



**MINUTES OF THE
MINNETONKA CHARTER COMMISSION**

July 14, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL:

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

Members absent: None.

3. APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 7, 2020 MEETING

Tolliver requested a change on page 6, regarding the comment about increased costs of voter education. Allendorf requested a change at page 3, regarding his opinion that more people running does not mean that there are better candidates. Anderson moved, Sodergren seconded, to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2020 meeting, as revised.

By roll call vote, all voted in favor.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY: HEAR FRM THE PUBLIC REGARDING RANKED CHOICE VOTING

Northrup summarized the work that the commission has done so far. The commission will hear from members of the public this evening.

Sodergren noted that the commission had received written comments from a number of people and thanked everyone for sharing their comments.

Paula Ramaley said she is a fourth-generation resident of Minnetonka. She was shocked by the 4% turnout for primaries and 15% for general elections. After doing a lot of research, she found that ranked choice voting would ensure diversity of candidates and allows voters to evaluate a lot of ideas and candidates, She thinks the greatest benefit of RCV would be diversity of viewpoints and ideas.

Ben Gozola indicated that he had been on the Robbinsdale charter commission. He said RCV is not the latest flavor of the month but that a ground swell of residents asked the council to consider it. Based on the city survey, 56% of residents favor RCV.

Regardless of where commissioners stand personally on the issue, they should let the voters decide in November. There are four months to get the word out to voters. The positives are the elimination of primaries; it is not a complicated system; it promotes civility.

Jonathon Wiese said he is in favor of RCV. He is a 20-year resident. He uses ranked choice voting in business. RCV allows robust conversation. The more choices there are, the more interested voters are. It is a community building opportunity.

Kim Gohman supports RCV because it empowers candidates to choose the candidate they want and not just the safe choice. RCV helps diversify the field of candidates. RCV allows more than two candidates to run without fear of splitting the like-minded votes. RCV makes democracy more fair and functional. Minnetonka voters should have the opportunity to choose RCV.

Judy Melinate is in favor of RCV. She agreed with Ms. Gohman's comments.

Sandy Johnson lives at 12201 Minnetonka Boulevard. She's lived in Minnetonka for three years. She previously lived in St. Louis Park, which she considers a very progressive city. In St. Louis Park, the city council chose RCV and it did not go to the voters. She sees RCV as a tool in order to help Minnetonka become more progressive. It is critical for the issue to go on the ballot in November.

Ben Wilinski is an eight-year resident of Minnetonka. He is strongly in favor of putting the issue on the ballot in November. Primaries are a waste of time and money when so few voters participate. RCV would solve that problem.

Marc Jaffe is a 10-year resident of Minnetonka. He is in favor of RCV and would like to see it on the ballot.

Ann Deuring lives at 17149 Chiltern Hills Road. She spoke in favor of RCV. Subsequent to the meeting, she emailed in her comments for the record. Her email has been added to the addendum for the July 7, 2020 meeting.

Bryana French said that RCV is better for marginalized communities. She identifies as black and LGBT. She moved from Minneapolis, where she voted in an RCV election. With RCV, every vote counts and it would help reduce voter apathy. Data shows that RCV increases voter turnout.

Clarence Richard. Minnetonka is a leader among cities. He begged the commission to bring the issue to voters in November. We are losing our democracy. He sees a

systemic problem in our democratic process. It can be fixed, but it needs a level playing field.

Lu Bjornay said many people are like her and get sick of ads by the time voting comes around. Voters tend to vote for who can win, not those that they actually favor. RCV gives more choices. She is an election judge and has seen the low voter turnout. RCV can eliminate the primary and be overall lower cost. In Minneapolis, they had an increase in voters of 43%. She hopes Minnetonka can vote on RCV in the fall.

Paul Gilles has been a resident for 12 years. He is very against RCV. He doesn't see low voter turnout as a problem. If people don't want to vote, that is their choice. He sees RCV as a solution in search of a problem.

Joe Jacobs has been a resident for about 10 years. He has noticed low voter turnout and it bothered him. He spurred him to become more active. Voting is the personal responsibility of the citizenry. RCV concerns him because the election system has worked for years. RCV is not going to solve polarization. Polarization is not caused by the election system. Most people are so uninformed about candidates that they won't rank all of the candidates, and it results in ballot exhaustion. If the city wants to increase participation, it needs a more educated electorate, not RCV.

Rickey Brown has been a resident for 33 years. He supports RCV. It promotes a majority of support for the winning candidate. It results in more candidates and promotes diversity. Voters can support an outside candidate without worrying about wasting their ballots. RCV can cut costs by eliminating primaries. The council should provide education so that voters understand how RCV works.

Jennifer Johnson has lived in Minnetonka for 20 years. She supports RCV. She agrees that the results of the election are more valid because the results are more reflective of what voters want. Having more choices would make voters more engaged. She would like to see RCV on the ballot.

Diana Klein is a lifelong resident of Minnetonka. She is in favor of RCV and would like to see it on the ballot in November. RCV ensures that the winning candidate has a majority of support. She finds RCV simple to understand. Studies show there are statistically few errors on RCV ballots.

Linda Halley said she and her husband live on Clear View Drive. She spoke in favor of RCV. Subsequent to the meeting, she emailed her comments for the record. Her email has been added to the addendum for the July 7, 2020 meeting.

Chris Barry lives in Glen Lake in Minnetonka. He has lived in Minnetonka for 21 years. He is in favor of RCV. His main focus is in increasing voter participation and in engaging younger voters. He believes RCV will increase awareness of voting in the community and increase choices. The current system is a zero sum game and discourages people from voting.

Sarah Brandt has lived in Minnetonka 45 years and has been an election judge. She favors doing away with primary elections. She has noticed that those against RCV oppose the mechanics of the election. She looks forward to having more conversation and engagement in elections.

David Teigland has lived in Minnetonka for four years. He has served as an election judge in Minneapolis. He saw fewer spoiled ballots and a minimum of questions. He is in favor of Minnetonka adopting RCV.

David Haeg said that he started the conversation about RCV about two years ago. He talked with a FairVote representative. That got him thinking. He saw that most of the council members had either been appointed or had won with less than a majority of the vote. He started networking with neighbors. It took over a year to get the council to hold a study session. This is a grass roots, community funded effort. Most of the work has been done by volunteers. He is only asking for it to be put on the ballot to give voters a choice.

Anderson commended Haeg for the organizing he had done. She said that the commission had received many emails. Thirty of the emails were identical and came from everyactionadvocacy.com. When one of the everyactionadvocacy.com email senders received a thank-you email from a commissioner, the resident said that she had not sent the email and knew nothing about it. She questioned the validity of the 30 emails. Haeg said that he uses tools to organize people. He sends an email to people who have asked to be updated. Every email came from someone who used that tool.

Jen Bouchard is a fourth-generation Minnetonka resident. She is on the Hopkins School Board. She's seen Minnetonka evolve into a diverse community and she sees RCV as a further evolution. She's been following the commission's work. She favors RCV because it will foster inclusiveness, is cost-effective, and promotes majority support. The recent survey showed that residents approved RCV by a three-to-one margin. She would like the voters to have the ability to decide.

Bill Sorem has lived in Minnetonka for 25 years and has been an election judge. He is in favor of putting RCV on the ballot. He had been at one primary where only three voters showed up at the precinct.

Jeanne Lutgen lives at 6085 Rowland Road and has lived in Minnetonka 35 years. She has also been an election judge. She is in favor of putting RCV on the ballot. Candidates who have less resources and name recognition may be more likely to stay in a race if they can campaign until November. Low voter turnout is a problem. RCV will create more candidates and more interest in the community. Voters should be able to decide this issue.

Kevin Lattery has lived in Minnetonka for 17 years. He is strongly in favor of RCV. Ms. Gohman covered most of his points. One of the greatest problems the nation faces is divisiveness. RCV gives good candidates a better chance of winning without political endorsement. The local level is a great place to start with RCV.

The city attorney read into the record comments from Kathryn McCullum and Sandy Jambeck. Their written comments have been added to the July 7 meeting addendum.

Amy Morsman is in agreement with most of the people who called in. She doesn't see this as a liberal or conservative issue. The city should want a higher participation rate. Primaries knock out a lot of candidates before the voters have been able to hear their ideas. She hopes to see RCV on the ballot in the fall.

Julie Johnson has lived in Minnetonka over 20 years. This conversation has been going on a long time. It is important to get the issue on the November ballot so that the city can hear from the most voters.

Mary Blake lives in Ward 4 and is part of a fourth-generation Minnetonka family. She spoke in favor of RCV. Subsequent to the meeting, she emailed in her comments for the record. Her email has been added to the addendum for the July 7, 2020 meeting.

Barb Westmoreland is a lifelong Minnetonka resident. She spoke in favor of RCV. Subsequent to the meeting, she emailed in her comments for the record. Her email has been added to the addendum for the July 7, 2020 meeting.

5. COMMISSION DISCUSSION OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

The commission did not have any discussion.

6. FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Northrup said that at the next meeting the commission will discuss the report to the city council, the structure of that report, and possibly the ordinance. The July 28 meeting will be to refine the report and vote on what to send to the city council.

Cheleen commented that the chair had done a fantastic job of handling the public comment.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Allendorf moved, Tolliver seconded, to adjourn the meeting. By roll call voted, all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

LuAnn Tolliver
Secretary