

**Minnetonka Charter Commission
Resolution No. 2020-01**

Resolution rejecting Ordinance No. 2020-12

Be it resolved by the Charter Commission of the City of Minnetonka, Minnesota as follows:

Section 1. Background.

- 1.01. On June 8, 2020, the Minnetonka city council adopted Ordinance No. 2020-12, "An Ordinance amending sections 2.06 and 4.02 of the Minnetonka City Charter, regarding elections; requiring use of ranked choice voting; eliminating use of primary elections," and submitted the ordinance to the charter commission for review, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 410.12, subd. 5.
- 1.02. Under Minn. Stat. § 410.12, subd. 5, the commission has 60 days, or until Aug. 7, 2020, to review the proposed charter amendment and accept, reject, or propose an amendment to the city council.
- 1.03. The commission has made extraordinary efforts to conduct its review during the COVID-19 pandemic and within the 60-day review period, by meeting twice during the month of June and four times during the month of July. As part of its review, the commission heard from: advocates and opponents of ranked choice voting; public elections officials from the State of Minnesota, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis; and numerous residents. The commission conducted a review of scholarly articles, surveys and hundreds of pages of information regarding ranked choice voting.
- 1.04. Minnetonka has a long history of making major decisions after thoughtful evaluation of the pros and cons of the action and after a robust community engagement process. Accordingly, consideration of changes to the city charter should be thorough and thoughtful, not rushed.

Section 2. Commission Findings.

2.01. As a result of its detailed study, the commission makes the following findings:

- a. The city, state and nation are under a state of emergency due to an international health pandemic. The health pandemic has prevented the commission from meeting in person and has prevented members of the public from attending commission meetings in person. The pandemic has prevented the commission from engaging in meaningful opportunities to engage residents in face-to-face conversations, either formally through public meetings or informally through encounters with residents in local gathering places or city events. To offer a charter amendment to the public without full public discussion and without a single in-person public meeting is not acceptable and has never occurred in Minnetonka.
- b. Ranked choice voting is relatively new to Minnesota. It is currently in use in only three cities – two of which (Minneapolis and St. Paul) are many times the size of Minnetonka and they often have contentious political election contests. St. Louis Park is comparable in size to Minnetonka, but it has only held one election using ranked choice voting; there is an inadequate track record to

show that ranked choice voting would benefit a city of Minnetonka's size. Some cities, including Duluth, have rejected ranked choice voting.

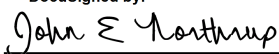
- c. Even with the removal of primary elections, implementation of ranked choice voting will increase, not reduce, city election costs. According to conservative estimates by city staff, implementation of ranked choice voting is likely to increase annual election costs by \$67,853 to \$106,063, not including additional costs for voter outreach.
- d. There is no election equipment certified for use in Minnesota that will automatically tabulate the results of a ranked choice election beyond the initial round of voting. Unless a candidate wins a majority of votes cast in the initial round, votes must be tabulated manually by elections staff. Manual tabulation requires additional staff time, and therefore increases elections costs. Manual tabulation is time consuming and likely to result in delays in determining the winning candidate. Most importantly, manual tabulation of votes is not easily explained to voters. It is not a transparent process of counting votes.
- e. There is no credible evidence to support the claim that ranked choice voting consistently increases voter turnout. Voter turnout is more influenced by competitive races, voter communication and education, and particular issues of interest to voters, rather than the voting system in use.
- f. There is some evidence that ranked choice voting may result in a greater number of candidates for open seats. However, it is not certain if ranked choice voting is a major reason for this increase.
- g. Ranked choice voting encourages single issue candidates to run. The use of ranked choice voting has become politicized and may result in candidates who are more likely to be aligned with political parties, which runs counter to Minnetonka's long tradition of non-partisan elections.
- h. Ranked choice voting can result in exhausted ballots that are excluded from the final ballot count that results in the winning candidate. Any voter who elects to vote for only their preferred candidate risks having their ballot eliminated by ballot exhaustion. Similarly, even if a voter ranks three different candidates, the voter's ballot may be exhausted if there are more than three candidates running. This situation is not comparable to a voter whose candidate loses in a primary election. In ranked choice voting, the voter must predict what candidates may be eliminated and determine how the remaining candidates might compare; the voter is deprived of the opportunity to decide between directly competing candidates after the initial round of ranked choice voting.
- i. If the city is going to make a fundamental change to its election system, the issue should be put to the voters, but only after an adequate opportunity to inform the voters of the issues and potential impacts of the change. This is not that time. As a result of the pandemic, the city communications efforts are heavily reliant on social media, but social media engages only a portion of the city's residents. The *Minnetonka Memo* is the single source upon which most residents rely for information about the city, but there has not been a single

article in the *Memo* to lay out the pros and cons of the proposed use of ranked choice voting.

Section 3. Commission Action.

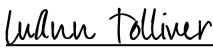
- 3.01. The commission hereby rejects the charter amendment proposed by the Minnetonka City Council in Ordinance No. 2020-12.
- 3.02. The commission respectfully requests that the city council formally rescind Ordinance No. 2020-12.
- 3.03. The commission is willing to work with the city council in developing a schedule under which the issue of ranked choice voting could be submitted to the voters in the future, after voters have had multiple opportunities to participate in in-person meetings, to learn about ranked choice voting, and to cast their ballots without the chilling effect of a health pandemic.
- 3.04. The city attorney is directed to file a copy of this resolution with the city clerk immediately.

Adopted by the Charter Commission of the City of Minnetonka, Minnesota, on July, 28, 2020.

DocuSigned by:


 John Northrup, Chair

Attest:

DocuSigned by:


 LuAnn Tolliver, Secretary

Action on this resolution:

Motion for adoption: Anderson
 Seconded by: Larson
 Voted in favor of: Allendorf-Anderson-Cheleen-Larson-Schneider-Tolliver-Wiersum-Northrup
 Voted against: Sodergren
 Abstained: None
 Absent: None
 Resolution adopted.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Minnetonka Charter Commission at a meeting held on _____, 2020, the original of which was filed with the city clerk on _____ 2020.

Becky Koosman, City Clerk