

THE COUNCIL

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THE COUNCIL

Cross References

Investigating financial transactions - see CHTR. [Sec. 33](#)

Council action on initiative - see CHTR. [Sec. 44](#)

Council action on referendum - see CHTR. Sec. 50

Election of Council members - see CHTR. Sec. 205

Public Defender - see ADM. [Ch. 173](#)

Sec. 3. - Legislative powers.

The legislative powers of the city, except as reserved to the people by this charter, shall be vested in a council, consisting of nine members elected from districts by the electors of the city.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 4. - Council members.

Each member of council shall be elected from one of nine districts by the electors of the city. All council members shall serve for a term of four years.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 4-1. - Transition.

This section provides for a transition from the seven-member council elected at-large to the nine-member council provided by this charter, and maintains the current practice of staggered terms for members of council. Notwithstanding [Sec. 3](#) of this charter, council shall be composed of seven members elected at-large until the first day of January in 2024. Notwithstanding [Sec. 4](#) of this charter, the terms of all council members elected or appointed prior to the 2023 general election shall end on the first day of January in 2024. At the primary election in 2023, candidates for council shall be nominated from nine districts by the electors of the city, and at the general election in 2023, nine council members shall be elected from nine districts by the electors of the city. At the first meeting of council in 2024, the city clerk shall divide the council districts into two classes by drawing lots. Lot A shall consist of five districts and the members from those districts shall serve a four year term. Lot B shall consist of four districts and the members from those districts shall serve a two year term, and candidates for those districts shall stand for election to a four year term in 2025, marking the end of the transition period.

(Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 5. - Vacancies.

If a city council member dies, resigns, is removed from office, ceases to hold any qualification for office, or the office is otherwise vacated during the term of office, a successor, having the qualifications of a council member for the vacant seat, shall be appointed by council to serve until the first day of January following the next regular municipal election. If such election be the time for the regular election of the council member, a council member shall then be elected to serve for a term of four years; otherwise, for the unexpired term. If the vacancies in the council are not filled by the council within forty-five days from the date following the occurrence of such vacancy, the mayor shall have in all future balloting a vote on the question of filling such vacancies. Council shall adopt, in the administrative code, procedures to govern the filling of vacancies and such procedures shall require the council to hold at least one (1) public hearing prior to any appointment.

(Amended 11-2-93; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 5-1. - Temporary inability.

If a city council member is unable to discharge the powers and duties of office, such inability being of temporary duration, the member, or the member's agent, shall transmit to the presiding officer of council a signed, written declaration setting forth the reasons for such inability and the city clerk shall be notified of the same. Such declaration shall be in effect until such time as the declaration is rescinded in like manner, or six months have passed, or the office is vacated. For the purpose of this section, each council member shall file with the city clerk a notarized statement, on a form prescribed by the city clerk, setting forth the name of one or more persons designated as the member's agent(s). The filing shall be made by the second meeting of council each January and may be amended at any time.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 5-2. - Permanent inability.

If a city council member has been unable to discharge the powers and duties of office for ninety consecutive days, and no written declaration of temporary inability was in effect during such ninety consecutive days, such act shall work a forfeiture of office and the presiding member of council shall request that the appropriate official commence in the appropriate court an action in quo warranto to vacate the office. If judgment be made that the office be vacated, a successor shall be named as provided for in this charter.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 6. - Qualifications of council members.

Members of council shall be electors of the city, shall have resided within the corporate limits of the city of Columbus and the district the member represents for not less than one consecutive year preceding the date of the regular primary election for such office, and shall, at all times during the term of office, maintain residence in the city of Columbus and the district the member represents as the boundaries of the district were drawn at the time of the council member's appointment or election. Council members shall not hold any other public office except that of notary public, or member of the state militia or any reserve unit of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Any member who shall cease to possess any of the qualifications herein required shall forthwith forfeit the office and the vacancy shall be filled as provided for herein.

(Amended 11-5-85; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 7. - Districting for Council.

An independent, citizen-led districting commission shall be appointed by March 1st in the year 2021. A districting commission shall then be appointed by March 1st in the year 2031 and each tenth year thereafter. The purpose of the districting commission is to conduct an open and transparent process enabling public consideration of and comment on the drawing of council district lines, culminating in the recommendation of three districting plans to council.

(Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 7-1. - Membership of the Districting Commission.

The commission shall be formed as follows: by a two-thirds vote the council shall appoint four members, and the fifth member, who shall serve as chair of the commission, shall be jointly appointed by the mayor and president of council. All members must be qualified electors of the city. Members should reflect, to the extent practicable, the diversity of the city. No person may serve on the commission if the person is an elected official (except precinct committee members), a lobbyist registered with the City of Columbus, a candidate for elective office, or a city employee. The appointing authority may remove a member of the commission for neglect of duty, gross misconduct, failure to meet the qualification herein, or inability to discharge the duties of the commission, and such decision shall be final. All vacancies shall be filled in the same manner prescribed for the original appointment.

The commission shall be considered a public body. The records of the commission shall be a permanent public record. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum to do business. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation. The council shall appropriate sufficient funds to meet the reasonable operational needs of the commission.

(Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 7-2. - Districting criteria.

The districting commission shall create and submit three districting plans which lay out the boundaries of the nine council districts for the city of Columbus, using the following criteria:

1.

Districts shall comply with the United States and Ohio constitutions, this charter, and all applicable local, state and federal laws, including, but not limited to, the federal Voting Rights Act and any successor thereto.

2.

Each district shall have reasonably equal population with other districts based on data from the most recent federal census, except where deviation is required to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act and any successor thereto or is otherwise allowable by law; but in no instance may the population of the largest district exceed that of the smallest district by more than one percent.

3.

Districts shall be geographically contiguous, with boundaries of each district comprised of a single nonintersecting continuous line.

4.

To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn to encourage geographic compactness such that nearby areas of population are not bypassed for more distant populations.

5.

To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn to maintain the geographic integrity of a neighborhood or community of interest.

6.

To the extent practicable, district boundaries shall be drawn using the boundaries of existing election precincts, council districts, and geographically identifiable boundaries, such as roads and waterways.

7.

Districts shall not be drawn for the overt purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political group.

(Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 7-3. - Adoption of a Districting Plan.

The commission shall develop no less than three districting plans that comply with the requirements of the charter. In developing these plans, the first districting commission shall conduct public meetings in nine areas of the city before submitting plans to council; and subsequent commissions shall hold one public meeting in each of the nine council districts. Audiovisual records of the meetings shall be made available using a medium readily accessible by the general public.

The commission shall provide a means whereby any resident of the city of Columbus may submit a proposed districting plan for review by the commission. The commission shall establish and publicize a period of no less than 30 consecutive days for residents to submit such plans.

The commission shall make at least three plans available for public inspection and comment no less than 30 consecutive days prior to approval and submission of such plans to the council.

No later than nine months after appointment, the commission shall vote to approve and submit three districting plans to the council, including with each plan a statement explaining how the plan complies with the districting requirements herein. Council shall not modify any districting plan or portion thereof, except to ensure compliance with the requirements of this charter. No later than December 31st of the year of submission, council shall pass an ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, adopting one of the districting plans. The districting plan so adopted shall be effective at the next succeeding primary and general municipal elections and shall remain in effect until a new districting plan has been approved as provided for herein.

Upon council adoption of a districting plan, the districting commission shall be automatically dissolved.

If territory is annexed into the city after the adoption of the districting plan, council shall by ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, amend the districting plan to attach the territory to the contiguous council district sharing the largest boundary with the territory. If territory is detached from the city after adoption of the districting plan, council shall by ordinance, which shall be an emergency measure, amend the districting plan to detach the territory from the council district within which it previously resided.

If a districting plan is invalidated by a court of competent jurisdiction, the prior district map shall remain in effect and the provisions of this charter shall be followed forthwith to develop a new districting plan.

(Ord. No. [0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 8. - Meetings of council.

At 5 o'clock p.m., on the first Monday in January, following a regular municipal election, the council shall meet at the usual place for holding meetings. If the first Monday in January is a legal holiday, then the meeting shall be held on the following day. Thereafter the council shall meet at such times as may be prescribed by ordinance or resolution; provided that at least fifty regular meetings shall be held in each year. The mayor, the president of the council, or any three members thereof may call special or emergency meetings of the council as provided for by this charter and ordinance of council. All meetings of the council or committees thereof shall be public meetings as provided for by this charter and ordinance of council bodies and the minutes and records thereof shall be maintained as an electronic record that is made available to the public pursuant to the general laws of the state governing public records.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1143-2010, § 1, 7-19-2010; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; [Ord. No. 2200-2022](#), 7-25-2022)

Sec. 9. - Rules.

The council shall determine its own rules and order of business.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Editor's note— Ord. No. 1749-2014, adopted July 21, 2014, amended the title of § 9 to read as set out herein. Former § 9 was titled rules and journal.

Sec. 9-1. - Journal.

The council shall keep a journal of its proceedings, which journal shall be maintained as a permanent electronic record that is made available to the public pursuant to the general laws of the state governing public records.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 9-2. - Organization of council.

The council shall organize itself as it deems appropriate, including the formation of and rules for special committees and standing committees to promote the thorough and effective conduct of the business of the council.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 9-3. - Expelling, removing, forfeiting office.

The council shall be the judge of the election and qualification of its members. Council may punish or expel any member for gross misconduct, or for malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or upon conviction of a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude while in office, or for disorderly conduct, or violation of its rules during the term of office. No expulsion shall take place without the concurrence of six members, nor until the delinquent member shall have been notified of the charge and been given an opportunity to be heard. Any vacancy created upon the expulsion of a member shall be filled as provided for in this charter. In addition to these provisions and those regarding permanent inability, absence from eight consecutive regular council meetings shall operate to vacate the seat of a council member unless the absence is excused by resolution, adopted by vote of three-fifths of its members, setting forth such excuse and entered upon the journal.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 10. - President of council.

At the first meeting in January following a regular municipal election, the council shall elect one of its members president. The president of council shall preside at meetings of the council, determine the agenda for such meetings, appoint the chair and members of council committees, and perform such other duties as may be imposed by the council. If the president of council dies, resigns, is removed from office, ceases to hold any qualification for office, or the office is otherwise vacated during the term of office, the council shall elect one of its members president.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 10-1. - President pro tempore of council.

At the first meeting in January following a regular municipal election, the council shall elect one of its members president pro tempore. The president pro tempore of council shall act as the presiding officer of the council in the absence of the president of council.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 10-2. - Acting president pro tempore of council.

In the absence of the president of council and the president pro tempore of council, the council shall elect one of its members acting president pro tempore.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 11. - The city clerk.

The council shall appoint a city clerk who shall serve at the pleasure of council.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Editor's note— Ord. No. 1749-2014, adopted July 21, 2014, amended the title of § 11 to read as set out herein. Former § 11 was titled clerk and employees.

Sec. 11-1. - Duties of the city clerk.

The office of the city clerk, under the supervision and control of the city clerk, shall keep the records of the council; compile an annual report giving a summary of the council proceedings and a summary of the operations of the administrative departments for the previous fiscal year; collect and compile information and statistics concerning all departments and offices of the city; publish weekly the City Bulletin; and perform such other duties as may be required by this charter or by the council. Except as otherwise provided in this charter or by ordinance of council, the city clerk shall receive on behalf of council all petitions, papers, or like documents required to be submitted to council.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 11-2. - The City Bulletin.

The city clerk shall cause a weekly City Bulletin to be produced. The City Bulletin shall contain the transactions and proceedings of the council, the legal advertising of the city and such other information relating to the affairs of the city as shall be determined by ordinance. The City Bulletin shall be published in such manner and on such terms as the council may determine, and shall be maintained as a permanent electronic record that is made available to the public pursuant to the general laws of the state governing public records. No unofficial advertisement shall be published in the City Bulletin, nor shall the City Bulletin be used to promote the candidacy of any person, or be used as a medium for any personal controversy.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 12. - Reserved.

Editor's note— Ord. No. 1749-2014, adopted July 21, 2014, repealed § 12 in its entirety. Former § 12 pertained to public defender and was derived from Original Charter.

Sec. 13. - The city treasurer.

Council shall appoint a city treasurer who shall serve at the pleasure of council. The treasurer shall perform such duties and exercise such powers as are prescribed in this charter or by the council.

(Amended 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 14. - Officers and employees.

The council shall appoint such officers and employees of council as it deems necessary. Except as herein otherwise provided, council shall by ordinance determine the number of officers and employees in each department of the city government. Council shall exercise no power of appointment for officers or employees except as herein expressly provided.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15. - Compensation of officers and employees.

Subject to the provision of this charter as to the salary of council members, the auditor, the city attorney, and the mayor, council shall fix by ordinance the salary or compensation of all officers and employees of the city government. The salary or compensation so fixed shall be uniform for like service. All such salaries and rates of pay shall be reported to the civil service commission forthwith. The salary of any officer, employee, or member of a board or commission in the unclassified service of the city who was elected or appointed for a definite term shall not be increased or diminished during the term for which the individual was elected or appointed, and all fees pertaining to any office shall be paid into the city treasury.

(Amended 11-5-85; 11-3-98; Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-1. - Citizens' commission on elected official compensation.

The salary of all elective officers provided for in this charter shall be established by ordinance upon recommendation from a citizens' commission on elected official compensation.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-2. - Commission membership.

The citizens' commission on elected official compensation shall consist of five members, who shall be qualified electors of the city, shall not hold any other office or employment in the city government, and shall serve without compensation. Two members shall be appointed by the council, two members shall be appointed by the mayor, and one member shall be jointly appointed by the council and the mayor, such member serving as chair of the commission. Such appointments shall take place at the second regular meeting of council in 2018 and of each succeeding fourth year thereafter; except that the first commission shall be appointed at the second regular meeting of council in 2015. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as prescribed for the original appointment. The commission shall be considered a public body.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-3. - Commission duties.

The commission shall conduct a review of salaries for like positions in the public sector. The review shall be made for the purpose of recommending salaries appropriate to the duties and responsibilities of each elective officer of the city.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-4. - Commission report.

Within three months of appointment, the commission shall submit to the city clerk a report of recommendations for the salary of each elective officer of the city, including an annual cost of living adjustment which shall not exceed the average increase in the consumer price index, or successor thereto, during the preceding four years. If the commission fails to timely submit the report, the council may compel a meeting of the commission to prepare and submit the same.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 15-5. - Council action to establish salaries.

After the report is submitted, council shall by ordinance either accept the commission recommendations or any portion thereof, or reject the same. If council rejects the recommendations, the salaries then in effect shall remain unchanged. In no event may council adopt an ordinance establishing salaries which exceed the recommendations of the commission.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 16. - Official bonds.

The council may determine whether any officer or employee shall give a bond, and the amount thereof; which bond shall be given by such officer or employee, and be signed by a surety company authorized to do business in Ohio, to the approval of the mayor; provided that the bond of the mayor, if any, shall be approved by council. Council shall by ordinance provide for the payment, by the city, of the premiums on such bonds.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014)

Sec. 17. - Legislative procedure.

Five members shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a lesser number may adjourn from day to day and compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as may be prescribed by ordinance.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; [Ord. No. 0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)

Sec. 18. - Action on ordinances or resolutions.

The action of council shall be by ordinance or resolution and the affirmative vote of at least five members of council shall be necessary to adopt any ordinance or resolution. The vote upon the passage of all ordinances, and upon the adoption of such resolution as the council by its rules shall prescribe, shall be taken by "yea" and "nays" and entered upon the journal. Every ordinance and resolution of the council, so adopted, shall be maintained as a permanent electronic record that is made available to the public pursuant to the general laws of the state governing public records.

(Ord. No. 1749-2014, 7-21-2014; [Ord. No. 0650-2018](#), § 2, 3-5-2018)