



The Differences Between Code Home Rule and Charter Government

WHAT do I need to know right now about Code Home Rule versus Charter Government, and WHY?

Charles County operates as a Code Home Rule form of government in the State of Maryland. Charles County's Charter Board was convened in June 2023 to draft a charter that will propose a new administrative and legislative structure for county government, known as charter form of government. Charles County voters will consider whether to approve the draft charter in November 2024. If voters approve it, the draft charter will be adopted and formally change the form of Charles County government from Code Home Rule to Charter.

HOW does the current Charles County Code Home Rule Government operate?

- Charles County currently operates as a Code Home Rule government, with five elected board members called Commissioners.
- Four Commissioners represent each of the four districts, and a Commissioner President is elected countywide and serves as the Board's chair. An appointed County Administrator manages local government operations.
- Each Commissioner has an equal vote on both executive and legislative decisions for county government.
- The Board has no power to impose new types of taxes or fees without state enabling legislation, or to establish a tax cap. Bonding authority for debt on infrastructure projects (schools, parks, roads, etc.) is not capped.
- Code Home Rule has broad authority over planning and land use decisions. It is enabled to impose development impact fees and excise taxes.

HOW would a Charter Government operate differently?

- It operates according to a charter that defines the government's structure and is established, adopted, and amended only by voters.
- A County Council enacts local laws and oversees legislative functions of government. The charter will define its representation and composition.
- A Charter may require an elected County Executive to serve as the chief executive officer and oversee the day-to-day operations of county government.
- Charter Government cannot impose new taxes but can establish a tax cap and enact regulatory licenses and fees. Bonding authority for debt on infrastructure projects (schools, parks, roads, etc.) is capped at 15%.
- Charter government and Code Home Rule have similar broad authority over planning and land use decisions; however, Charter does not have the authority to impose development impact fees or excise taxes.

WHAT is the process for changing to the Charter Form of government?

- Commissioners designated and appointed a nine-member board to draft a charter. Two community members were appointed from each district, and one member was appointed at-large.
- The Charter Board meets twice monthly to work on the draft charter, which will define the duties, powers, rules, procedures, and structure for a charter form of government in Charles County.
- The Charter Board will submit the draft charter to the Board of Charles County Commissioners by June 1, 2024. After it is submitted, it will be publicly advertised at least twice in the following 30 days.
- The draft charter will be presented on the ballot for voter approval during the general election in November 2024. If approved, the charter will take effect within 30 days or as outlined in the charter document for the transition process.

WHO can participate in drafting the proposed charter?

- Commissioners designated and appointed a nine-member board to draft a proposed charter. On May 24, 2023, Charles County Commissioners announced the appointment of nine members and three alternates.

District 1	Cheryl Botts	Sarah Hammett
District 2	Marjorie Chiles	Mary Stokely
District 3	Ramonda Davis	Christopher Harrington
District 4	Eileen Lynch-Britt	Gregory Waring
At-Large	Dottery Butler-Washington	

Chair: Gregory Waring **Vice-Chair:** Dottery Butler-Washington

Alternates: James Crawford, Michael White, William Smith

- All Charles County community members and stakeholders are welcome to provide public comment at every Charter Board meeting. **To provide comments virtually:** call (301) 638-080 on the day of the scheduled meeting to be added to the list of speakers. **To provide comments in person:** register to speak in person upon arrival at the meeting. **To provide written comments:** visit the [Charter Board webpage](#).
- From November 2023 – February 2024, the Charter Board will host public hearings in each district to present the draft charter and receive public feedback on the proposed document before it is submitted to the Board.

WHAT will be included in the draft charter?

The draft charter will define the structure of local government and how it operates, including:

- Authority, functions, term limits, and compensation of elected officials
- Designation of elected and appointed positions, and qualifications for each group
- District and at-large election of Council members, and Council meeting requirements
- Process for the approval of the budget and local laws
- Coordination of public safety functions
- Referendum procedures for voter approval on specific policy issues
- Transition process should the Charter be approved

WHEN does the Charter Board meet to develop and discuss the draft charter?

- The Charter Board meets twice monthly, generally on the second and fourth Thursdays at 6 p.m. in the Charles County Government Building Conference Room, located at 200 Baltimore St, La Plata MD.
- Go to the Charles County online calendar (www.charlescountymd.gov/government/calendar) for more information on attending in person or listening virtually.

HOW can I stay informed?

- Watch/Listen to Charter Board Meetings:** All Charter Board meetings are broadcast on Comcast 95 and Verizon Fios 10. You can also watch meetings on demand anytime on Roku or Apple TV streaming devices (Charles County Government). All meetings are also posted in the video library at: www.charlescountymd.gov/vod.
- Visit www.charlescountymd.gov/government/boards-commissions/charter-board for updates and to provide input using our “eComment” function.