

---

# What's on the ballot: Learn more about the ballot questions

The Minneapolis Charter Commission has submitted two proposed charter amendments that are appearing on the General Election ballot this November. The first addresses municipal filing fees and the second aims at leveling liquor licensing regulations.

## Municipal Filing Fees

***City Question 1: FILING FEE FOR CITY ELECTED OFFICES** - Shall the Minneapolis City Charter be amended to increase the filing fees for candidates seeking City elected offices from the current fee of \$20 for each office to \$500 for the office of Mayor, \$250 for the office of Council Member, \$100 for the office of Board of Estimate and Taxation Member, and \$100 for the office of Park & Recreation Commissioner and, as an alternative to payment of a filing fee, allow a candidate to submit a petition of voter signatures as provided in state law?*

A proposal to increase municipal filing fees - the fees candidates pay to officially get on the ballot for mayor, city council, and other city-based contests - ping-ponged between the Charter Commission and the City Council several times over the past year and a half. The proposal failed to secure a unanimous vote of all 13 Council Members at a meeting in June that would have allowed the change to be administratively enacted. Instead, the Charter Commission is submitting the question to Minneapolis voters on their ballots this November.

The current \$20 filing fee was set by state statute in 1967, and has not been modified since that time. Charter cities, like Minneapolis, can change filing fees through charter amendments. Three separate proposals to update municipal filing fees have been submitted by the Charter Commission over the past year, leading up to the final proposal that is being put before voters. The ballot question proposes to set filing fees for local offices as follows:

- 
- **For Mayor - \$500**
  - **For Council Member - \$250**
  - **For Board of Estimate & Taxation Member - \$100**
  - **& For Park & Recreation Commissioner - \$100**

---

State law also gives candidates the option to file via petition rather than pay a fee, an option that would still be available with increased fee amounts. The statute requires a candidate to gather either 500 signatures of registered voters, or the signatures of registered voters equal to 5 percent of the total votes cast in the last election for that particular office, whichever is less.

If the increased fees recommended by the Charter Commission are adopted by voters, they would become effective at the next regularly scheduled municipal election in 2017.

---

## 70:30 Liquor Licensing Regulations

***City Question 2: REMOVE MANDATORY FOOD REQUIREMENTS FOR WINE LICENSES*** - *Shall the Minneapolis City Charter be amended to remove the requirement that businesses holding on-sale wine licenses in the City must serve food with every order of wine or beer and to remove mandatory food to wine and beer sales ratios?*

In 1966, voters approved a charter amendment authorizing liquor licenses to be issued to restaurants in smaller commercial areas outside the city's downtown zone as long as at least 70 percent of their gross receipts came from the sale of food. Customers could only be served alcohol in those restaurants if they also ordered a meal. The intent was to prevent restaurants which served beer and wine from becoming problem areas for neighborhoods and residents.

Today, a growing number of restaurants, largely located in south and southwest Minneapolis, fall under this food-to-alcohol formula, sometimes referred to as "70:30" regulations.

Under a separate 60:40 mathematical formula, set by ordinance, the City licenses restaurants to serve beer and wine for properties located in larger commercial nodes that are at least seven acres in size.

As a consequence, there are two sets of regulations that apply differently, based primarily on location within the city. The City of Minneapolis is interested in updating and modernizing its liquor licensing regulations to align with changes in the economy of scale between costs for prepared food and beverage alcohol. Work on updating the existing 60:40 license provisions has already been undertaken; however, changes to the city charter which affect 70:30 licensing regulations must be submitted to voters to be changed.

The Charter amendment ballot question is being proposed to accompany the ordinance changes to replace the existing food-to-alcohol sales requirements and feature new policy definitions for restaurants and bar areas designed so that establishments have a level playing field, whether located in commercial or residential areas.

The proposed amendments also include new management responsibilities for restaurant operators which require monitoring of sound and customer behaviors in and near their businesses. Finally, the proposed amendments give the City Council greater flexibility in issuing licenses, including the ability to restrict hours of operation for outdoor alcohol service areas and limits on the levels of entertainment that can be provided.

If the ballot question is approved by 55 percent of those voting on the question (the higher threshold is required for provisions relating to liquor), the existing 70:30 licensing regulations would be eliminated from the city charter. The companion licensing regulations related to alcohol would be handled by ordinance under the City's general governing powers provided by state law.