

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026**

**MEETING MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Everett Charter Review Committee was called to order at 4:30 p.m., February 26, 2026, by Chair Sniffen, in the 10<sup>th</sup> 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, Eli Vasquez, and Deb Williams.

Committee Members Absent: None.

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

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The February 12, 2026, meeting minutes were approved by majority vote (15 to 0).

**3. WELCOME FROM COUNCIL PRESIDENT DON SCHWAB (TENTATIVE)**

Council President Don Schwab was unable to attend the meeting.

**4. WHAT CHARTER CHANGE CAN AND CANNOT DO**

Jennifer Gregerson provided a briefing to outline what a charter review process can and cannot accomplish. A document was presented as part of the Committee's briefing, draws on guidance from the National Civic League. It is intended to support Committee decisions, help clarify expectations, and provide foundational understanding before members take action.

The document details two categorical lists summarizing the realistic potential of charter reform:

WHAT CHARTER CHANGE **CAN** DO:

- Alter the form of government to better align with public preferences
- Restrict or increase the options available to governmental leaders
- Change electoral representation
- Clarify ambiguous or confusing existing charter language



- Redistribute powers among elected officials, appointed officials, governing bodies, and between city officials and the public
- Create conditions enabling governmental leaders to pursue desired changes
- Convert positions from elected to appointed – or vis versa

WHAT CHARTER CHANGE **CAN'T** DO:

- Automatically improve the quality of governmental products or services
- Eliminate political conflict or ensure elected officials reach consensus
- Expand the legal scope of municipal powers beyond state authority
- Jumpstart a local economy
- Reduce local crime
- Improve the school system
- Stop a controversial public project
- Change or eliminate state-mandated activities

Discussion followed, with committee members exploring the topics outlined above and offering examples related to governmental powers, fiscal responsibility, ballot processes, council actions, the number of council meetings, and other related considerations.

**5. GROUP NORMS**

Chair Sniffen led a discussion on group norms, focusing on expectations around etiquette, respect, and the Committee’s role in providing thoughtful recommendations. Members emphasized the importance of avoiding unnecessary “rabbit holes,” using a parking-lot system to capture ideas, topics or suggestions for later review, and creating a running list to revisit. The discussion also covered the Committee’s code of conduct, the process for advancing items – requiring agreement from at least 10 members – and a brief discussion of Robert’s Rules of Order.

**6. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Chari Sniffen and Vice Chair Vasquez led a discussion on approaches for effective community outreach. Members considered strategies such as attending neighborhood meetings, introducing themselves to community members to encourage participation and feedback, attending other city events, and the potential for using social media within established guidelines. They also discussed the importance of holding public hearings and announcing them well in advance to ensure broad community awareness and participation.

**7. PUBLIC HEARING LOCATIONS**

Vice Chair Vasquez led a discussion on potential locations for upcoming public hearings. Committee members considered timing that would allow hearings to occur not too early in the review process, yet not so late that public input could not meaningfully inform their recommendations. Suggested locations included libraries, Silver Lake Hall, a site in South Everett with accessible public transit, the former Grocery outlet on Everett Mall Way, Modern Furniture, or a local middle or high school.

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Members also discussed the importance of each committee member attending at least one neighborhood meeting and asked when district meetings would be scheduled so they could attend and participate. Depending on the availability of a no-cost venue, the Committee is aiming to hold its first public hearing between April 19<sup>th</sup> and April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Committee Members selected Rod Sniffen, by majority vote, as Chair of the committee.

## **8. ARTICLE 11.2.D: INITIATIVE THRESHOLDS ISSUE**

Jennifer Gregerson provided a briefing on Article 11.2.d, which outlines the signature thresholds required for citizen initiatives to qualify for the ballot. She explained that the Everett City Charter currently requires initiatives to meet a minimum threshold of five (5) percent of the total votes cast in the last general municipal election. The Committee is being asked to consider whether this threshold remains appropriate, whether the charter language regarding “the last preceding general municipal election” should be clarified, and whether a revised threshold would better align with practices in other jurisdictions.

Gregerson also reviewed recent examples from 2024, when three initiatives qualified for the ballot by exceeding the five percent requirement, which has been calculated at 928 signatures based on 18,568 votes cast in in the prior election. She notes that Everett’s threshold is lower than those used by many other Washington charter cities, where minimums range from ten (10) percent to as high as twenty-five (25) percent depending on the jurisdiction. The Committee is therefore being asked to consider whether to move forward with developing a policy proposal to update Charter Article 11.2.d to reflect a more appropriate and clearly defined initiative threshold.

Committee members asked why adjusting the initiative thresholds was important and requested additional information to better understand the difference between the percentage options. Members generally agreed that the initiative process should remain accessible but incorporate clearer guidelines, including consistent terminology, defined signature-collection periods, identification of petition sponsors, and clarifications about which election totals should be used in calculating thresholds. The committee expressed interest in revising Everett’s threshold upward, some expressed mixed views on whether thresholds should be identical, and debating seven (7) percent versus ten (10) percent.

After discussion, they passed two motions:

1. To direct staff to draft clearer, more consistent language for Section 11.2.D around thresholds (15-0); and
2. To recommend a proposed threshold for the minimum of ten (10) percent for signature requirements, with the understanding that the language draft will return to the committee for further and a final vote (11-4).

The committee also requested staff to bring back alternatives.

## **9. ARTICLE 2.2: ELIGIBILITY FOR OFFICE**

The Committee was unable to begin its scheduled discussion of Article 2.2: Eligibility to Hold Office due to time constraints. Members agreed that this item would be prioritized as the first topics of discussion at the next meeting.

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## **10. COMMENTS AND FUTURE TOPICS DISCUSSION**

Discussion led by Chair Sniffen, the group discussed how members should share new charter-related ideas and how much information to provide. The suggestion was that anyone with a concept could email a short description – ideally by end of day Monday before the Thursday meeting – explaining the issue, reasons it matters, and where it might fit in the charter. This would allow the idea to be included in the meeting packet and placed on the agenda. Members supported also presenting the idea in person so everyone has time to read the summary beforehand and come prepared with questions. They emphasized that written submissions, agenda placement, and advance sharing would help the group think more clearly and avoid rushed decisions.

Members also discussed gathering topics of interest, potential working groups, and how to handle collaboration while following open meetin rues. Members were encouraged to email their top one or two topic ideas to Jennifer Gregerson, so they can be shared prior to the next meeting. Subcommittees can work on issues as long as they remain below quorum and avoid serial communications. The group expressed interest in identifying major topics early, coordinating through staff-distributed materials, and ensuring that any shared documents become part of the public record.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is set for Thursday, March 12, 2026, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor’s Conference Room on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor at City Hall 2930 Wetmore Avenue.

### **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

