

Learn About & Vote On Somerville's Proposed New City Charter



Two Charter-Related Ballot Questions Are on the November 4th Ballot

City of Somerville Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

What do voters get to decide?

- On November 4, 2025, voters will decide on whether to approve a new city charter. This is the first time this question has been put before the voters since 1899.
- In a separate question on the ballot, voters will decide whether the term of a mayor should be increased from 2 to 4 years. If approved, this change would go into effect no earlier than the 2028 term.

What is a Charter? Why does it matter?

- Somerville's Charter serves as our local constitution. It's like a set of directions on who does what, when, where, and how in city government.
- The National League of Cities explains it is "the basic document that defines the organization, powers, functions and essential procedures of the city government" and that the charter is "the most important legal document of any city".
- The city's current charter was adopted by Somerville voters in 1899.

What are the four steps we are taking to update the charter?

- ✓ **DONE!** Community members update the charter via the Charter Review Committee
- ✓ **DONE!** The City Council and City finalize the proposed charter
- ✓ **DONE!** Elected Officials approve the charter: That includes the City Council, the Mayor, the State Legislature & the Governor



VOTERS TO DECIDE NOV. 4: The charter proposal goes before the voters of Somerville on the November 4, 2025, ballot. For information on when and where to vote, visit somervillema.gov/elections.

What are some key updates in the proposed charter?

- Guiding values added such as justice, empowerment, ethical leadership & equitable opportunity
- Modern language that is easier to read (no more Latin)
- Increased oversight powers for City Council including for confirmation of department heads and board and commission members, audit reporting & hiring of Council legal counsel and staff
- Updated budget processes including requiring:
 - a community budget hearing before budgeting starts
 - an annual joint City Council and School Committee meeting, called by the Mayor, to review city finances
 - a public hearing on the proposed budget before the Council takes action
- Charter requirements that are in line with modern practices
- Required review of the charter, code of ordinances & boards and commissions every 10 years
- Required public presentation to the Council on the findings of the annual independent audit

What are highlights of what was kept from the current charter?

- The current form of government remains unchanged: the Mayor serves as the chief executive officer and the City Council serves as the legislative branch.
- The composition of the City Council and the School Committee is unchanged.
- A 2-year term of office for all elected officials remains, and voters will decide on Nov. 4 whether to extend the Mayoral term to 4 years in the future.

What are the two charter-related questions that will be on the Nov. 4 ballot?

QUESTION 1

- Shall the City adopt Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2025 an act passed by the general court in the year 2025 entitled: An Act establishing a charter for the City of Somerville?

Yes_____ No_____

QUESTION 2

- Shall the term of office for the mayor of the city of Somerville be for 4 years?

Yes_____ No_____

***For more information and to read the ballot question summaries,
visit somervillema.gov/charterreview***