

## **Final Report of the Hallowell Charter Commission**

The Hallowell Charter Commission, duly established by law, held its organizational meeting on November 30, 2015. The Members of the Charter Commission are: David Bustin, Christie Cross, Scott Cowger, Eric Perry, Maureen Aucoin, Richard Dolby, Bob McIntire and Stephen Langsdorf. The Commission elected Stephen Langsdorf Chair, Scott Cowger, Vice Chair and Richard Dolby as Secretary.

The Commission has met on the following dates: January 13, February 10, March 9, April 13, May 10, June 22, July 13, and August 3, 2016, and had duly noticed public hearings on May 10, and August 10, 2016.

Attached to this report are the proposed final amendments to the Hallowell Charter to be presented to the Hallowell City Council on September 12, 2016. Also attached is a letter from William Lee, Esquire, certifying that the proposed amendments to the Charter are in compliance with the law.

The draft Charter does not make significant changes to the structure of City Manager/City Council government in the City of Hallowell. The size of the Council (seven members plus a Mayor) and the five wards and two at-large Council makeup will not change.

The changes to the Charter include:

- Mayor and Council terms increase from two to three years. Rather than each Councilor and Mayor serving two year terms, where as much as half the Council and the Mayor may be overturned every year, the Charter proposes staggered three year terms for Councilors and the Mayor;
- The proposed new Charter adds a limit to the bonding authority for the City Council. Any bond which would require the City to borrow \$250,000 or more annually must be approved by referendum election of the citizens;
- Currently all appointments within the City are for one year and every office is reappointed annually at the first January meeting. This process requires annual Council appointment of employees who are subject to the control of the City Manager. Councilors have been required to make decisions regarding reappointment of employees without having knowledge as to their personnel files or details of their employment. The changes to the Charter make it clear that the Mayor, with Council confirmation, will make appointments for the length of the term of office and the Council will confirm certain appointments of the City Manager on a one-time basis. Thereafter those employees would be subject to the normal hiring and discipline process and would not need to be reappointed annually by the Council;
- Adding a Board of Assessment Review so that Hallowell can have a local Board of Appeals for appeals of tax abatement cases;

- The section involving schools has been updated to follow current Maine law;
- Number of signatures on petitions to run for a ward council seat increased from 10-20 to 25-50;
- The Councilors' annual salary will be increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500 and the Mayor's annual salary will be increased \$1,600 to \$2,500 (has not changed since 2006);
- The standard for initiative and referendum has been modified so that rather than petitions for a people's veto or enactment of an ordinance requiring 25% of the voters, that has been reduced to 15%;
- Mayor no longer may be Acting City Manager if a vacancy occurs, he must appoint someone until next Council meeting.
- Housekeeping, renumbering and better organization.

Respectfully submitted:



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Stephen E.F. Langsdorf, Chair

Date: September 1, 2016

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