

***Article #1 in a series of articles about the 2023 Minneapolis City Election, brought to you by League of Women Voters Minneapolis***

**CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES ARE ON THE BALLOT—WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE 2021**

Because of the redistricting process completed in 2022, every Minneapolis City Council member will be up for reelection this year to serve a two-year term. In 2025, Council Candidates will be back on the ballot returning to the traditional four-year term. And this will be the first time the 13 City Council members will be elected following major changes to the City Charter (the City's constitution).

Charter Amendment No. 184, passed in the municipal election of 2021, has redefined the City structure. Before this process, the Government Structure Work Group described the City "as a complex patchwork of existing laws that has been in place since 1920." Known for years as a "Weak Mayor-Strong Council" system, Minneapolis has been transformed into an "Executive Mayor-Legislative Council" form of government. But what does that mean? What role will the City Council play now?

In the 1980s Mayor Don Fraser failed to pass a Strong Mayor Charter Amendment, after multiple attempts had been made throughout previous decades. He devised a compromise which passed. He proposed an Executive Committee made up of up of the Mayor, the City Council president, and up to three City Council members. Together they had a say in hiring or firing department heads. But this was described over the years as an unruly "governance by committee". In 2004, Steve Berg, writing in the Star Tribune, called the city's structure "one that makes no one accountable and puts no one in charge". He called it inefficient and costly. Close to twenty years after that article appeared the situation has changed.

The 2021 Charter Amendment No. 184 has consolidated all administrative authority under the office of the Mayor - the City's chief executive officer - in a single chain of command. The Executive Committee has been eliminated. All department heads are chosen and supervised by the Mayor alone. The City Council confirms all of these appointments. Previously the Mayor had appointed only the Chief of Police.

Removed from the day-to-day operations of the City's administration, the City Council, the City's legislative and primary policy-making body, is charged with enacting local laws and public policies. Council members serve ward constituents as advocate and ombudsman. The City Council appoints the City Clerk, establishes an independent Audit Committee, and has general oversight authority, holding the Administration to account. Under the Charter "neither the City Council nor the Council committee or member may usurp, invade, or interfere with the Mayor's direction or supervision of the administration." Clear lines of authority and responsibility have been drawn.

While the Mayor represents the entire city, each Council member serves a ward of about 34,000 people. Your Council person is your public advocate - a link to your community and its' specific issues. Who you elect can determine the outcome of which policies you care about; policies that are not only heard, but ultimately incorporated into decision making. Vote local! Your vote matters!