

Questions for Public Hearings



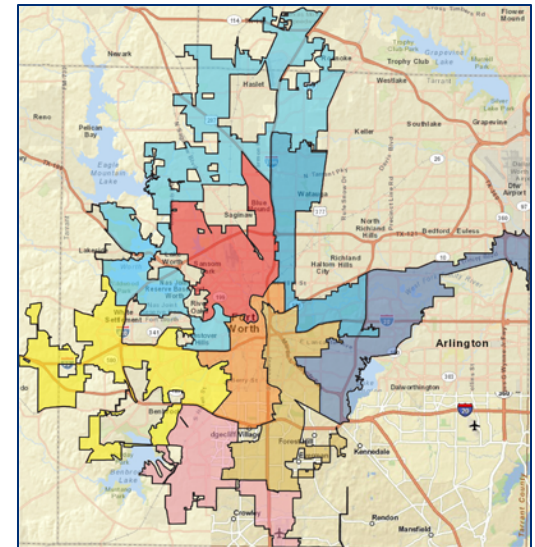
As Revised by Charter Review Task Force
September 3, 2015

Increasing the Number of Council Members

The city council is currently composed of the mayor who is elected city-wide and eight council members elected from single-member districts. Each council member in Fort Worth represents approximately 101,000 citizens.

In Austin, Dallas, El Paso, and Oklahoma City, each council member represents fewer than 100,000 residents. In San Antonio, however, each of their ten council members represents more than 140,000.

- Would increasing the number of single-member districts, perhaps from eight to ten, provide **all Fort Worth residents** with better representation?
- Would increasing the number of districts provide **minority groups**, such as Hispanics and African-Americans, with better representation?
- Would increasing the number of districts provide better representation for residents from different **geographic areas**, including older urban neighborhoods within Loop 820 and newer suburban neighborhoods beyond the Loop?



Terms of Office

Fort Worth's mayor and city council members currently serve two-year terms and are elected in odd-numbered years.

Council members in Dallas and San Antonio also serve for two years. Council members serve for three years in Austin and Charlotte, and for four years in El Paso, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City.

- Could longer terms increase the **effectiveness** of the mayor and council members?
- Would longer terms in any way reduce their **accountability**?
- Should the **cost** savings of holding less frequent elections, i.e. up to approximately \$550,000 per municipal election, be a significant factor in this decision?



Staggered Terms

Fort Worth's mayor and city council now serve concurrent two-year terms. Dallas, San Antonio, Charlotte, and Kansas City also have concurrent terms, while Austin, El Paso, and Oklahoma City stagger their terms.

- Would staggered terms provide the city council with greater **continuity and stability**?
- Is it important to limit the amount of **turnover** that could occur in any city council election?
- Is it important to elect the mayor and all council members at the **same time**?
- Do the **terms of office**, i.e. two years versus three or four years, affect the importance of staggering those terms?
- Should the **cost** of holding elections be a significant factor in this decision?



Compensation

The mayor is currently paid \$29,000 per year and the council members are paid \$25,000, but the time demands on the mayor and council members have increased over the years as the city has grown in size and complexity.

In comparable cities, salaries range from \$24,000 for the mayor and \$12,000 for council members in Oklahoma City to more than \$123,000 for the mayor and \$61,000 for council members in Kansas City.

- Is it important to consider the **time demands** of the position when setting compensation?
- Is it important to consider the city's **budget**?
- Would increasing the compensation allow **more citizens** an opportunity to serve in public office?



Conflicts of Interest

The city charter currently provides that no elected official or employee shall have a direct or indirect financial interest in a contract with the city. For example, if you work for the city, your spouse may not enter into a contract to provide goods or services to the City. Similar language appears in the charters of most comparable cities. Furthermore, the City's Ethics Code elaborates upon this prohibition by discussing what constitutes a direct or indirect financial interest.

- Is it important to **retain** this provision in the city charter?
- Is this provision sufficiently **clear and understandable**?
- Could this provision from time to time **prevent** the city from entering into beneficial contracts?

