

City of Santa Clara

Charter Review Ad Hoc Subcommittee Group 5

Civil Service: General Rules for Classified and Unclassified Employees; Commission Composition and Duties

November 17, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers



**City of
Santa Clara**
The Center of What's Possible

Proposed Meeting Agenda

- Meeting Logistics
- City Charter Basics
- The Charter Project
- Background of Civil Service System
- Group 5 Charter Sections
- Preliminary Staff Identified Areas for Review/Improvement
- Preliminary Committee Member Ideas and Discussion
- Next Steps



Meeting Logistics

- **Consider Appointing a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary**
 - Chair oversees meetings and acts as liaison with City staff
 - Vice Chair acts in absence of Chair
 - Secretary takes meeting notes and reports out to CRC
- **Meeting Procedures Informal, Facilitated by Chair and Staff**
 - Actions taken by consensus; majority vote if necessary
- **Always End with Next Steps**
 - Including Setting of Next Meeting if Possible
- **Remember to avoid communications regarding Group issues outside the Group to avoid Brown Act “serial meeting” violations**



City Charter Basics

- A city charter is the legal document that serves as the city's "constitution" establishing its government structure, powers and responsibilities.
- Charter cities have authority over their "municipal affairs" which generally include
 - Municipal election matters (qualifications, terms, districts, who is elected/appointed)
 - Land use and zoning decisions (subject in recent years to state preemption on housing)
 - Structure of government/city work force
 - Fiscal policy (how we budget, spend and account for our revenues, with a lot of preemption on taxes and fees)
 - How the city awards and implement public works and municipal contracts (also a lot of preemption)
- Charter provisions typically provide a general framework for government structure and operations; ordinances adopted by City Councils then implement these general rules with more detailed regulations.
- Can only be amended by a vote of the people



The Charter Project

- Santa Clara Charter Adopted in 1951; amended since multiple times since, but has gotten out of line with state law, City's actual and "best practices"
- Charter project intended to develop of comprehensive Charter amendment to (1) make corrections, (2) eliminate ambiguities, (3) align Charter with state law/current City/best practices, (4) easier to understand and apply.
- Process driven by practical/legal considerations; NOT to implement major restructuring of City operations or change City's election process.
- CAO staff will draft proposed modifications based upon input from City staff, impacted "stakeholders" (B&Cs, unions, the public) and, of course, CRC members.
- Consideration given to "Levels" of changes
- Comprehensive amendment to be presented to the Council and ultimately the voters in November 2026



Background of the Civil Service System

- Broadly speaking, the term “civil service system” is used to describe the rules applicable to hiring, promotion, discipline, and termination of public employees
- Purpose: to protect the integrity of public employment (use of public funds) and the continuity of essential public services by ensuring employees providing the services are hired in a merit-based system, and that their ongoing employment is shielded from politics
- Enshrined in the state constitution (for state employees) since the early 1900s, with updates over the years
- The system was made applicable to counties and cities (including charter cities) in the 1940’s

Group Five: Civil Service – Charter Sections

- Article X. Appointive Boards and Commissions
 - Sec. 1010 Civil Service Commission
 - Sec. 1011 Civil Service Commission – Powers and duties
- Article XI. Civil Service
 - Sec. 1100 Civil service; merit principle.
 - Sec. 1100 Classified service.
 - Sec. 1102 Appointments from classified to the unclassified service.
 - Sec. 1103 Classification.
 - Sec. 1104 Pay plan.
 - Sec. 1105 Civil service rules and regulations.
 - Sec. 1106 Reserved.
 - Sec. 1107 Prohibitions.
 - Sec. 1108 Contract for administrative services.
- Article XII. Retirement
 - Sec. 1200 State system.



Preliminary staff thoughts

- General review of all Sections for improved organization, headings, consistency, wording/legal compliance
- Bring categories of employees listed into alignment with current practice
- Make some vague language more clear
- Make consistent with current applicable law



Preliminary Subcommittee Comments

- Reactions to preliminary staff comments
- Committee members ideas/thoughts on assigned Articles/Sections
- Committee members ideas/thoughts on process



Next Steps

- Calendar next Sub-committee meeting
- Set agenda for next meeting
- Responsibility for preparing and presenting report out to CRC at upcoming November 19th meeting

