

Comments

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To:Charter Board <CharterBoard@charlescountymd.gov>

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IF this 2024 proposed Charter is to pass by the voting public, it must adequately address the issues which caused the 2014 failure. **Plus**, the benefits must outweigh the cost and changes.

The Basics: The Charter must be adequate for now and allow for future growth.

- A.** Checks and Balances between the County Executive, County Council, and the Public.
- B.** Balanced power between the Executive and Council, esp. for Budget, Taxes, and Hiring.
- C.** Create an independent Office of Inspector General with appropriate powers.

The 2024 Charter must include at least these **10 Key Points**.

- 1.** Incorporate appropriate **limits of the power** of the County Executive, especially denying the power to appoint a county police force separate from the duly elected County Sheriff, or appoint a county fire chief over the local volunteer squads.
- 2.** Establish **Term Limits** and qualifications for the Executive and Council members.
- 3.** Define a clear, simple, and reasonable method for a **public referendum** on unpopular actions. Signature requirements should not be more than 5% of registered voters and open for 120 days.
- 4.** Maintain the current four voting districts with **8 Council Members** elected **by district** and **1 elected at-large Member**.
 - ▶ To give citizens more local representation, each of the 4 current Districts should be divided into two, i.e., 1A, 1B, 2A 2B, etc. This can be determined by using the precinct census figures for easily establishing the 4 split/sub districts, which would then make a total of 8, with 1 council member elected from each. Members should be elected by district voting for each with term limits of 2 Council terms total for each, regardless of whether district or at-large.
- 5.** Elect a **County Council** designed for adequate accessibility and input by the public including:
 - a. **9 Part-time Council Members** with a limited, shared Full-time staff;
 - b. The **School Board** receives nearly 50% of the county budget, and as such its operating model should be the **model** for the County Council;
 - c. The **chair** to be elected annually by the Council (same procedure as the School Board);
 - d. **Non-partisan** elected members, same as for the School Board;
 - e. Four year **terms** with a **limit** of 2 terms;
 - f. **Meetings** in public, "Robert's Rules of Order" with frequency defined in the Charter, and
 - g. **Super majority** required for **major actions** and defined as requiring **six (6) votes** for over-riding county executive veto, county executive appointments and removals, etc.
- 6.** Establish **transition procedures** and timing for implementing the offices.
- 7.** **Salaries and Benefits**, including **perks**, of the Executive and Council are defined.
- 8.** Define a periodic charter **Review Committee** to make suggestions and amendments.
- 9.** Clearly **define** Authority and Responsibilities of the Executive and the Council.
- 10.** Determine procedure for **filling vacancy** of county Executive and Council members.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Crawford0