


WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL AGENDA BILL

NO. 2015 - 216

CLEARANCES	Initial	Date	Date Received in Council Office	Agenda Date	Assigned to:
Originator:		7/7/2015		7/7/2015	Introduction
Division Head:				7/21/2015	Public Hearing
Dept. Head:		7.7.15			
Prosecutor:					
Purchasing/Budget:					
Executive:					

TITLE OF DOCUMENT:

Ordinance - amend Charter to require supermajority to propose Charter amendments

ATTACHMENTS:

SEPA review required? () Yes () NO	Should Clerk schedule a hearing? (X) Yes () NO
SEPA review completed? () Yes () NO	Requested Date: 7/21/2015

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE: (If this item is an ordinance or requires a public hearing, you must provide the language for use in the required public notice. Be specific and cite RCW or WCC as appropriate. Be clear in explaining the intent of the action.)

Ordinance proposing an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to require a supermajority of either the entire Charter Review Commission or the County Council to propose Charter amendments

COMMITTEE ACTION:

COUNCIL ACTION:

7/7/2015: Introduced 7-0

Related County Contract #:

Related File Numbers:

Ordinance or Resolution
Number:

Please Note: Once adopted and signed, ordinances and resolutions are available for viewing and printing on the County's website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council.

SPONSORED BY: CONSENT
PROPOSED BY: CONSENT
INTRODUCTION DATE: JULY 7, 2015

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE WHATCOM COUNTY CHARTER
TO REQUIRE A SUPERMAJORITY OF EITHER THE ENTIRE CHARTER
REVIEW COMMISSION OR THE COUNTY COUNCIL TO
PROPOSE CHARTER AMENDMENTS**

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Charter requires the Whatcom County Council to have five affirmative votes in order to propose A Charter amendment to the voters; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has been granted the authority in the Whatcom County Charter to propose Charter amendments to the voters by filing their proposed amendments with the County Council and having the County Council submit amendments to the voters; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Council and the Whatcom Charter Review Commission should be held to the same standards in public participation and in submitting Charter amendments to the voters; and

WHEREAS, achieving a supermajority agreement on proposing Charter amendments requires a greater effort to set aside partisan agendas and achieve bipartisan consensus than a simple majority vote; and

WHEREAS, reaching a supermajority agreement means more diverse opinions are heard, included, and considered; and

WHEREAS, Charter Review Commission amendments have been proposed with limited or no opportunity for public comment and without broad support, achieving only a simple majority vote; and

WHEREAS, elected officials should work together for the good of all the people of Whatcom County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that the County Auditor place on the November 2015 general election ballot a Charter amendment, as outlined in Exhibit A to this ordinance, requiring a supermajority vote of two-thirds of the entire membership of either the Charter Review Commission or the Whatcom County Council to submit or propose a charter amendment to the voters; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that both the Charter Review Commission and the Whatcom County Council shall be held to the same high percentage of votes required in order to propose Charter amendments to the voters and neither body shall be required to achieve a higher or lower threshold than the other for proposing any Charter amendment to the voters.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2015.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Carl Weimer, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Jack Louws, County Executive

() Approved () Denied

Date Signed: _____

Whatcom County Council Charter Amendment #

As adopted by the Whatcom County Council: Shall all Charter amendments proposed by either the Charter Review Commission or the County Council be required to receive a supermajority vote of the entire membership of the Commission or Council in order to be placed on the ballot for voters to consider, with no requirement for a higher number?

Ballot Title:

REDUCING PARTISAN AMENDMENTS THROUGH SUPERMAJORITY AGREEMENT

The Whatcom County Council has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter concerning equal standards to submit Charter amendments. This measure would amend 8.21 and 8.23 of the Whatcom County Charter to require any amendment proposed by the County Council or the Charter Review Commission to have a supermajority vote of the of the Commission or Council, with no requirement for a higher number. Should this proposal be:

APPROVED _____
REJECTED _____

Amended Charter Language

Section 8.21 Amendments by the Charter Review Commission.

The Commission may propose amendments to the Charter by filing such proposed amendments with the County Council who shall submit the amendment to the voters at the next November general election at least ninety (90) days after the filing and registration of the amendments. A supermajority (ten of fifteen) of affirmative votes of the entire membership shall be required to file a proposed amendment with the County Council and no amendment shall require a higher number.

Section 8.23 Amendments by the County Council.

The County Council may propose amendments to the Charter by enacting an ordinance to submit a proposed amendment to the voters at the next November general election occurring at least ninety (90) days after enactment. A supermajority (five of seven) of affirmative votes of the entire membership shall be required to enact such an ordinance and no amendment shall require a higher number. An ordinance proposing an amendment to the Charter shall not be subject to the veto power of the County Executive.

The County Council by unanimous vote of the entire Council may effect amendments to the language of the Charter where the passage of time has rendered language moot or obsolete. Such changes shall be made by ordinance, and have a public hearing. (Amended by referendum 1995)