

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

MEETING MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Everett Charter Review Committee was called to order at 4:30 p.m., March 31, 2026, by Chair Sniffen, in the 10th floor Mayor Conference Room located at City Hall 2930 Wetmore Ave.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Members Present: Brady Begin, Randy Bolerjack, Leland Dart, Grant Harrington, Emily Hoke, Shari Ireton, Tom Norcott, Zsofia Pasztor, Alan Rubio, Mason Rutledge, Rod Sniffen, Elizabeth Stenhouse, John Traynor, and Deb Williams.

Committee Members Absent: Eli Vasquez

City Staff: Jennifer Gregerson (Government Affairs Director), and Ashleigh Scott (Legal Administrator)

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of March 12, 2026, meeting were approved.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The meeting agenda of March 31, 2026, meeting was approved.

4. SECTION 2: TERM LIMITS

Chair Sniffen led the discussion. The committee reviewed a term-limit proposal, with materials provided by Jennifer Gregerson, and originating from community advocacy groups. Members discussed examples from other jurisdictions: Clallam County and Port Angeles have three four-year terms (12 years total), Spokane has two terms, and Tacoma has a 10-year system. Historically in Everett, no mayor has exceeded 14 years in office, and long tenures on City Council were more common prior to district-based elections.

Deb Williams made a motion to adopt three four-year term limits for both the Mayor and City Council, with partial terms of two years or less not counting toward the term limit. The motion was seconded by John Traynor for discussion.

Arguments in Favor of Term Limits:

- Some members emphasized the difficulty challengers face when running against long-term incumbents, especially in low-turnout districts.



- Term limits were seen as a way to increase civic engagement, open opportunities for new candidates, and prevent entrenched political power.
- Supporters argued that political roles are meant to be civil service positions, not lifelong careers, and that periodic change can renew community energy and accountability.
- Comparisons were made to federal presidential term limits as evidence that term limits can be beneficial.
- Several members noted low voter engagement and the perception that elections are predetermined, discouraging new candidates from running.
- Advocacy organizations supporting the proposal included Indivisible, Snohomish County 360, and other local groups.

Arguments Against Term Limits:

- Opponents expressed concern that term limits restrict voter choice and are unnecessary where elections already provide accountability.
- Members noted risks of losing institutional knowledge and weakening the ability of officeholders to stand up to special interests.
- Some stated that low candidate turnout reflects deeper issues – such as party dynamics, campaign financing, and limited civic engagement – rather than the absence of term limits.
- Term limits were seen by some as addressing symptoms rather than root causes associated with political participation.
- When elected officials cycle out frequently, lobbyists, senior staff, and outside interest groups – who remain in place – can gain disproportionate influence. Because appointed staff are not directly accountable to voters, opponents argue this may reduce transparency and weaken democratic oversight.
- If officeholders know they will be leaving after a fixed number of years, they may be less inclined to take on complex, long-horizon projects that require continuity. Opponents argue that predictable leadership turnover can create short-term thinking, disrupt progress on major initiatives, and lead to inconsistent policy direction.

Question and Clarifications Raised:

- Whether term limits apply to both the Mayor and all City Council seats – Motion language confirms they do.
- How vacancies or uncontested races would be handled; members noted existing charter processes for appointments.
- Whether individuals may return after sitting out a term (4-years); proposal allows eligibility after a four-year break.
- Whether service in different council positions (district vs. at-large) should count separately; examples from the county were discussed.
- Whether accumulated campaign funds create incumbent advantages; raised as an underlying structural issue.
- Whether shifting to a council-manager form of government should be discussed in parallel; group returned focus to the motion at hand.

Additional:

2

**These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length recording and transcription of the meeting, please visit: <https://www.everettwa.gov/630/Charter-Review-Committee>*



- Members expressed mixed personal views, with several still undecided but acknowledging the importance of succession planning, generational turnover, and inviting new voices into civic leadership.
- Some members described local examples of both positive long-term service and burnout among long-serving officials.
- Historical examples of incumbents losing mayoral races were briefly referenced.

The committee voted to direct the City Attorney’s Office to draft an ordinance based on the motion language provided by Deb Williams. The motion passed with a vote of 10-4.

5. SECTION 2.2: HOLDING ONLY ONE ELECTED OFFICE AT A TIME

Chair Sniffen led the discussion. The committee considered proposed changes to Charter Section 2.2, addressing whether the Mayor or a City Council member may hold another elected office simultaneously. The issue was raised by several committee members and through public input.

Members generally supported clarifying and strengthening the prohibition on holding more than one elected office. However, concerns were raised about unintended consequences. Specifically, in certain governmental structures, such as fire authorities or other special districts, city council members may temporarily serve as board members by operation of law. Members emphasized that these statutory or structural assignments should not be restricted by charter language.

Randy Bolerjack proposed specifying the particular elected offices that a mayor or council member may not hold concurrently, rather than using a blanket prohibition. The intent is to avoid conflicts while ensuring flexibility for legally mandated board service. A motion to develop language enumerating prohibited offices was made and seconded by Deb Williams.

Clarification Questions:

Members asked for simpler explanations of how board assignments work, and staff provided examples:

- Formation of a fire authority where the city council briefly serves as the interim governing board.
- Regional boards (e.g., Sound Transit, Community Transit) where representation is tied to the office held, not a separate elected position.

Scope:

Discussion focused on whether restrictions should apply only to elected offices, not appointed or employment roles. Several members noted:

- The draft language from one committee member stated no mayor or council member should hold another public office or employment within city government.
- The group leaned toward replacing “public office or employment” with “elected public office” to more precisely define the intent.

Employment by Another Elected Official:



Members briefly discussed whether a city council member working as staff to another elected official creates a conflict of interest. Some recalled examples where conflicts were reviewed and mitigated through recusal and existing charter conflict-of-interest provisions. The committee did not reach a conclusion on whether this employment relationship should be included in Section 2.2.

Full-Time vs. Part-Time Council Considerations:

Several members noted that decisions about whether council positions remain part-time could affect Section 2.2, but the committee agreed to proceed with the current motion and address the full-time council question separately.

Further Considerations:

Members reviewed examples to better understand the cope of conflicts:

- A council member who owns a private business with potential city contracts – handled through conflict-of-interest, not Section 2.2.
- A mayor serving on regional boards as an ex officio representative – exempt because these are not separately elected offices.
- Distinctions between elected and appointed roles and whether additional clarification should be included.

Motion Clarification:

The committee confirmed that the motion was to move forward with drafting proposed charter language that:

- Prohibits the mayor or council members from holding another elected public office at the same time.
- Enumerates which elected offices are incompatible (e.g., state legislature, county council, school board).
- Leaves space for legal staff to review and refine the language based on committee discussions and statutory requirements.

The committee voted on the motion to direct the City Attorney's Office to amend Section 2.2 to require that elected officials hold only one elected public office at a time, with enumerated exclusions. The motion passed unanimously.

6. SECTION 2.8(A): FULL-TIME CITY COUNCIL

Chair Sniffen led the discussion. The committee opened the discussion on whether the city charter should be amended to establish a full-time city council. Members referenced materials previously shared, including two submissions from Nathan Shelby, as well as an additional submission circulated by Jennifer Gregerson.



Chair Sniffen noted that depending on the outcome, a full-time council model could intersect with or supersede the prior item (holding only one elected office). Staff also clarified that if council members became full-time city employees, existing city employment policies and restrictions would apply.

Arguments Against Moving to a Full-Time Council:

- Fiscal Impact Concerns – Several members expressed concern about the cost implications, including salaries, benefits, adding staffing needs, and potential office space. The city’s structural deficit was frequently referenced as a major barrier.
- Questioning The Problem Being Solved – Members asked whether the council has demonstrated an inability to fulfill duties under the current structure, and whether a full-time designation would meaningfully address issues like civic engagement or workload.
- Alternative Solutions May Better Address Representation – Some argued that improving the Office of Neighborhoods, funding neighborhood associations, or adjusting how council positions are structured might be more effective ways to increase community representation and engagement.
- Public Perspective – Members shared concerns that the public may resist approving higher compensation or expanding council costs via ballot measure. Some noted that they had not heard community demand for a full-time council.
- Potential Unintended Consequences – Members cautioned that requiring full-time status could deter capable candidates who rely on existing full-time employment, thereby unintentionally narrowing the pool of prospective council members.

Arguments In Support of Considering a Full-Time Council:

- Barriers To Service under The Current Structure – Members emphasized that the current salary (\$33,000) and expectations effectively limit service to those with flexible jobs, stable income, or significant financial support – excluding many working residents.
- Representation and Equity Goals – Several members stressed that Everett’s diverse and growing population required more robust representation, which may necessitate making council roles financially viable for working parents, lower-income residents, and people with non-flexible employment.
- Growing Complexity of the City’s Needs – Everett is projected to grow substantially in population, and members argued that increasingly complex issues may require more time and capacity from council members.
- Workload Comparison – Some noted that council members already functionally perform full-time work despite part-time designation, and that workload may exceed what can reasonably be done while holding another full-time job.
- Further Exploration Needed – Even undecided members supported gathering clearer data, particularly fiscal impacts, before ruling out the idea.

Hybrid or Alternative Ideas Raised:

- Making only the two at-large positions full-time while keeping district positions part-time.
- Reducing the number of council seats if shifting to full-time, to control costs.



- Seeking creative structural adjustments that improve representation without fully committing all seven seats to full-time status.
- Asking council leadership to describe how they currently allocate time and how the role might change under a full-time model.

Information Clarifications Provided During Discussion:

- Role of the Salary Commission – If the charter designated council positions as full-time, the Salary Commission, not the Charter Review Committee, would determine appropriate compensation.
- Precedent In Other Cities – Seattle is currently the only Washington city with a full-time council. Bellingham pays full-time equivalent salaries but has not yet designated council members formally as full-time. Spokane evaluated the issue and ultimately remained part-time.
- Council Staffing Comparisons – Bellingham: Seven members supported by a council manager, a legislative analyst, and a communication director. Everett: Seven members supported by one council executive assistant; an analyst position was approved but unfilled.
- Benefits Status – Everett council members currently receive full-time benefits even though the positions are part-time.

Members debated whether requesting draft language was worthwhile given the close division within the committee and the requirement of 10 affirmative votes to advance any proposal to city council. Some noted that requesting staff to prepare draft language and financial analysis may require significant resources and should be weighed carefully.

Members requested that any returned proposal include comparative data from similar cities, number of council members and staffing levels in those cities, estimated fiscal impact, and options reflecting different structural approaches.

Brady Begin moved to request that the City Attorney’s Office draft a proposal to transition City Council positions from part-time to full-time status, including a fiscal impact analysis and alternative structural options. Mason Rutledge seconded the motion.

The committee voted on the motion, and with a confirmed vote count, the motion passed 8 to 6.

7. SECTION 1.6: COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT (NO SEPARATE ELECTED MAYOR)

Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed. Chair Sniffen stated that this would be placed at the top of the next meeting’s agenda.

Members were encouraged to review the materials provided in advance.

REVIEW TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

Due to time constraints, no new items were added to the “Parking Lot” for future discussion.

NEXT MEETING:



Committee members and staff are coordinating to schedule the next public hearing, targeting either Saturday, April 18th or Saturday, April 25th.

The next regular meeting is set for Thursday, April 9, 2026, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room on the 10th floor at 2930 Wetmore Avenue.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

