

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Albany County Charter Review Commission
Harold L. Joyce Albany County Office Building
112 State Street, Room 620
Albany, New York 12207-2021

Albany County Charter Review Commission Delivers Final Report to County Legislature and County Executive

The Albany County Charter Review Commission (the “Commission”) today delivered its final report to the County Legislature and County Executive. The Commission was established to evaluate and review the Albany County Charter (the “Charter”), which has been in place since 1976. The Commission was charged with recommending potential revisions to the Charter that would improve the efficiency, performance and accountability of County government. The Commission is composed of 11 non-elected citizens of the County appointed by the leadership of the County Legislature.

Commencing in January 2013, the Commission conducted a comprehensive review of all 30 articles in the County Charter. The Commission held 23 meetings — all open to the public — in addition to a public hearing. At these meetings, the Commission heard presentations from virtually every department, office and other significant administrative unit in County government. Additionally, the Commission interviewed County-wide elected officials (current and former), legislative leaders, and numerous others.

In its final report, the Commission found the current Charter no longer well serves the residents of Albany County. The Charter is out-of-date, poorly organized, and difficult to read; plus no one can say with certainty what provisions are in effect. In fact, the last comprehensive review of the Charter occurred over 20 years ago — and it shows. The woeful state of the Charter led the Commission to believe the document cannot be mended with minor tweaks and surgical revisions.

Accordingly, the Commission painstakingly rewrote and reorganized the current Charter. The Commission’s report includes a proposed revised draft of the Charter that contains

hundreds of revisions to the document. Among the notable recommendations reflected in the Commission's rewrite of the Charter are the following:

- Reduce the size of the County Legislature by 14-members from 39 to 25.
- Establish a non-partisan, independent and inclusive reapportionment commission to permanently reform how County legislative districts are drawn.
- Replace the County's four, part-time elected Coroners with a single full-time Medical Examiner (a licensed physician) appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Legislature.
- Institute a merit selection process for appointment of the County's Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender; the independence of defense services requires the exclusion of political factors between the head of the County's defender agencies and the attorneys staffing them.
- Consolidate certain agency functions by:
 - Merging the Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning into the County Executive's Office; and
 - Merging the Department of Aging into the Department of Social Services.
- Establish economic development as one of the core purposes of County government.
- Codify succession procedures for elected officials and department heads in the event they are unable to exercise the powers and duties of their offices.
- Mandate an Administrative Code to organize the administration of County government and codify legislation, rules and regulations.
- Delineate the powers and duties of elected officials, department heads and the heads of certain other administrative units.
- Create a new Division of Purchase, within the Department of Management and Budget, tasked with developing uniform system of competitive bidding and procurement of goods and services by the County.
- Establish the Department of Probation as a freestanding, independent department of County government.

The Commission's submission to the County's top policymakers includes a supplemental report in support of its recommendation to reduce the size of the County Legislature. This report provides a brief history of the size of the County Legislature, a discussion of the

factors which led the Commission to recommend a 14-member reduction, and additional recommendations for the next round of legislative redistricting.

Click [here](#) to view the Commission's full report (which includes the proposed revised draft of the Charter) and [here](#) for the supplemental report and recommendations regarding a reduction in the size of the County Legislature.

For more information about the Commission, visit www.albanycounty.com/Government/CharterReviewCommission.aspx.

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