

DRAFT AUGUST 4, 2020

Minneapolis Charter Commission

Compilation of Public Comments

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PLACING AMENDMENT ON NOVEMBER BALLOT

***NOTE:** The large majority of the comments in support of the amendment simply urge us not to delay the process and, instead, to take timely action to ensure that the voters have an opportunity to exercise their right to vote on it. There was relatively little comment about the substance of the amendment; rather, the concern was simply that reform of the police department is urgent, the ballot question is the democratic way, we cannot afford to wait a year, and that the amendment is the way to start the conversation about police reform or, for many, dismantling.*

1. Shifting of supervisory power to the City Council

The amendment will increase the City Council's freedom to move to a new model.

The Charter does not allow for change and accountability.

The City Council is more representative than the Mayor.

2. Creation of New Department

While there are problems with the vagueness of the amendment and with the Council's lack of coordination with others who have been researching this topic for years, the amendment moves us in the right direction.

Systemic change must start with the Charter amendment.

Change will not be immediate; the new model will be "thoughtful and strategic."

This is an opportunity to be at the forefront of visionary models of public safety.

This is an opportunity to build something entirely new.

Make Minneapolis a shining example.

Four mayors have pledged reform; police chiefs the same. Twenty five years of promises have not been kept. Incremental change is failing, and the result has been trauma and death. Make room to reimagine with the community.

I look forward to "a future of reconciliation, healing and a community-led response to public safety."

Delighted to see focus on public health. Public health initiatives are often overlooked and can achieve long term effects. We still need police officers, too, though. But this idea is promising.

At times, police are called upon to do jobs outside the scope of their training.

3. Position of Chief of Police

[No comments refer to the Police Chief.]

4. Hiring of or numbers of licensed law enforcement officers at the discretion of the City Council

We must eliminate the police all together.

People are sick and tired of the abuse of power by the police department. Over and over the MPD has shown itself to be un-reformable and unaccountable. Do not delay change.

The MPD will not be dismantled overnight. There will be a thoughtful transition.

Disbanding has proven to be successful in places like Camden, New Jersey.

A restructuring will permit the police to concentrate on the real crime work for which they are trained.

5. Fears for Safety

The MPD has failed to keep all members of our community safe. Help our community move to new methods of community safety.

The current system has failed. We need a different structure for the safety of all.

Children deserve to live where they can feel safe and valued.

The police have abandoned us.

This is the first time I have been able to imagine safety in my lifetime since I was born as a black person. Let future generations know you were thinking of them.

6. “Good cops/bad cops”

[No comments on this theme.]

7. The Process

George Floyd's murder was the last straw. A "yes" vote will allow serious conversations to occur.

The ballot fast tracks a public and democratic process, which is key. The new concept of Community Safety is also key.

The City Council's expedited process was for "extraordinary circumstances."

The counterpoint to the concern the process is too rushed is the opposite, that speed is vitally important when the spotlight is on Minneapolis for awful racial disparities and other such issues. We really do have time: it is four months to November.

Despite lots of questions, people should vote "yes."

Apparently, we are finally ready to act/ready for historic change. "Defend black life!"

The people of Minneapolis should have the ability to influence how we are policed.

The amendment will allow the one year process to take place.

We cannot wait a year. A delay will lead to collective uncertainty and unrest.

Getting the amendment on the November ballot is urgent because the turnout for the 2020 election will be high. It is a golden opportunity because the community is engaged.

If we cannot vote in November, it will be a "discouraging signal" that "once again, Minneapolis is unwilling to grapple with a tough problem."

"All eyes are on us."

We have a right to have a say. We deserve the opportunity to vote. "I am ready to vote." Just "do your job" and let us vote.

Because this issue is so complex and people's views differ, putting it on the ballot is a good test; it is the only way to assess the peoples' will. Otherwise, the loudest voices may overrule the majority.

This is the most public engagement ever for a charter change. If there is doubt about how much support for it there is, the vote will tell us.

You are unelected and unaccountable.

8. The Need for Charter change to facilitate reform

We can't have community engagement without Charter change.

We can't enact the vision/"reimagine" without Charter change.

The city cannot plan unless we can vote.

Dissatisfaction with the MPD is loud and clear.

We took to the streets to demand change. We are tired of fear and targeting.

The City needs to make good on its promises in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

The MPD is unreformable. Past reform efforts have not worked.

Incremental reform has not worked.

Reforms were promised fifteen years ago after Dominic Felder's death, and nothing has happened.

Disband the MPD.

Stop Bob Kroll, settlements and systemic racism.

One bad apple spoils the whole bunch.

The amendment offers flexibility.

The amendment is only the first step.

The amendment is "weak soup" but is essential. Reforms in the past year have changed nothing.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of good.

Changing the Charter would not necessarily require dismantling the police department or demoting the Police Chief. It would simply provide needed flexibility to reform the department.

Maybe this amendment will make Minneapolis "the haven of diversity it aspires to be."

Let us vote to decide what kind of system will keep us safe and let us heal.

This is the first step in the process. We need to redirect resources to public housing, social services, etc. The city needs to understand the root causes of crime.

A delay in placing the question on the ballot would constitute a pocket veto by an unelected body, not consistent with the Charter Commission's values of good governance.

Respect the City Council's "unanimous" vote.

"For too long, the city Charter has prohibited public oversight over the MPD and blocked commonsense solutions for community safety."

This may be the tipping point toward palpable change. Look at the big picture.

9. Suggested Substitute Amendments

You should endorse the 2018 proposal.

You should work with MPD150 or other such groups to draft better language.

Abolish the police.

10. Other Suggestions

American Indian Movement could be in charge of security for the city.

We need stronger language.

There should be community-appointed boards in each ward to oversee police discipline, residency requirement.

The experience requirement for the new director should be better defined, including a mission and goals.

The Charter Commission should be an elected body.

Let police officers continue to pursue part time work, but their performance in that work should be part of their evaluations. Misconduct off duty is relevant to the assessment of work performance.

The Charter Commission is responsible for educating the public about what it means, that it does not mean defund the police.

**COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO PLACING AMENDMENT ON NOVEMBER
BALLOT**

NOTE: *Comments in opposition to Amendment are universally in favor of reform and see it as urgent, but, at the same time, are not in favor of the proposed Amendment.*

Four major themes are: (1) the lack of detail or plan and consequently the concern about an uninformed vote or being left in a vacuum; (2) the better alternative is to have the year-long process before a vote; (3) the fear of the consequences of a lack of police protection; and (4) the lack of opportunity for community input to date. People also expressed support for Chief Arradondo and for giving him a chance to lead a reform process and expressed skepticism about the shifting of power to the City Council.

1. Shifting of supervisory power to the City Council

“Fourteen bosses are too many” and diminishes and muddles, not increases accountability and transparency.

It is irresponsible to have the police force effectively reporting to thirteen or fourteen people – who are, historically, in perpetual disagreement with each other. This would risk politicization of the department, and in any event would simple be bad management; no one would be in charge of public safety.

Allowing a thirteen-member body to oversee MPD is a mistake. Particularly with the group currently in office. This is not what the majority wants.

Diffused oversight can be no oversight.

Accountability is assumed and cannot be trusted; there is precedent to demonstrate why.

I can only vote out of office one of the fourteen and only once every four years.

This is a blank check to the City Council.

City leaders should be working together.

“Such an amendment will not make city leaders better leaders...”

Violates separation of powers which is one of the foundations of our democracy.

The City Council has done little to address structural racism in the past; why should we believe it will do so now?

The City Council has deprived city residents of input.

Do not weaken the Mayor. (Note: this was a focus of no more than a small handful of comments.)

Give the Mayor more power, not less.

The Charter is not a barrier, but, rather, it is a guarantee against arbitrary City Council actions.

Minneapolis knows what we do not want, but not what we do want. The amendment does not accomplish what we do not want. Please separate the two components.

The non-responses to the Charter Commission during the July 8 meeting show that the City Council needs a “thoughtful rebuke.”

2. Creation of New Department

Not well thought out; the details are unclear, vague or nonexistent, and there is no plan we can review before voting, no goals or data analysis. When asked repeatedly, “Where is this process going?”, the amendment sponsors replied, “We will find the answer later.”

I understand that details do not go into the Charter, “but color needs to be given to the rationale.”

“It fails the basic measures of good government: it lacks both specifics and accountability.” According to the Question and Answer section on the City’s website, the City Council conducted no legal, no fiscal impact nor a racial equity analysis.

I am against being forced to make an uninformed vote.

There is no budget attached so that we might know the cost.

We should not vote until we know what the replacement law enforcement agency will look like.

Our chance to have a say in the decision should come through our input.

We don’t need to pay for or support an experiment.

This whole process is too rushed, the changes too broad and sweeping without adequate study, first.

We should not be held hostage to an unclear vision. We should not be asked to vote on a *possible* strategy.

It makes more sense to have the “year-long” process, first, and then something to vote for.

The City could be making incremental changes while larger structural change is still in the planning stages.

The facts are that we need the Mayor to stay in command and control of the current MPD in order to examine the impact of labor agreements, state law and administrative law on the function of MPD and the retention and departure of more than 100 officers according to media reports. Let the public know what is going on and base decisions on evidence, not election cycles.

There are far too many factors that contribute to racism in this city. Drug addiction, for instance, is a big problem, and there is no plan to eliminate it.

It does not address the root causes of racism.

The job description for the new Director of the Department contains too much detail for a charter provision. It should not be so inflexible; things could change. When one reads the proposed amendment, there is nothing in it to support change. This is just a name change.

3. Position of Chief of Police

We support our current Chief and want to give him an opportunity to lead reform.

If there is an appointment for a new position, it will not be a public process as it has been under the current Charter and therefore less accountability.

All officers should have to reapply for their positions.

The Charter Commission should take the full time for review so that the Police Chief can develop a comprehensive plan, as urged by Nekima Levy Armstrong, Al Flowers, Lisa Clemons.

This shift would weaken the Mayor and Police Chief at the very time they are trying to implement essential reforms.

Rondo is an amazing leader. I recognize he won’t always be there, but it is reckless to take his power away now. Throwing him under the bus is typical of progressives stepping over a person of color.

4. Hiring of or number of licensed law enforcement officers at the whim of the City Council

Impact of labor laws not considered.

Defunding does not necessarily mean reform.

There is no commitment to any law enforcement. The language leaves room for zero licensed officers.

There is no plan to replace the current police department.

The Charter provision referring to lawful power of police officers is deleted, and there is nothing in the new text defining what “lawful power” the new “licensed peace officers” may exercise.

The word “may” leads to lack of stability.

:A disproportionately white population of folks who do not live in North Minneapolis (and never would) and non-Northsiders are behind dismantling the police.”

CAHOOTS is a great model, but 80 percent of the department is still police officers. Partnership *with* police officers is essential to the model.

5. Fears for Safety

The first duty of any government is to protect its citizens. The mere mention of defunding has initiated a free-for-all or crime.

This Amendment is dangerous. It will backfire in countless ways.

It is not only clear if a non-police officer response is enough. For example, domestic violence calls and mental health crises are often not controlled and safe.

Yes, we have been subject to the abuses of police, but we need their protection, too.

The police department is part of a vital network of first responders. Think of the 35W bridge collapse.

I do not see how the new structure will help.

Defund but do not abolish.

Crime is on the rise; the solution is new forms of policing, not defunding.

The Amendment will cause businesses and residents to move out of the City. Convention business will be lost.

Crime will be on the increase, as it has in recent weeks.

The Charter change will empower/embolden criminals.

Police need more funding, not less, because we do not have enough police officers. (Some commented on calls to 911 going unanswered, particularly in North Minneapolis.)

We are living in fear.

“We are not an experiment.”

“We’re not guinea pigs in a social experiment.”

“Where is the evidence that this decision is likely to lead to less violent crime?”

Though change is long overdue, experimenting with public safety is dangerous, and the most vulnerable will bear the brunt.

6. **“Good cops/bad cops”**

They just need better training and discipline.

We should support our good police officers. They are doing the best they can, but being short staffed leads to long delays in response to calls and other such problems. The majority are good and are being disrespected.

We need police, but we need better police.

A few bad police officers do not mean the whole department is bad.

We should not fix the problem by creating another one.

We just need to take power from the Police Federation/arbitrators.

Just limit the power of the police union and eliminate qualified immunity. In other words, we need a better police force, but not a vacuum.

7. **The Process**

We need to come together as a community, not become more divided.

The Amendment causes the City to remain splintered instead of bringing us together to effect deep and sustainable change.

The City Council’s drafting process was shrouded in secrecy and bypassed community input. Not enough information has been shared with the public.

Understand the impulse, but the City Council has an obligation not to just “do something.”

Don’t reward the lack of due diligence.

A short time line is a “bad way to make good public policy,” especially when public engagement is more difficult during summer months, generally, and now during the COVID crisis.

Remember the law of unintended consequences.

The City Council short circuited its usual and appropriate processes to expedite the amendment, thus short circuiting opportunity to the public for input before the amendment was essentially carved in stone.

There was a failure to seek community input, particularly from the black community. It is just a change of name; it retains the police federation.

The City Council has used words like “defund,” “abolish,” and “dismantle” and then backs off and says they do not really mean that, leaving unclear what they do mean.

This is all rhetoric without substance; it is confusing.

Saying “trust us, we’ll figure it out later” is unacceptable.

The Amendment is poorly written.

People can’t figure this out. Slow down.

The Amendment is premature.

There have been too many rash decisions lately.

Rushing the process means that long term consequences cannot be thought through. Drastic change not thought through first can have unintended consequences.

The process is opportunistic, a “cheap reelection gimmick,” a “kneejerk reaction.”

There is a moral obligation to stop this amendment dead in its tracks before more people are hurt and changes get baked into a long term horror.

The City Council has not earned our trust. For example: the 2020 Plan.

There is no guarantee the City Council and Mayor will not just return to business as usual; this is just a name change and creates a more convoluted structure.

Needed are goals and methods for measuring success, as part of a longer process. Need evaluation before moving to ballot.

We need more thoughtful design to close the biggest inequality gap in the U.S. The proposal is encouraging exit of employers, which will increase the inequality gap.

The City Council should listen to the community for a year, first, before acting.

The City Council should also listen to experts during that year.

“Please don’t continue a legacy of making decisions for black and brown people without seeking their input.”

The City Council shut down community input when it should be welcoming it.

We need real community control. Do it right.

The amendment politicizes the police department, impossibly.

It would be better for this amendment to be on the 2021 ballot when voters are focused on the municipal election.

A vote this year is not prudent. During a pandemic, street violence and damage, plus the lack of clarity about a replacement plan all mean it is not the time to make an extremely consequential decision. The 2021 ballot is a better option.

The whole point of charter change is not to do so without strong support. In this case, the Mayor, City Council and the City are split, so the strong support is missing.

8. No Need for Charter change to facilitate reform

Reform can occur without changing the Charter.

There is no justification for any action as significant as this; no need to amend the Charter. This proposal has distracted us for the proper questions. We are not having the right discussion. We should take our time and do it right.

The amendment has no actual reforms.

The City can just add the new department and funding for the public health related reforms without touching the Charter.

Having appropriate first responders for mental health crises, for example, is a good idea, but it doesn’t require Charter change. It would be better to explore the synergies with Hennepin County.

Implement the reforms already proposed by Attorney General Ellison’s task force or other groups.

The City Council could have made change, already, within the current system, and without compromising public safety.

The City Council has had many opportunities to fix the MPD.

Don’t burn bridges if you can’t swim!

9. Suggested Substitute Amendments

Add a charter provision that prohibits guns .

Defund the mayor and city council and replace with a city manager.

10. **Other Suggestions**

Form a task force representing the Mayor, City Council and community. Have weekly press conferences to discuss steps taken that week.

There should be community control of the police department and involvement of community groups such as CAIR and CUAPB.

CUAPB and Justice for Jamar have done the hard work.

Outsource police function to the county or a different police department. For instance, St. Paul Police Department would have to hire more officers but could hire just the good ones. No more outrageous settlements.

We should expand our partnership with Hennepin County and community based human services professionals to address the needs of citizens experiencing mental illness, homelessness and chemical dependency.

The amendment doesn't correlate with what we want: abolition.

Review and change the union contract to provide more authority to discipline and fire.

The money that will be spent on this campaign would be better spent on flipping the Senate and the White House.