

March 2025

To Pepper Pike Residents:

On May 6, 2025, you will have the opportunity to vote for Pepper Pike Charter reform, updating the original 1966 Charter, which has seen only a few amendments in nearly 60 years. Unlike many modern charters, ours lacked provisions for periodic reviews. To address this, the City formed a Charter Review Commission (CRC) to evaluate and recommend updates.

Key facts about the CRC and the proposed Charter reform:

- The following **9 members** with diverse expertise were selected by the Mayor and City Council members from over 30 applicants:

<b>Scott Bilsky</b>	<b>Dagmar Fellowes</b>	<b>Stephanie Jarrett</b>
<b>Howard Bochnek</b>	<b>Dr. Gary Hoffman</b>	<b>Robert Reznick</b>
<b>Cindy Eickhoff</b>	<b>Tamara Hrynik</b>	<b>Matthew Vazzana</b>
- The CRC **met 17 times over a period of five months in meetings open to the public**, gathering input from the City Administration, Council, and Pepper Pike Residents.
- **Steve Byron, the City Law Director, attended and advised the Commission** at 14 of the 17 meetings.
- Residents **received mailings, emails, and newsletters** inviting participation.
- Meeting minutes, the Commission's Final Report to Council, and the recommended Charter revisions are **available on the City's website and at [www.pepperpikecharter.com](http://www.pepperpikecharter.com)**.
- City Council accepted the recommendations of Council with minor modifications and placed it on the May 6 ballot.

Some recent social media and website posts have included inaccuracies or incomplete information.

A summary of the proposed changes follows. Scan the QR code or go to [www.pepperpikecharter.com](http://www.pepperpikecharter.com) to view the full text, the Charter Commission's Report, the indexed minutes of the Charter Review Commission, and other important information.



**We encourage you to review the facts  
and make an informed decision at the ballot box.**

**Please VOTE YES on Issue 17 for Charter Reform**

## **Proposed Revisions to the Pepper Pike City Charter:**

**General Updates:** The current charter is out-dated, and much terminology needs correction (e.g. “Village” of Pepper Pike changed to “City”). Also, certain changes are required to make the 1966 Charter compatible with current State law.

**Residency Requirement for Elected Officials:** The current Charter does not provide a residency requirement for City elected officials beyond the one-year imposed by the Ohio Revised Code. **Residency requirements beyond the one-year statutory requirement are common in our neighboring communities**, including: Hunting Valley, five years for both Council members and the Mayor; Gates Mills, three years for both; Chagrin Falls and Orange Village, two years for both; Mayfield Village, two years for Council and three years for Mayor. The CRC agreed that there is value to candidates for elected office having resided in our community long enough to understand it and recommended adding a two-year residency requirement for members of Council and a four-year residency requirement for Mayor.

**Addition of President of Council:** The recommended revised Charter adds the position of President of Council in response to a very significant amount of input from elected officials and community members documenting shortfalls in communication between the Executive Office (Mayor) and the Legislature (Council). Council members also told the CRC that having a President would allow them to function more efficiently as a legislative body. **This is not a novel approach; the vast majority of communities in Cuyahoga County, including our neighboring communities of Chagrin Falls, Moreland Hills, Orange Village, and Woodmere Village, have a President of Council.** This new section provides that the President of Council will preside at Council meetings. Though this would change who manages the agenda during Council meetings, it does not impact the Mayor’s role as the CEO of the City nor the Mayor’s critical role of keeping Council informed and presenting ordinances to Council with respect to the City’s operation. Because the proposed President of Council position would render the Vice Mayor position redundant, the Vice Mayor position would be removed from the Charter.

**Clarifying the Mayor’s Executive Powers:** The section of the Charter delineating the Mayor’s Executive Powers was re-written by the Law Director because this section in the current Charter is very confusing, does not clearly delineate the Mayor’s powers, and also does not reflect the impact of current civil service laws and union contracts on the Mayor’s hiring and firing powers. **The recommended re-write of this section does not make any substantive changes to the Mayor’s current powers as the Chief Executive Officer of the City.**

**Built-in Charter Review:** The recommended Charter includes a built-in Charter review every six years, beginning in 2029.

**Removal Provisions:** Unlike the charters of many neighboring communities, our current Charter does not contain provisions allowing for the removal of officials **in the event of an extraordinary, critical situation where on-going harm to the City may be occurring.** As “guardrails” for the protection of the City, the revision includes removal provisions, which (like impeachment at the federal and state levels) would only be invoked in extraordinary circumstances and, ideally, never. The recommended provisions provide that **BOTH THE MAYOR AND THE MEMBERS OF COUNCIL** can be removed only under specified “Grounds for Removal” (gross misconduct, malfeasance, misfeasance or nonfeasance in office; conviction of a crime of moral turpitude; having been adjudicated legally incompetent; etc.) pursuant to a detailed Due Process procedure, and only by a “super majority” vote of Council (six of seven members to remove the Mayor, five to remove a Council member). **The Grounds for Removal in the proposal are virtually identical to those provided in the charters of many of our neighboring communities, including Chagrin Falls, Gates Mills, Hunting Valley, and Mayfield Village. In fact, by requiring approval of six of seven Council members, the proposal requires a higher standard to remove the Mayor than in those neighboring communities.**

The recommendation also adds similar protective removal provisions with respect to the Law and Finance Directors. Unlike more modern charters, our current Charter does not provide a provision for the removal of the Law or Finance Director. The recommendation is that the Mayor can remove those officials, with confirmation by a majority vote (4 of 7) of Council, and that Council can remove those officials by a “super majority” vote (5 of 7). The latter provision is intended to be an extraordinary “guardrail” protection that would allow a “super majority” of Council to act in the unlikely event that a Mayor is not responsive to removing a problematic official.

**City Planning Commission:** The revised Charter would change the structure of the City Planning Commission (CPC). The CRC received input from Council members and members of the public, expressing concern about the current CPC structure, in which the Mayor serves as both the Chair and a voting member, appoints all three electorate members, AND hires the professionals who advise the CPC. **The purpose of a municipal planning commission is for residents with expertise in planning and related fields to make decisions on requested variances from City ordinances and to guide the City in the critical areas of land use planning and zoning.** The recommendation increases the number of resident members from three to four, increasing the representation and voting power of the appointed residents. The resident members will be identified through a formal application process and will be vetted and appointed by all eight of the City’s elected officials, the Mayor and the seven members of Council. Because the CPC interprets ordinances, the proposal provides that the City Council representative to the CPC will serve as its chair. The length of CPC members’ terms is recommended to be reduced from six to four years with a goal of widening the potential applicant pool and increasing community member expertise and involvement on this critical City commission

**Please VOTE YES on May 6 for Charter Reform**