and city council elections would require amending the city charter, which can be done by ordinance or by referendum.

If by ordinance, the vote would require a unanimous consensus by the city council. This is the approach St. Louis Park took.

Alternatively, a question could be placed on the ballot by a majority vote of the city council or charter commission or by voter petition with 1,600 signatures of Minnetonka residents. If the question is initiated by the council, it must be reviewed by the charter commission. If it is initiated by a citizen petition, it does not require approval by the council or charter commission. Regardless of how it appears on the ballot, the city council must approve the language of the ballot question. If 51 percent or more of those who vote on the ballot question support it, RCV would be adopted for mayoral and city council elections.

While school board elections are held at the same time as municipal elections, RCV is not currently available for school board as those elections are governed by state law, not city charter.

What if I unknowingly make a mistake on my ballot? Will my vote be counted?

First of all, just like now, if you make a mistake on your Ranked Choice Voting ballot that would disqualify your ballot (e.g., ranking two different candidates as your favorite), the tabulator would reject your ballot and you would have an opportunity to correct it. However, if you choose not to correct it, then just like now, your vote might not count depending on the error that you made. In other words, whether using RCV or the current system, mistakes are handled the same way.

Could it hurt my preferred candidate's chances of winning if I rank other candidates 2nd and 3rd?

No. Your vote counts for your second choice only if your first choice is eliminated. Your vote only counts for your third choice only if your first and second choices are eliminated.

Do voters have to rank all the candidates, even candidates they don't like?

No. You can rank as many, or as few, candidates as you like, up to the limit of choices permitted by the final rules of the city election. In most cases, it's up to 3 choices. The value of ranking is to ensure your ballot continues to count if your first choice is eliminated.

Does Ranked Choice Voting help mitigate the influence of money in campaigns?

We have observed that Ranked Choice Voting has helped reduce the influence of money in local campaigns. RCV levels the playing field and gives a fighting chance to candidates who have good ideas, but not big bank accounts. In the 2013 Minneapolis mayoral race, the winning candidate was outspent

3-to-1 by her leading opponent. Similar disparities in campaign spending by candidates and their PACs have been seen in other races elsewhere in the United States. Why? Because most of the big money raised directly by campaigns, PACs, or Independent Expenditures is used for negative TV ads or mailings. Attack ads and messaging are not only unhelpful in an RCV campaign, but can actually backfire. This was seen in the Ward 2 council race in St. Paul in 2015 and St. Paul mayoral race in 2017, in which Independent Expenditure organizations sent negative mailers against the winning candidate. Negative campaigning may work under the traditional system, but is not a successful strategy under RCV.

Who supports Ranked Choice Voting?

Voters support Ranked Choice Voting, winning on the ballot in most of the nearly 20 cities using it. In Minneapolis, it passed 2:1 on the ballot, and in St. Paul by 52 percent of the voters. St. Louis Park city council adopted RCV by unanimous vote following a popular grassroots effort advocating for the change. Most recently, RCV was adopted by 78 percent of voters in New York City.

RCV is also supported by a wide range of Minnesota political, business, community, and philanthropic leaders, media publications and civic organizations, including the League of Women Voters Minnesota and the DFL, Independent, Green, and Libertarian parties.

The Star Tribune, Sun Sailor and Current and ECM papers, and Rochester Post Bulletin have editorialized in favor of RCV, as have a number of papers across the country, including the New York Times and Washington Post.

Well-known political leaders like former Senator Dave Durenberger, former Congressman Tim Penny and current Congressman Dean Phillips are strong RCV champions. Rep. Phillips recently introduced the Voters Choice Act to provide support to cities and states transitioning to RCV.

Minnetonka Representative Patty Acomb and Senator Steve Cwodzinski are co-sponsors of the Local Options Bill that would make it easier for cities like Minnetonka to adopt Ranked Choice Voting.

In 2019, former Bloomington mayor Gene Winstead and two dozen business and health care leaders, including Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Jonathan Weinhagen, Bill and Penny George, Marc Gorelick, Penny Wheeler, Kelly Doran, Peter Hutchinson and Karla Ekdahl, Ken Powell and Wendy Bennett, among others signed a letter of support for the bi-partisan RCV Local Options Bill introduced by Bloomington Steve Elkins in the House and Scott Jensen in the Senate.

A growing number of national political scientists and business professors are championing RCV as a top reform to address our nation's growing polarization, including Stanford Professor Larry Diamond, award-winning author Lee Drutman, and Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter, to name a few.

Who opposes Ranked Choice Voting?

The main group opposed to Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Minnesota is the Minnesota Voters Alliance, which challenged RCV with a lawsuit in 2009 and lost. The Minnesota Supreme Court ruled unanimously that RCV is constitutional. It is the same group that led the unsuccessful pro-Voter ID push in Minnesota

in 2011 and recently lost its case before the Minnesota Supreme Court to require public disclosure of voter information.

Senator Kiffmeyer, whose Elections Committee is leading an effort to preempt RCV in Minnesota, has served on their board. Former Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk is also a co-sponsor of the RCV pre-emption bill.

What are some common myths about Ranked Choice Voting?

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting disenfranchises voters.

No, it doesn't. To the contrary, evidence shows that Ranked Choice Voting increases turnout and enfranchises more voters.

Opponents cite the case of a voter who chooses to rank fewer candidates than are available, ranking one or two candidates, for example, when they could rank two or three, and the candidate they rank is eliminated because they received the lowest number of votes. In this case, a voter is choosing to cast fewer preferences than are allowed in an election. This scenario is no different from our current system when someone votes in the primary for a candidate who doesn't make it to the general election. That voter is still able to vote for a remaining candidate in the general election. If they decide they don't like the remaining candidates, it's their choice to not vote in the general. No voter is disenfranchised; to the contrary, the voter is given more power to rank candidates in order of their preference. If they choose to rank only some, that is their choice. Indeed, if Minnetonka adopted RCV, there would be one election in November, increasing the number of voters having a say in our local elections - the opposite of disenfranchising voters.

As we describe above, an "exhausted" ballot does not equal a disenfranchised voter. It simply means that a voter didn't have a preference for any more candidates on the ballot after selecting their first or second preferences.

Another way to think about it: Currently, 4% of voters participate in the Minnetonka city council primary, and 15% in the general election. This means that just 25% of the city council general election voters participated in the primary, and were able to indicate more than one preference. But in nearly every Ranked Choice Voting election, over 75% of voters indicated more than one preference. This shows, once again, how our current voting system is inferior.

RCV would eliminate our low-turnout primary and bring together the most choices and most voters in one single, decisive, cost-efficient election in November. It rewards candidates who can reach beyond their base to build broad coalitions of voters and listen to all voices in their community.

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting disadvantages communities of color and less affluent voters.

No, it does just the opposite. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) has been shown to enfranchise communities of color by eliminating low-turnout primary elections which are disproportionately attended by older, less diverse, and more affluent voters than the general election. For example, in 2005 (before RCV was

enacted), general election turnout in Minneapolis was nearly three times greater than primary turnout (8 percent compared to 21 percent) in Ward 5 which is predominately people of color compared to two times greater for the city overall (15 percent to 30 percent). RCV mitigates this inequity by holding one election in November, when turnout is higher and more diverse. In San Francisco, effective voter participation increased as high as 300 percent in traditionally low-turnout precincts.

As discussed above, RCV helps to increase and diversify the voters participating as well as the candidates running. Over time, RCV has proven to yield more elected officials from historically underrepresented communities. RCV allows candidates to run without fear of being eliminated in a low-turnout primary, as well as the opportunity to garner votes from voters who are no longer afraid of splitting or wasting their vote.

Hear voices from from communities of color, both candidates and voters, on how RCV helps expand electoral power in their communities in post-election video testimony [here](#).

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting favors one party over another.

Ranked Choice Voting doesn't favor any political party; it simply ensures that outcomes reflect the will of the majority of voters. Fundamentally, RCV is about increasing the range of viable choices for voters by eliminating the fear of spoiler candidates, regardless of party affiliation. That's just good, smart democracy. Furthermore, political leaders from all parties have endorsed RCV. Utah, a Republican state, passed RCV legislation in 2018 enabling cities to use RCV, and Maine, a state known for its large number of independent voters, adopted and started using RCV that same year.

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting means too many candidates will run.

No, only in very rare cases. This issue is raised because of the large number of candidates on the 2013 ballot for Minneapolis mayor which was a result of the first competitive open mayoral race in 12 years coupled with no party endorsements and a very low filing fee for a city as large as Minneapolis. The city has since implemented a requirement to collect a minimum number of signatures or pay a higher filing fee, similar to St. Paul, so voters likely won't see such a long ballot again. In 2017, the number of candidates was half that in 2013 and similar to a typical competitive primary for mayor in Minneapolis, the largest local election in Minnesota. This is not the case in any other city in Minnesota. In mayoral and council races, the number of candidates running in an open or competitive race is typically between three and five.

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting favors incumbents or Ranked Choice Voting favors challengers.

We hear both arguments. The truth is Ranked Choice Voting does not favor incumbents or challengers. It favors candidates who make an effort to talk to more voters, actively reach out beyond their base for second- and third- choice support and, ultimately, who appeal to the broadest number of voters.

A research paper from Utah State University examining the 2013 Minneapolis RCV election found no evidence that RCV supports incumbent candidates. Three of the nine incumbents seeking reelection lost their races. Similarly, in the St. Louis Park at-large City Council race last year, the incumbent came in

third. By eliminating the primary, RCV lowers barriers for entry and opens up the opportunity for new voices and candidates to enter the race and win. If the incumbent is strong, that candidate is unlikely to garner a strong challenger just like now. If the incumbent is not very strong, the race may draw challengers and one of them may win. These political dynamics are the same under any voting system.

Myth: Ranked Choice Voting results in winners who are everyone's second choice.

This is not possible. Candidates must have strong first-choice support to move on to the next round. If a candidate gets few first choices, that candidate will be eliminated and not be able to return even if he was the second choice on many voters' ballots.

Myth: You can harm your candidate by ranking them first, or RCV can be manipulated.

Prepare to go down the rabbit hole! If a candidate had perfect information about how everyone would vote, AND was able to coordinate a precise number of their own supporters to vote for less popular candidates, it is theoretically possible they could eliminate a stronger opponent in the primary stage of our current voting system and in a RCV election. However, elections simply don't work this way - candidates don't know exactly what the vote totals will be and it would be dumb to tell your supporters to attempt this strategy. Also, this scenario is more likely in our current system, since there would be more opportunity to coordinate this scheme over 2 separate voting days than on a single ranked ballot. It's mathematically possible, but impossible in the real world.

Some cities have rejected Ranked Choice Voting. Why should we adopt it?

While some jurisdictions may have repealed Ranked Choice Voting when anti-democratic forces were threatened by its success (among them Ann Arbor, Michigan, following the election of the city's first African American mayor, and Burlington, Vermont, following the election of a Reform Party candidate), momentum is on the side of RCV because it is a people-powered reform and has proven to be so successful and popular with voters.

As described above, Minnesota's two largest cities and suburban St. Louis Park have successfully used RCV, and polling shows that voters find it easy to use and prefer it over the old system. Moreover, RCV use across the country is expanding with several cities adopting this pro-voter system every year, and many states advancing ballot measures and legislation for use of RCV in state elections.