



# City of Santa Clara

1500 Warburton Avenue  
Santa Clara, CA 95050  
santaclaraca.gov  
@SantaClaraCity

## Agenda Report

26-380

Agenda Date: 4/7/2026

### REPORT TO COUNCIL

#### SUBJECT

Update to Council on Charter Review Committee Progress with its Assigned "Charter Project" Proposed Plan for Charter Reorganization, and Proposed Schedule for City Council Consideration and Action

#### BACKGROUND

The idea for a comprehensive review and update of the City Charter (now commonly referred to as the "Charter Project") was incorporated into the Governance and Ethics Committee Work Plan in early 2025. An outline for the project was first formally presented to the Governance and Ethics Committee on May 1, 2025. Senior City staff were supportive of the project based on their own assessment, and feedback from the different departments responsible for implementing its terms, that a number of Charter provisions were ambiguous, out of date, not aligned with current City operations or best practices, and/or not aligned with current laws. With support from the Committee, the project concept was presented to the full City Council on July 15, 2025. Recognizing the potential benefits of the project, the Council directed staff to take the initial steps to form a Charter Review Committee for purposes of implementing the "Charter Project" (the Charter Project CRC). Council direction included terms for the CRC's composition, selection process and purposes. Staff advertised the availability of CRC positions and, with the City Clerk, implemented the CRC lottery selection and appointment process. On September 16, 2025, the City Council appointed the CRC members and formally established the CRC by adoption of the CRC Bylaws.

Section 2 of the City Council adopted Bylaws for the Charter Project CRC describes its purpose as follows:

"The purpose of the CRC is to work with City staff, with input from the community, to facilitate the implementation of the "Charter Project." The Charter Project involves a process for comprehensive review of the City Charter to identify provisions in the Charter that should be corrected, clarified or modified for the Charter to be fully consistent with applicable state law, aligned with current best practices for City operations and, in general, easier to understand and apply. At the end of the process, the objective of the Charter Project is to produce a draft comprehensive Charter Amendment for presentation to the City Council and, if the City Council so directs, possibly the voters at the November 2026 Election."

Section 3 of the Bylaws sets forth a list of the CRC's duties. Section 3.4 describes the CRC's ultimate duty as follows:

"Make a Recommendation to the City Council regarding a Comprehensive Amendment of the City Charter. To implement the Charter Project City staff will be preparing draft revisions to the City Charter for consideration and input by CRC Subcommittees and/or the CRC itself. At the

end of the process, the CRC will be expected to make a recommendation to the City Council on one or more proposed amendments to the City Charter. The proposed “top to bottom” review process is intended to be driven by practical and legal considerations, with the prime objective being to bring the Charter up to current “best practices” for City operations. It is not intended to implement any major restructuring of City operations or to change the City’s election process. In the end, it will be up to the Charter Review Committee to recommend, and the City Council to decide which, if any, of the proposed changes will be presented to the voters as part a comprehensive update to the City Charter. In order to coordinate with the City Council’s summer meeting schedule, and to meet the timing requirements for submittals of measures to voters at the November 2026 election, the CRC shall endeavor to finalize and present its recommendation(s) to the City Council by no later than June 29, 2026.”

This report is intended to update the City Council on the Charter Project CRC’s progress to date towards implementing the Charter Project.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **CRC Meetings and Activities.**

Since October, the Charter Project CRC has met six (6) times. Meetings were held in 2025 on October 1<sup>st</sup>, October 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 19<sup>th</sup> and in 2026 on January 21<sup>st</sup>, February 18<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup>. Early meetings focused on training and work plan development. Since then, significant actions taken to date by the CRC include:

- Formation of six (6) Ad Hoc Subcommittees to serve as working groups for their assigned sections. The six Groups’ assigned work areas are as follows: (1) Powers and Structure of City Government: Rules/Process for Action; (2) City Council: Elections, Powers and Conduct of Meetings; (3) Senior Officials: Duties and Qualifications; (4) Boards and Commissions: Composition, Powers and Duties; (5) Civil Service: General Rules for Classified and Unclassified Employees; Commission Composition and Duties; and (6) Fiscal Administration and Procurement.
- Consideration and approval (in concept) of proposed changes to Article XI, Civil Service (setting forth the City’s basic structure and rules of classified and unclassified positions), and Sections 1010 and 1011 (setting forth the terms for the Civil Service composition and powers and duties). Early action on these provisions was necessary in order to allow for potentially impacted labor groups to be consulted and provide input on the proposed changes. Note: Staff recently commenced the process for solicitation of input from labor groups.
- Consideration and approval in concept of working definitions of the different “levels” of changes to the Charter. The idea here was to categorize proposed changes into levels so that when the total package is presented to the City Council, the Council will have a basis to evaluate which of the proposed changes ought to be included in the comprehensive Charter amendment submittal to the voters (generally, Levels One and Two), which changes might be so significant or implicate politically sensitive areas that such changes might be considered for presentation to the voters as one or more separate ballot measures (generally, Level Three), and which areas discussed were so

significant, complex or sensitive that they were beyond the scope of the Charter Project CRC, but might warrant future study or consideration.(Level Four)  
(See current draft of proposed Levels attached hereto as Attachment 1)

- Consideration and approval (in concept) of plan for an overall reorganization of the City Charter. As currently proposed, this overall reorganization would include a number of elements: (1) Consolidation of Articles I through V; (2) shifting of certain Sections into more logical arrangements by subject matter; (3) retitling of Articles and Sections with more descriptive language; (4) breaking up longer Sections into titled Subsections; (5) deleting headings and numbering left over from previously deleted Sections; (6) re-numbering all Articles and Sections with a more modern, intuitive numbering system; and (7) creation of a comprehensive matrix to be attached at the end of the Charter showing the history of changes to each Section, references to previous Section numbers, and references to City Code Sections that are implementing of the Charter. Note: the pros and cons of this approach are discussed in more detail, below.

#### **Ad Hoc Subcommittee Meetings and Activities.**

As of the date of publication of the agenda including this item, the following Ad Hoc Subcommittee meetings have been held. :

- Group One: Power and Structure of City Government: Rules/Process for Action
  - November 12, 2025
  - December 15, 2025
  - January 14, 2025
- Group Two: City Council: Elections, Powers and Conduct of Meetings
  - December 8, 2025
  - February 9, 2026
  - March 9, 2026
- Group Three: Senior Officials: Duties and Qualifications
  - January 12, 2025
  - March 11, 2026
- Group Four: Boards and Commissions: Composition, Powers and Duties
  - November 13, 2025
  - December 15, 2025
  - February 12, 2026
  - March 12, 2026
- Group Five: Civil Service: General Rules for Classified and Unclassified Employees; Commission Composition and Duties
  - November 17, 2025
  - January 5, 2026
  - January 14, 2026

- Group Six: Fiscal Administration and Procurement
  - February 4, 2026
  - March 17, 2026

At each monthly CRC meeting, the CRC agenda includes a report out from each Ad Hoc Subcommittee that has met since their last “report out.” Report outs include a summary of issues discussed, input (if any) received from Charter Project “stakeholders” (for example, relevant City Staff, Boards and Commissions), benchmarking information and proposed next steps. CRC questions and input are also solicited.

Most Ad Hoc Subcommittees have moved beyond mere discussions of issues and are now reviewing and commenting on actual proposed Charter language. To continue this work effort, many more Ad Hoc Subcommittee meetings are already on calendar. Ultimately, each Ad Hoc Subcommittee will be presenting their proposed language changes to the CRC for CRC consideration and action on what to recommend to the City Council. The collection of all of these recommendations will then be packaged and presented to the City Council for Council consideration and action.

### **Scheduling**

At the March 18, 2026 CRC Meeting, staff suggested that in order to complete the project, there would likely need to be more CRC meetings beyond the currently scheduled April 15<sup>th</sup>, May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 17<sup>th</sup> meetings. CRC understood and was amenable to this. Staff is currently looking at the calendar to propose additional meeting dates.

The current intent is to be in a position to present the full Charter Project CRC recommendation to the City Council at the June 9, 2026 Council meeting. After receiving Council preliminary input, the CRC would meet further, as needed to, make any requested modifications and refine the proposal. The recommendation would then be re-presented to Council later in June or early July. If Council desires to proceed to place a measure on the ballot, the full ballot package would need to be delivered to the County Registrar by no later than August 7, 2026. In order not to intrude on the Council’s scheduled summer recess, that means final City Council action on Charter update ballot proposal would need to occur at the Council’s currently scheduled July 14, 2026 meeting.

### **Pros and Cons of the Proposed Comprehensive Reorganization.**

At their February 18, 2026 meeting the Charter Project CRC considered the proposed comprehensive Charter reorganization concept, along with the pros and cons of such approach presented by staff. The primary arguments in favor included: (1) such a reorganization would be perfectly aligned with the Charter Project’s stated purposes by making the Charter more modern and “user friendly” for the public and for professional staff; (2) the deletion of unused Section headings and internal history references would make the Charter shorter, less cluttered and easier to read; (3) the proposed new “tools” including an expanded definitions section, and a detailed matrix with Section amendment and numbering history, along with references to relevant City Code sections, would also enhance Charter usability. Arguments against a comprehensive Charter reorganization included: (1) if an underline/strikeout of the proposed changes were to be placed on the ballot, it could turn off the voting public if it appeared that the changes were not being fully explained or evident; (2) if the full text of all changes needed to be included on the ballot it would increase the cost of the ballot measure; and (3) if a measure with comprehensive renumbering were to be approved by voters, full implementation would require a review and update of the City Code and all other materials

referencing the Charter to update the existing Section references.

Ultimately, the CRC approved proceeding with the comprehensive reorganization. On balance, since they were already undertaking a comprehensive update of the Charter, the consensus of the CRC was that now was the right time to also implement the comprehensive reorganization and renumbering system. They were also apprised that there was no legal requirement to place an underline/strikeout version of proposed changes on the ballot, so that a very messy and complicated document need not be what the voters acted on. Instead, a link could be provided in the ballot measure and/or the City Attorney's Impartial Analysis to the City's website for the full Charter language. This would include an underline strikeout of all proposed changes, a detailed description of all the proposed changes, and an extensive FAQ Section. In light of this, the CRC voted unanimously to support including the comprehensive Charter reorganization concept as part of their work plan.

On staff's suggestion, the CRC included in their action a request that City Council be provided a preview of the proposed reorganization in case there was any issues or concerns. This item presents that preview, along with the current draft reorganization summary (Attachment 2). If the Council, or any individual Councilmember has any concerns with this approach, this item can be pulled for further discussion. Any individual Councilmember can also contact City Attorney Googins with any questions. CRC Members Diamond and Tansey, along with CRC Chair Nikolai have indicated that they would also be available to respond to any questions at the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting if necessary.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Note and file the report.

Reviewed by: Courtney Mohammadi, Legal Executive Assistant, City Attorney's Office  
Approved by: Glen Googins, City Attorney

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Charter Project "Levels" Summary
2. Proposed Charter Reorganization Summary (DRAFT dated February 18, 2026)



## **Charter Project “Levels”**

[Presented to the CRC on February 18, 2026]

### **Level One**

Changes in form and appearance that are not substantive. Includes corrections, rewording for clarity, reorganization, elimination of redundancies, consistency of cross-references and numbering, consolidation of sections, elimination of headings for previously deleted sections, rewording of headings to better reflect content, addition of subheadings, defined terms, and other Charter-wide conventions to improve comprehension and usability.

### **Level Two**

Rewordings, deletions and additions intended to add clarity, fill gaps, eliminate ambiguities, replace outdated (no longer used) practices with current “best” practices, and provide consistency with state law. Some changes are “substantive” but are not thought to be that significant or made in sensitive areas so as to warrant consideration as possible separate ballot measures.

**Note:** Both Level One and Level Two Changes will be recommended to be combined in one ballot measure

### **Level Three**

Changes to policies or procedures that may be considered “best practices” or are otherwise viewed as desirable, and that the CRC recommends, but either involve political sensitivity, or are of such independent significance, that they may justify consideration as separate ballot measures.

**Note:** Ideally, Level Three changes would be combined with Level One and Level Two Changes, but some or all may warrant separate consideration

### **Level Four**

Possible changes to the Charter that are either too complicated or too significant to have been fully analyzed or appropriate for consideration as part of this Charter update project, but are worthy of further study and consideration in the future.

**Note:** An example of this might be “ranked-choice” voting.



**Charter Project  
Proposed Reorganization  
DRAFT  
February 18, 2026**

**Preamble**

Article One  
**Essential Terms**

Article Two  
**Elected Officials**

Article Three  
**Conduct of Elections**

Article Four  
**City Council Actions and Limitations**

Article Five  
**Organization of City Government**

Article Six  
**Appointed Boards and Commissions**

Article Seven  
**City Workforce**

Article Eight  
**Fiscal Administration [and Finance]**

Article Nine  
**Public Contracting (Including Franchises)**

Article Ten  
**General Provisions**

**Article One**  
**Essential Terms**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

Article I - Name of City, Article II - Boundaries, Section 400 - General grant of power, Section 500 - Form of Government, [Section 706 – Powers, Section 1800 – Defined Terms]

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 100 Name  
Section 101 Boundaries  
Section 102 Powers  
Section 103 Form of Government  
Section 104 Relationship with Other Laws  
Section 105 Defined Terms

**Article Two**  
**Elected Officials**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

Section 600 - City elected officers, Certain Sections in Article VII, 700.1 - Elections – City Council Districts, 701 - Term limits of mayor and council members, 701.1 - Qualifications for Chief of Police, 702 - Compensation, Parts of Section 703 - Vacancies, 704 – Presiding Officer – Mayor, 704.1 - Mayor – Limitation of terms, 704.2 - Mayor Political position, 704.3 - Mayor – Powers and duties, 704.4 - Mayor – Vacancy, 705 - Vice Mayor, [Section 706 - Powers], Section 912 – Oath of Office]

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 200 City Elected Officials  
Section 201 Required Qualifications  
    a. Applicable to All  
    b. Mayor and Council  
    c. Chief of Police  
    d. City Clerk  
Section 202 Powers and Duties  
    a. Mayor  
    b. Councilmembers  
    c. Chief of Police  
    d. City Clerk  
Section 203 Election and Appointment  
    a. Mayor, City Clerk and Chief of Police Elected City-wide  
    b. City Councilmembers Elected By District  
    c. Term Limits  
    d. Vacancies  
    e. Commencement of Term; Oath of Office  
Section 204 Compensation

**Article Three**  
**City Elections**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

600.01, Municipal Elections, 600.02, Consolidation of Elections, 700 - Term – Method of holding elections, 700.2 - Election Following Change of Boundaries, parts of Section 703 - Vacancies, 711 - Election and Qualification of Council Members

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

- Section 300 Regular Elections
- Section 301 Special Elections
- Section 302 Consolidation of Elections
- Section 303 Councilmember District Elections
- Section 304 Administration of Elections
- Section 305 Applicable Law

**Article Four**  
**City Council Actions and Limitations**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

Section 401 - Disposal of Public Utility; Certain Sections in Article VII, including: Section 707- Regular meetings, 708 - Special meetings, 709 - Place of meeting, 710 - Quorum, 712 - Proceedings, 713 - Action by ordinance or resolution, 714 - Power to lease, sell or convey City Property, 714.1 - Protection of parkland and public open space; Certain Sections in Article VIII, including: Section 807 - Prohibitions against Councilmanic interference, 808 - Ordinances, 809 - Repeal or amendment of ordinances, 810 - Effective date of ordinances, 811 - Emergency Ordinances, 812 - Publication of ordinances, 813 - Codification of ordinances, 814 - Adoption of printed building codes, etc., 815 - Publication of legal notices, [910, *Administrative Code*]

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

- Section 401 City Council Authority
- Section 402 City Council Meetings
  - a. Regular Meetings
  - b. Special Meetings
  - c. Rules for Conduct of Meetings
- Section 403 Forms of Action
  - a. Ordinance
  - b. Resolution
- Section 404 Limitations on Authority/Actions
  - a. Prohibitions on "Councilmanic Interference"
  - b. Sale of public utility
  - c. Certain sales of real property
  - d. Transfer or change of use of parkland and public open spaces
  - e. Reserved powers of electorate (initiative/referendum)

**Article Five**  
**Organization of City Government**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

Certain Sections in Article VIII, including: Section 800 - Appointment, 801 - Compensation, 802- Powers and Duties, 803 - Rules and Regulations, 804 - Manager pro tempore, 805 - Participation in Council action, 806 - Removal by City Manager; Certain Sections in Article IX including: Section 900 - Officers to be appointed by the City Council and by the City Manager, 901 - Other appointive officers, 902 - Appointive officers; duties, 903 - City clerk; powers and duties, Section 904 - Director of Finance, 905 - City Engineer and Department of Public Works, 906 - Chief of the Police Department, 907 - Chief of the Fire Department, 908 - City Attorney, 909 - City Auditor, [910 - Administrative Code], 911 - Official Bonds, [Article XII – Retirement]

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

- Section 501 Organization of City Government
- Section 502 Officers Appointed by Council
  - a. City Manager
  - b. City Attorney
  - c. City Auditor
- Section 503 Officers Appointed by the City Manager
  - a. In General
  - b. Director of Finance
  - c. Director of Public Works
  - d. Chief of the Fire Department
- Section 504 Other Officers and Employees
- Section 505 Retirement System

**Article Six**  
**Appointed Boards and Commissions**

**Existing Articles/Sections:**

Article X, Sections 1000 – In general, 1001 – Appointments; terms, 1003 – Meetings; Chair, 1004 - Compensation, vacancies, 1005 – Oaths; affirmations, 1006 – Planning Commission – Generally, 1007 Planning Commission -Duties and powers, 1008 – Parks and Recreation Commission, 1009 – Parks and Recreation Commission – Powers and Duties, 1010 – Civil Service Commission, 1011 – Civil Service Commission – Powers and Duties, 1012 – Board of Library Trustees, 1013 – Board of Library Trustees – Powers and Duties

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

- Section 600 In General
  - a. Charter boards and commissions
  - b. Other boards and commissions to be created by ordinance/resolution
  - c. City Council to provide funding
  - d. Appointment Process
  - e. Terms
  - f. Compensation
- Section 601 Planning Commission
- Section 602 Parks and Recreation Commission
- Section 603 Civil Service Commission
- Section 604 Board of Library Trustees

**Article Seven**  
**City Workforce**

**Existing Articles/Sections**

Article XI – Civil Service, including Section 1100 – Civil Service; merit principle, 1101 – Classified Service, 1102 – Appointments from classified to the unclassified service, 1103 – Classification, 1104 – Pay Plan, 1105 – Civil Service rules and regulations, 1106 – Reserved, 1107 – Prohibitions, 1108 – Contract for administrative services

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 700 Classified and Unclassified Service  
Section 701 Classified Service; Merit Principle  
Section 702 Council Approval of Classification and Pay Plan  
Section 704 Rights Retained Upon Appointment from Classified to Unclassified Service  
Section 705 Civil Services Rules and Regulations  
Section 706 Prohibitions; Violations  
Section 707 City Authority to Contract for Administrative Services

**Article Eight**  
**Fiscal Administration [and Finance]**

**Existing Articles/Sections**

Article XII – Retirement, Certain (most) Sections of Article XIII, including Section 1300 – Fiscal Year, 1301 – Annual budget, 1302 – Budget –Submission to City Council, 1303 – Budget – Public Hearing, 1304 – Budget – Further consideration and adoption, 1305 – Budget – Appropriations, Repealed Sections 1306 through 1308, 1309 – Bonded debt limit, 1311 – General Fund, 1312 – Capital project funds, 1313 – Department funds, 1314 – Petty cash funds, Repealed Sections 1315 and 1316, 1319 – Independent Audit, 1320 – Utilities Fund, 1321 – Revenue Bonds

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 801 Fiscal year  
Section 802 Budget  
    a. Preparation  
    b. Adoption  
    c. Amendment  
    d. Carryforwards  
Section 803 Required Budget Components  
    a. General Fund  
    b. Capital Fund  
    c. General Enterprise Funds  
    d. Utility fund  
    e. Reserves  
Section 804 Finance Authority  
Section 805 Finance Limitations  
Section 806 Independent Audit  
Section 807 Retirement

**Article Nine**

**Public Contracting (Including Franchises)**

**Existing Articles/Sections**

Section 1310, Contracts on public works, Section 1318 – Centralized purchasing, Article XIV - Franchises

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 900 Centralized Purchasing  
Section 901 Public Works  
Section 912 Use of City Forces  
Section 913 Franchises

**Article Ten**

**General Provisions**

**Existing Articles/Sections**

Article III – Succession, Section 1317 – Actions Against City, Article XVIII – Miscellaneous, including Sections 1800 – Definitions, 1801 – Violation, 1802 – Validity, 1803 – Effective Date

**Proposed Reconfigured Sections**

Section 1000 Definitions  
Section 1001 Effective Date  
Section 1002 Actions Against City  
Section 1003 Violations and Enforcement

**Article One**  
**Essential Terms**

- Section 100 Name
- Section 101 Boundaries
- Section 102 Powers
- Section 103 Form of Government
- Section 104 Relationship with Other Laws
- Section 105 Defined Terms

**Article Two**  
**Elected Officials**

- Section 200 City Elected Officials
- Section 201 Required Qualifications
  - a. Applicable to All
  - b. Mayor and Council
  - c. Chief of Police
  - d. City Clerk
- Section 202 Powers and Duties
  - a. Mayor
  - b. Councilmembers
  - c. Chief of Police
  - d. City Clerk
- Section 203 Election and Appointment
  - a. Mayor, City Clerk and Chief of Police Elected City-wide
  - b. City Councilmembers Elected By District
  - c. Term Limits
  - d. Vacancies
  - e. Commencement of Term; Oath of Office
- Section 204 Compensation

**Article Three**  
**Municipal Elections**

- Section 300 Regular Elections
- Section 301 Special Elections
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- Section 303 Councilmember District Elections
- Section 304 Administration of Elections
- Section 305 Applicable Law

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  - c. Rules for Conduct of Meetings
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- Section 404 Limitations on Authority/Actions
  - a. Prohibitions on "Councilmanic Interference"
  - b. Sale of public utility
  - c. Certain sales of real property
  - d. Transfer or change of use of parkland and public open spaces
  - e. Reserved powers of electorate (initiative/referendum)

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- Section 503 Officers Appointed by the City Manager
  - a. In General
  - b. Director of Finance
  - c. Director of Public Works
  - d. Chief of the Fire Department
- Section 504 Other Officers and Employees
- Section 505 Retirement System

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  - a. Charter boards and commissions
  - b. Other boards and commissions to be created by ordinance/resolution
  - c. City Council to provide funding
  - d. Appointment Process
  - e. Terms
  - f. Compensation
- Section 601 Planning Commission
- Section 602 Parks and Recreation Commission
- Section 603 Civil Service Commission
- Section 604 Board of Library Trustees

**Article Seven**  
**Civil Service**

- Section 700 Classified and Unclassified Service
- Section 701 Classified Service; Merit Principle
- Section 702 Council Approval of Classification and Pay Plan
- Section 704 Rights Retained Upon Appointment from Classified to Unclassified Service
- Section 705 Civil Services Rules and Regulations
- Section 706 Prohibitions; Violations
- Section 707 City Authority to Contract for Administrative Services

**Article Eight**  
**Fiscal Administration [and Finance]**

- Section 801 Fiscal year
- Section 802 Budget
  - a. Preparation
  - b. Adoption
  - c. Amendment
  - d. Carryforwards
- Section 803 Required Budget Components
  - a. General Fund
  - b. Capital Fund
  - c. General Enterprise Funds
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- Section 804 Finance Authority
- Section 805 Finance Limitations
- Section 806 Independent Audit
- Section 807 Retirement

**Article Nine**  
**Public Contracting (Including Franchises)**

- Section 900 Centralized Purchasing
- Section 901 Public Works
- Section 912 Use of City Forces
- Section 913 Franchises

**Article Ten**  
**General Provisions**

- Section 1000 Definitions
- Section 1001 Effective Date
- Section 1002 Actions Against City
- Section 1003 Violations and Enforcement



# City of Santa Clara

**City Council Item No. 3.D**  
**Update to Council on Charter Review Committee**  
**Progress with its Assigned “Charter Project,”**  
**Proposed Plan for Charter Reorganization and**  
**Proposed Schedule for City Council**  
**Consideration and Action on the Charter Project**  
**Proposal**

**April 7, 2026**



1

## Background

- “Charter Project” concept for a comprehensive Charter review and update formally presented to Governance and Ethics Committee on May 1, 2025
- Senior staff supportive based on assessment that a number of Charter provisions were not well organized, ambiguous, out of date, and/or not aligned with City operations, best practices and applicable laws.
- With support of Committee, Charter Project was presented to City Council on July 15, 2025 for direction.
- Recognizing the potential benefits of the project, Council directed staff to take initial steps to form a Charter Review Committee (CRC), including the CRC’s composition, selection process and purpose.
- Staff advertised the availability of positions, and through a lottery and Council appointment process, 13 CRC members were chosen.
- On September 16, 2025, the City Council formally appointed the CRC members and adopted the CRC Bylaws.



2

**POST MEETING MATERIAL**

1

## **Charter Project Purpose (Bylaws Section 2)**

“The purpose of the CRC is to work with City staff, with input from the community, to facilitate the implementation of the “Charter Project.” The Charter Project involves a process for comprehensive review of the City Charter to identify provisions in the Charter that should be corrected, clarified or modified for the Charter to be fully consistent with applicable state law, aligned with current best practices for City operations and, in general, easier to understand and apply. At the end of the process, the objective of the Charter Project is to produce a draft comprehensive Charter Amendment for presentation to the City Council and, if the City Council so directs, possibly the voters at the November 2026 Election.”

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## **CRC Activities to Date**

- **Formation of Six Ad Hoc Sub-committees to serve as the project “working groups.”**
- **Consideration and approval (in concept) of proposed changes to Article XI, Civil Service (basic structure and rules for classified and unclassified positions), and Sections 1010 and 1011 (Civil Service Commission composition and duties). Early action needed to allow for consultation with potentially impacted labor groups (underway)**
- **Development and approval (in concept) of different “levels” of changes to the Charter.**
- **Consideration and approval of a plan for the overall reorganization of the City Charter to make the document more accessible and user friendly.**

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## Ad Hoc Sub-committees

- **Group One**  
Powers and Structure of City Government: Rules/Process for Action
- **Group Two**  
City Council: Elections, Powers and Conduct of Meetings
- **Group Three**  
Senior Officials: Duties and Qualifications
- **Group Four**  
Boards and Commissions: Composition, Powers and Duties
- **Group Five**  
Civil Service: General Rules for Classified and Unclassified Employees;  
Commission Composition and Duties
- **Group Six**  
Fiscal Administration and Procurement

5



5

## Ad Hoc Sub-committee Activities to Date

- Eighteen meetings, usually lasting between 1.5 to 2.5 hours
- Presentations and robust discussions on issues identified by staff and raised by Sub-committee members.
- Presentations by various identified “stakeholders” including senior officials impacted by and responsible for implementing various Charter provisions, and the identified Boards and Commissions.
- Lately, specific language presented (and refined with member input)
- “Report outs” of sub-committee activities made to the full CRC at each meeting for public and CRC member input.
- Ultimately, each Sub-committee will make a recommendation to the full CRC regarding their assigned “sections” and these recommendations will be assembled for presentation to the Council.

6



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## **Proposed Charter Reorganization**

- Consolidates and Reorganizes various Articles and Sections of the Charter.
- Designed to (1) make Charter more “user friendly” for both the public and professional staff, (2) delete consolidated sections and repealed section headings to make Charter shorter and easier to read, (3) add new “tools” including an expanded definitions section and a detailed matrix showing amendment and numbering history for each section, with added references to where the Charter is implemented in the City Code.
- Arguments against include: the appearance to the voters of more changes than they are comfortable with, and the need to implement an update of all City Code sections and materials referencing the Charter.
- Ultimately, the CRC concluded, unanimously, with so many changes being made anyway, now was right time to implement the reorganization. Only a summary of the proposed changes is legally required to be presented to the voters, with a link to the full text on the City’s website. This would include a full summary of changes, an underline strikeout version, and FAQs.

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## **Scheduling Requirements**

- Targeting an initial presentation to City Council on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026; if further Council direction needed, this would be scheduled for June 23<sup>rd</sup> ; final action would occur at your meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Likely need for one or more additional CRC meetings in May and/or June Current CRC meetings scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup> (at Central Library) and June 17<sup>th</sup> (City Council Chambers)
- Possible additional meeting dates (on Wednesdays) include: May 6<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup>, May 27<sup>th</sup> (Council Chambers), and June 10<sup>th</sup> (Central Library).
- Staff will look to identify any additional dates, and poll CRC members for availability

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**Questions?**



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# **City of Santa Clara**

## **City Council Item No. 3.D**

**Update to Council on Charter Review Committee  
Progress with its Assigned "Charter Project,"  
Proposed Plan for Charter Reorganization and  
Proposed Schedule for City Council  
Consideration and Action on the Charter Project  
Proposal**

**April 7, 2026 – END SLIDE**



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