

**Red Wing Charter Commission
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
August 28, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Terri Cook; Commissioners Thomas Drazkowski, Ryan Hanson, Michael Johnson, Carol Overland, Alan Quarnstrom, Charles Richardson, Ann Vogel, Mallory West, Min MartinOakes, Peggy Rehder, Janet Brandt, and Anne Robertson

Members Absent: Commissioners John Guerber and Chad Kono (excused absences)

Others Present: Melissa Hill, City Clerk / Staff Liaison; Abbi Kelzer, City Attorney; Chris Heineman, Council Administrator; Donald Kliwer, Council Liaison

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cook at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cook led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Chair Cook and Commissioners Brandt, Drazkowski, Hanson, Johnson, MartinOakes, Overland, Quarnstrom, Rehder, Richardson, Robertson, Vogel, and West were in attendance.

4. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Rehder, seconded by Commissioner MartinOakes and unanimously carried, to approve the agenda as presented.

5. Approval of Minutes

A. Motion to Approve June 18, 2025, Annual Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Overland, seconded by Commissioner Johnson and unanimously carried, to approve the meeting minutes as drafted.

6. Public Comment

Chair Cook reviewed the public comment procedure. There was no public comment.

7. Motions and General Business

A. Officers of the Council Discussion.

Chair Cook referenced past Charter Commission discussion of this topic. She noted that the Charter Commission is being asked to provide a recommendation to the City Council relating to officers of the Council.

Commissioner Robertson stated that Red Wing is fortunate to be a charter city, a designation that allows Red Wing to have local government that reflects the community. She stated that the current structure has worked well for past Council Administrators.

A motion was made by Commissioner Robertson to take no action relating to Chapter 3, Section 3.01 of the City Charter. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Overland.

Chair Cook referenced the staff report relating to this item.

Commissioner Rehder commented that Council Administrator Heineman has indicated some urgency relating to a potential Charter amendment to address the Administrative Services Director position, which is currently vacant.

Commissioner Overland cited proposed language indicating that the Mayor serves as the Council President, noting that this is not accurate.

Commissioner Drazkowski requested clarification of the motion on the floor. Commissioner Robertson reiterated her motion to take no action relating to Chapter 3, Section 3.01 of the City Charter. Commissioner Hanson commented that the motion would preserve the status quo. Commissioner Overland suggested a friendly amendment to maintain the status quo, and Commissioner Robertson accepted the friendly amendment. Chair Cook then restated the motion to take no action, thus maintaining the status quo. Commissioner Rehder suggested considering language that would specifically address the Administrative Services Director position. Commissioner Overland stated her opinion that any guidance relating to this position should come from the City Council.

Commissioner MartinOakes requested rationale for the motion on the floor. She stated her understanding of the process of proposing amendments to the Charter, noting that the Charter Commission provides recommendations to the City Council.

Commissioner Overland expressed concerns about the proposed language, noting that this language would remove one of the powers of the City Council. Chair Cook commented that the proposed language would change the City Council's organizational chart. She stated her opinion that the Charter Commission would not have the authority to do this.

City Attorney Kelzer reviewed the ways that the City Charter can be amended:

- 1) Recommendation from the Charter Commission to the City Council to consider an amendment.

- 2) Request from the City Council to the Charter Commission to initiate a Charter amendment process, which would require a community vote during an election.

Commissioner Rehder suggested scheduling a joint workshop of the Charter Commission and the City Council for further discussion of the City Charter as a whole.

Commissioner Robertson provided additional rationale for her position. She noted that she viewed the discussion that occurred during the June 18 Charter Commission meeting. She stated her opinion that Red Wing should not operate as a statutory city and should not rush to change the City Charter. She commented that Red Wing has neither a strong mayor nor a weak mayor, adding that the Red Wing Mayor does have veto power. She commented that she sees no confusion about the chain of command.

Commissioner Quarnstrom asked whether a Charter Commission meeting would be scheduled for further discussion of a potential Charter amendment, if the motion to take no action is approved. Chair Cook commented that the current meeting represents the second time this topic has been discussed.

Commissioner Hanson recommended pursuing Charter amendments only on an as-needed basis. He referenced current language from the City Charter, Chapter 3, Section 3.01:

The Council shall prescribe the powers and duties of all officers and may assign one individual to perform the duties of more than one office, or in two or more departments or divisions.

Commissioner Hanson asked whether this language would give the City Council the power to address questions regarding Administrative Services Director position.

City Attorney Kelzer stated that under the current language of the Charter the City Council could assign the duties of the Administrative Services Director and not fill this position, or could appoint another officer to also serve as the Administrative Services Director.

Chair Cook asked about the role of the Council Administrator in terms of assigning these duties. She also noted that the City of Red Wing Employee Handbook states that the Administrative Services Director may represent the Council Administrator in the absence of the Council Administrator. She asked who would assume this responsibility. City Attorney Kelzer stated that the City Council could appoint someone to assume this responsibility, adding that perhaps the Council Administrator would have the authority to delegate this responsibility.

Chair Cook stated her understanding that only the City Council can change the organizational chart.

Commissioner Quarnstrom agreed with Commissioner Rehder's suggestion to schedule a workshop for further discussion of the Charter.

Chair Cook commented that Council Liaison Kliewer provided a report to the City Council about the June 18 Charter Commission meeting during the June 23 City Council meeting. She stated that Council Member Becky Norton and Council President Janie Farrar both suggested more discussion and clarification of what was being asked of the Charter Commission.

Chair Cook stated her opinion that the Charter Commission should not look at changing the Charter, unless a change is needed. She provided the example that the Charter may need to be amended in order to be in alignment with new State statutes.

Commissioner MartinOakes agreed with the need to be deliberative. She stated that she viewed the June 18 Charter Commission meeting recording and has concerns that City employees may not understand to whom they report. She suggested that this issue be considered.

A motion was made by Commissioner Overland to call the question. The motion to call the question was seconded by Commissioner Richardson. A voice vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 11:2, with Commissioners Quarnstrom and Drazkowski dissenting.

A voice vote was then conducted regarding the motion to take no action relating to Chapter 3, Section 3.01 of the City Charter, thus maintaining the status quo. The motion carried by a vote of 11:2, with Commissioners Quarnstrom and West dissenting.

Commissioner Rehder reiterated her earlier suggestion to schedule a workshop with the City Council, to gain a better understanding of the Charter and the process. Commissioner Johnson asked Council Liaison Kliewer for his opinion about scheduling a joint workshop. Council Liaison Kliewer stated his opinion that this would be a good idea. He stated that the role of the Council is to establish policies, noting that recommendations for efficiencies are presented to the Council by the Council Administrator and City staff for consideration. He stated that he would be interested in learning more about the origins of Charter language relating to officers of the City Council. He stated that during his time of the City Council, two or three organizational chart revisions have been approved at the request of former Council Administrator Kay Kuhlmann.

Commissioner West stated that she sees merit in scheduling a workshop, adding that feedback from City employees would also be beneficial.

Commissioner Quarnstrom suggested discussion of how the language of the City Charter is currently being applied from a practical perspective, so that everyone has a better understanding.

Commissioner MartinOakes commented that a more robust discussion would have better served the process. She suggested carefully considering the structure and scope of a joint workshop, noting that this type of discussion could lead to a slippery slope. She suggested starting with an educational presentation on the Charter. Commissioner Quarnstrom agreed that a practical workshop discussion would be beneficial.

Commissioner Overland expressed agreement with the concerns expressed by Commissioner MartinOakes about a potential slippery slope. She cited Charter language and stated that she does not understand the concept of employees having too many bosses.

Commissioner Hanson stated that it is incumbent upon Charter Commission members to become familiar with the language of the Charter on their own. He stated that the Charter Commission was presented with an issue that resulted from a City staff vacancy. He stated that the City, as an employer, has remedies available to it. He stated that it is not the charge of the Charter Commission to facilitate or guide these types of requests. He noted that it is the burden of the requestor to prove why a change would be necessary. He stated that, from the discussion, he has not been persuaded that an urgency to act exists or that there is the potential for harm if no action is taken. He stated his opinion that maintenance of the status quo is appropriate. He noted that additional information could be provided with regard to why changes may be necessary.

Commissioner Drazkowski commented that he recently reviewed approximately 30 city charters. He noted that they all had common boilerplate language that clearly specified the duties of the Council Administrator or City Manager position. He suggested considering language that would make the Red Wing City Charter more compatible with the charters of other Minnesota cities, noting that the Red Wing Charter is somewhat of an outlier. He advocated for the scheduling of a workshop to review the charters of similar-sized cities. He suggested working together with the City Council and City staff to address issues related to ambiguity in the City Charter.

Commissioner Robertson commented that comparing charters would be a very cumbersome process, noting that Red Wing has a unique form of government. She stated that it would be up to the City Council or the voters to request changes in this regard. She agreed with scheduling a workshop that would focus on better understanding the current City Charter.

Commissioner Overland stated that, while she agrees that it is the responsibility of Charter Commission members to familiarize themselves with the language of the City Charter, an educational workshop on the topic of the City Charter would be useful.

Council Administrator Heineman quoted language from the City Charter, Chapter 2, Section 2.04:

Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, the administrative officer shall be an ex officio member of all boards and commissions and has the right to attend meetings, including special and closed meetings.

Council Administrator Heineman commented that he takes his role as an ex officio member of the Charter Commission very seriously. He noted that this is why he raised these issues and appreciates the discussion that was conducted. He noted that the primary role of Charter Commission members is to serve as citizen overseers of the City Charter, which functions practically as Red Wing's constitution. He stated that Charter Commission members are empowered to review and study the Charter and ensure that it is effective, workable, and meets the needs of Red Wing's residents. He commented that Charter Commission members have the responsibility to recommend proposed changes, stating that this was his intention as an ex officio member of the Charter Commission. He cited examples of former Council Administrator Kay Kuhlmann doing this on a number of occasions.

Council Administrator Heineman commented that recommendations from the Charter Commission to the City Council constitute the simplest and easiest way to amend the Charter, without the need for a full election process. He stated that he would be happy to coordinate and facilitate a joint meeting or workshop with the City Council. He clarified that if this discussion results in a directive to change elements of the Charter, this may trigger an election process. He stated that it was not his intention to present this issue during the June 18 Charter Commission meeting, adding that he simply wanted to bring up the possibility of further discussion.

Commissioner Hanson asked Council Administrator Heineman, as an ex officio member of the Charter Commission, whether he considers himself to be a neutral or disinterested party in this matter.

Council Administrator Heineman stated that he is relatively neutral relating to this matter. He commented that the City Administration section of the Charter relates directly to the operation of his position and affects how the City organizational structure works. He stated his understanding that any amendments to the City Charter, at the recommendation of the Charter Commission, would require a unanimous affirmative vote of the City Council.

Council Administrator Heineman stated that he had conversations with all City Council Members prior to bringing the topic of potential Charter amendments forward during the June 18 Charter Commission meeting but did not discuss this during a City Council meeting, to ensure that the process was not City Council driven.

8. Communication Items

There were no communication items.

9. Adjournment

Chair Cook stated that the next Charter Commission meeting is scheduled in March of 2026, if necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.