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The Charter Review Committee met five times beginning in December 2021 to consider amendments to municipal charter of the City of Punta Gorda in accordance with Article XVI of the Charter. At each of its meetings the Committee invited and received public comment as to potential changes to the Charter and consideration of proposals under review. While most of the changes recommended herein were arrived at through discussions initiated between the Committee members themselves, some of the most far reaching recommendations, including changing from two to four year terms, came from public input (such as the change in election dates and terms of office). The Committee considered many variations on local governance in the frameworks of other communities along with past Committee recommendations. Ultimately, our Committee found that the current council-manager form and existing foundation of Punta Gorda's Charter remained solid and did not warrant significant alteration.

The Committee settled on four amendments to be put forth in November to the electors of the City. The first and most significant recommendation was to change the terms of office for councilmembers from two to four years. It was felt that longer terms would allow councilmembers to see the results of their policy implementation and allow the Council to operate with more consistency and with a longer vision. While the current two-year cycle does keep members highly accountable, the public may similarly be overly reactionary to half-implemented policies and the nearly continuous cycle of elections with new members may also prevent the Council from focusing on the long game.

A corollary amendment also emerged out of the discussions on term length, which was to consider revising the date and staggering of elections. The City currently holds its elections in November every year, however in odd year elections when there are no national, state or county-wide elections, the City elections experience a significant drop in voter turnout and at greater expense to the City taxpayers. Because of the higher turnout associated with presidential and gubernatorial elections, as well as the savings achieved by conjunction with the general elections, the Committee recommends shifting the City's election to an even-year schedule beginning in 2022. To effectuate this change smoothly, the recommendation also comes with a one-time term extension for existing councilmembers for Districts 3 and 5 of one year. To avoid confusion in the outcome of a split vote but unfortunately adding some confusion to the ballot question it was determined that both the term extension and the even-year election cycle should constitute a single ballot item.

The second referendum item for consideration is mayoral and councilmember salaries. After thoughtful consideration and review of similarly sized communities the Committee is recommending an increase in the salaries of the mayor and council to 35% and 30%, respectively, of the salaries of the County Commissioners set by statute. While this represents a significant

increase, complexity of the role and time commitments of the elected members have similarly increased in the six years since the last increase. Moreover, the Committee's recommendation to move to four years also means that prospective councilmembers are being asked to make a more substantial commitment than in years past. The new salaries would be \$22,000 for councilmembers and \$25,500 for mayor.

The third and last substantial referendum item for electoral consideration is to have the local county canvassing board canvass the City's election results. Given the proposed change to even-year elections, the City would be able to take advantage of the Supervisor of Election's certification of the general election without need to separately canvass results. In the event of a municipal only special election, the City's canvassing board would approve election results. However, under the latter circumstance the Committee has recommended replacing the City Manager with the Supervisor or their deputy along with the Mayor and City Clerk to act as the local canvassing board.

The remaining changes contained in the final ballot question below are all non-substantive grammar, conflicting, or other clarifying changes requested by the City Clerk to resolve issues which could lead to confusion in the Charter.

In addition to the four aforementioned ballot questions the Committee further recommends that the City Council take up and consider two additional matters that were raised during our review. First, the Committee recommends that the City Council explore developing further local incentives and set aside additional funds to relocate and preserve historical structures within the City's designated historic zones, including ad valorem tax exemptions pursuant to Section 196.1961, Florida Statutes. Second, the Committee recommends that the City consider the implementation of a local economic development incentives to attract investment and employment within the City in support of the Council's present efforts to diversify the City's tax base through proposed land use changes. Specifically, we recommend the Council place an economic development ad valorem exemption ballot question before the City electors, pursuant to Section 196.1995, Florida Statutes, in conjunction with this Committee's proposed Charter amendments this November. While neither of these matters necessarily conformed to the framework of the City Charter, both were considered of great important to the Committee. It is our collective recommendation that the City Council adopt the necessary ordinances to implement such initiatives after due consideration of the policy merits.

The Charter Review Committee would like to thank the Mayor, City Manager, City Attorney, and most especially the City Clerk's Office for their assistance to the Committee.

CHARTER AMENDMENT ONE
FOUR YEAR TERMS AND ELECTION DATE CHANGE

Shall Article III, Section 2 of the Charter be amended from two to four year terms for newly elected Councilmembers and, if approved, to also amend Article IX, Section 1 to move the date of City elections to coincide with the even-numbered year countywide, statewide and national elections? This change will require a one-time one-year term extension for existing councilmembers in District 3 and 5 till November 2024.

YES

NO

ARTICLE III. FORM OF GOVERNMENT; COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL; ITS POWER AND DUTIES

Section 2. Number; selection; term.

The Council shall consist of five (5) members who shall reside one in each of five (5) City Council districts, the districts together covering the entire City, and as nearly equal in population as practicable; and each Councilmember shall be elected by the qualified electors of the City at large. Within one (1) year after each decennial census is certified by the Census Bureau, the Council shall divide the City into districts of contiguous territory as nearly equal in population as practicable.

All Councilmembers shall be elected for ~~four~~two-year terms which shall be staggered so that alternatively, one more or one less than half of the Councilmembers shall be elected every two years.

ARTICLE IX. ELECTIONS

Section 1. Date of elections.

General municipal elections shall be held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of every ~~even-numbered~~ year in which elections are called for by this Charter beginning in November 2022. The implementation of this change in election years shall require a one-time term extension for current elected councilpersons in Districts 3 and 5 until November 2024. If more than two candidates qualify for office, a primary shall be held pursuant to State Election Laws. The two candidates receiving the highest number of votes in the primary election for a particular Council seat shall be declared candidates for said Council seat and run in the general municipal election. Councilmembers elected by these elections shall take office on the next regularly scheduled Council meeting following certification of the results of these elections.

CHARTER AMENDMENT TWO
ADJUST COUNCIL COMPENSATION

Shall Article III, Section 4, of the Charter be amended to adjust the salaries of the City Council to equal thirty percent of Charlotte County Commissioner salaries and thirty-five percent for Mayor?

YES
NO

ARTICLE III. FORM OF GOVERNMENT; COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL; ITS POWER AND DUTIES

Section 4. Salary.

The salary of Councilmembers shall be equal to ~~3020~~3522.5% of the salary of Charlotte County Commissioners and the salary of the Mayor shall be equal to ~~3522.5~~% of the salary of Charlotte County Commissioners which is determined by the State legislature.

CHARTER AMENDMENT THREE
CANVASS OF RETURNS

Shall Article IX, Section 3, of the Charter be amended to have City elections which coincide with countywide, state, or federal elections locally certified in the same manner as county, state, and national elections? Also approving a change for special City-only elections to be certified by a canvassing board of the Mayor, Supervisor of Elections, and City Clerk. This amendment presumes but does not require approval of Charter amendment question one.

YES
NO

ARTICLE IX. ELECTIONS

Section 3. Canvass of returns.

When municipal elections coincide with any statewide or countywide election the county canvassing board shall canvass and certify City elections. The City's canvassing board shall canvass and certify any municipal only election which shall in such instances consist of the Mayor, the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections or their deputy,~~City Manager~~ and the City Clerk, who shall act as the chair. In the event any member of the canvassing board is unable to serve, is a candidate who has opposition in the election being canvassed, or is an active participant in the campaign or candidacy of any candidate who has opposition in the election being canvassed, such member shall be replaced by the Council with a City elector~~person~~ who is able to serve, is not a candidate, and is not an active participant in the election. For municipal

~~elections which are not certified by the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections~~ The results of the voting, when ascertained, shall be certified and signed by the City Clerk and shall be delivered by the City Clerk to the canvassing board at a meeting to be held on the day following the election. At such meeting the canvassing board shall canvass the returns, and the result as shown by such returns shall be declared to be the result of election. The City Clerk shall, not later than noon of the second day after the canvassing board declares the result, furnish a certificate of election to each person shown to have been elected.

CHARTER AMENDMENT FOUR **NON-SUBSTANTIVE CORRECTIONS**

Shall Article I, Section 1, Article III, Section 7, Article XVI, and Article XVII, Section 6, of the Charter be amended to remove misleading, obsolete, and internally conflicting language. These non-substantive provisions have been identified historically or by the City Clerk as necessary to clarify the Charter.

YES

NO

ARTICLE I. ESTABLISHMENT

Section 1. Charter amended and revised.

Be it enacted by the people of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, that the existing City Charter of the City of Punta Gorda filed in the Office of Secretary of State of Florida upon November 30, 1996 (Ordinance No. 1196-96) be and it is hereby amended and revised and, as so amended and revised, shall, from the effective date hereof, be and constitute the Charter of said City unless so amended pursuant to Section XVI~~I~~ herein

ARTICLE III. FORM OF GOVERNMENT; COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL; ITS POWER AND DUTIES

Section 7. ~~Induction of Councilmember into office; m~~Meeting of the Council.

~~The first regular meeting of the Council following a City election shall be termed the organizational meeting, at which newly elected members shall be inducted into office.~~ The Council shall meet regularly at such times as may be prescribed by its rules or resolution but not less frequently than twenty-two (22) times per year and not less than once per month. Except as otherwise permitted by law, all meetings of the Council shall be open to the public. The Mayor, any member of the Council, or the City Manager may call special meetings of the Council upon at least twenty-four (24) hours' notice to each member, and proof of such notice or attempted notice shall be filed at the called meeting. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the notice.

ARTICLE XVI. CHARTER REVIEW ~~COMMITTEE~~

ARTICLE XVII. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 6. Oath of office.

Every officer of the City shall, before entering upon the duties of his or her office, take and subscribe to the following oath or affirmation; ~~to be filed and kept in the office of the City Clerk:~~