

# Charter for Change

## Seeking a Just, Safe, Well Managed City

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### What is the Minneapolis City Charter and why does it exist?

- In Minnesota, local city governments are created by the state and only have the limited powers conferred by state statute or implied to carry out these powers. The limited exception to this rule in Minnesota is the *home rule* city (an 1896 amendment to the state constitution). As long as it is consistent with state law, a home rule city can create its own constitution, called a charter, and claim greater powers to structure its government and ordinances, and amend these without state authorization.
- Minneapolis is a home rule city and has a charter that:
  - Defines the powers and authority of the city government granted by the people;
  - Prescribes the city's operating structure and its officers, including their number, qualifications, manner of election or appointment, and duties;
  - Specifies how official actions and decisions are made, implemented and enforced; and
  - Can only be amended by a vote of the people or unanimous approval of the Council, mayor, and Charter Commission

### Why is there a Charter Commission and what does it do?

- To create a home rule charter, the first step is the appointment of a charter commission responsible for drafting the original charter and submitting it to the voters. Once the charter is adopted, the charter commission becomes a permanent body, analogous to a standing constitutional convention.
- Despite wanting home rule, Minneapolis voters were unable to agree on a charter until 1920, after being urged by the Minnesota Legislature to compile into its home rule charter all laws for first class cities, all general statutes for municipalities, and all special laws affecting Minneapolis. This was approved by the voters and has been amended numerous times over the past 100 years, which helps to explain why Minneapolis has one of the most complex and unorthodox city structures in the U.S.

### Who are the members of the Minneapolis Charter Commission?

- There are fifteen (15) seats on the Minneapolis Charter Commission, and members are appointed to four-year terms by the chief judge of the district court of Hennepin County.
- Members must be residents of Minneapolis and current members represent the gender, racial and geographic diversity of our city.
- Members are from eleven different wards of the city (Wards 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13).
- Seven members are women, eight members are men; four members are people of color.