

Approved Proposed Somerville Charter Text

July 14, 2022

Approved Unanimously by the Somerville Charter Review Committee

PREAMBLE

We, the people of Somerville, with our diversity in culture and thought, in order to reaffirm the liberties of the people with respect to the conduct of our local government, adopt this charter to continue and enhance the city’s strong traditions of the pursuit of justice; empowerment of residents; ethical, transparent and responsive leadership; wise use of public resources; representation for all; and an engaged populace. We expect that our government will be approachable, accountable, equitable, inclusive, and respectful towards all people, and it will strive to provide all residents an equal opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural and intellectual life of the city.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT

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1 ARTICLE 1

2 INCORPORATION; SHORT TITLE; DEFINITIONS

3 SECTION 1-1: INCORPORATION

4 The residents of the City of Somerville within the territorial limits established by law, shall continue to be
5 a municipal corporation, a body corporate and politic, under the name "City of Somerville."

6
7 SECTION 1-2: SHORT TITLE

8 This instrument shall be known and may be cited as the City of Somerville Charter ("charter").
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10 SECTION 1-3: SEPARATION OF POWERS

11 The administration of the fiscal, prudential and municipal affairs of the City of Somerville shall be vested
12 in an executive branch led by a mayor and a legislative branch consisting of a city council. The legislative
13 branch shall never exercise any executive power and the executive branch shall never exercise any
14 legislative power.
15

16 SECTION 1-4: POWERS OF THE CITY

17 Subject only to express limitations on the exercise of any power or function by a municipal government in
18 the constitution or General Laws, it is the intention and the purpose of the municipal voters of Somerville,
19 through the adoption of this charter, to secure for themselves and their government all of the powers it is
20 possible to secure as fully and as completely as though each power were specifically and individually
21 enumerated in this charter.
22

23 SECTION 1-5: CONSTRUCTION

24 The powers of the City of Somerville under this charter are to be construed liberally in favor of the city
25 and the specific mention of any particular power is not intended to limit the general powers of the city as

1 stated in section 1-4. To the extent that any provision of this charter shall conflict with any special act or
2 law adopted by the city to the contrary, the provisions of this charter shall prevail.

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4 SECTION 1-6: INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

5 Subject only to express limitations in the constitution or General Laws, Somerville may exercise any of
6 its powers or perform any of its functions and may participate in the financing thereof, jointly or in
7 cooperation, by contract or otherwise, with the commonwealth or any of its agencies or political
8 subdivisions, or with the United States government or any of its agencies.

9

10 SECTION 1-7: DEFINITIONS

11 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following words shall have the following meanings as
12 used in this charter:

- 13 1) "Business day(s)" - any day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.
- 14 2) "Charter" - this charter and any adopted amendments to it.
- 15 3) "City" - the City of Somerville.
- 16 4) "City agency" - any multiple member body, department, division or office of the City of
17 Somerville.
- 18 5) "City officer or department head" - a person having charge of a city office or department.
- 19 6) "City website" - an online site established and maintained by the city as its repository of
20 municipal information.
- 21 7) "Day(s)" - calendar days.
- 22 8) "Emergency" - a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding
23 immediate action or response.
- 24 9) "Full city council" - the entire authorized membership of the city council, notwithstanding any
25 vacancy which might exist.

- 1 10) "Full multiple member body" - the entire authorized membership of a multiple member body,
2 notwithstanding any vacancy that exists.
- 3 11) "General Laws" - the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a codification and
4 revision of statutes enacted on December 22, 1920, and including all amendments subsequently
5 adopted.
- 6 12) "Majority vote" - when used in connection with a meeting of a multiple member body, shall mean
7 a majority of those present and voting, unless another provision is made by ordinance or by such
8 body's own rules; provided, however, that General Laws related to any vote to meet in executive
9 session shall always require a majority of the full multiple member body.
- 10 13) "Measure" - any ordinance, order, other vote or proceeding adopted, or proposed to be adopted,
11 by the city council or the school committee.
- 12 14) "Multiple member body" - any council, commission, committee, subcommittee or other body
13 consisting of two or more persons, whether elected, appointed or otherwise constituted, but not
14 including the city council, the school committee, or an advisory committee or task force
15 established by the mayor or city council.
- 16 15) "Municipal voter(s)" - anyone who is eligible to vote pursuant to this charter in a municipal
17 election
- 18 16) "Statewide voter(s)" - anyone who is eligible to vote pursuant to state and federal law.
- 19 17) "Organization or reorganization plan" - a plan submitted by the mayor to the city council which
20 proposes: a) a change in the organization or the administrative structure of the city administration
21 or organization, or b) a change in the way in which municipal services are delivered.
- 22 18) "Posting or post" - making available publicly on the city website, at city hall, and as otherwise
23 may be required under the General Laws.
- 24 19) "Quorum" - a majority of all voting members of a multiple member body unless some other
25 number is required by law or by ordinance.
- 26 20) "Year" - a calendar year, unless otherwise specified.

1 ARTICLE 2

2 LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

3 SECTION 2-1: COMPOSITION; TERM OF OFFICE; ELIGIBILITY

4 (a) Composition - There shall be a city council consisting of eleven members which shall exercise the
5 legislative powers of the city. Four of these members, to be known as councilors-at-large, shall be
6 nominated and elected by the municipal voters at large. Seven of these members, to be known as ward
7 councilors, shall be nominated from and elected by the municipal voters in each ward; one such ward
8 councilor to be elected from each of the seven wards into which the city is divided under section 7-7.

9 (b) Term of Office - The term of office for councilors shall be two years each, beginning on the first
10 business day in January following the municipal election.

11 (c) Eligibility - Any statewide voter shall be eligible to hold the office of councilor-at-large. Any
12 statewide voter in the ward from which election is sought shall be eligible to hold the office of ward
13 councilor. If the city council determines that a ward councilor or a councilor-at-large has removed from
14 the city during the councilor's term, that office shall immediately be deemed vacant and filled in the
15 manner provided in section 2-12. A ward councilor who removes from the ward in which the councilor
16 was elected and who remains a municipal voter of the city may continue to serve the balance of the
17 current term.

18
19 SECTION 2-2: PROHIBITIONS

20 (a) Holding Other City Position – Except as otherwise provided by this charter, a member of the city
21 council shall hold no other compensated city position. A former member of the city council shall not hold
22 any compensated appointed city position for 1 year after termination of their service on the city council,
23 unless eight members of the city council approve the appointment. This section shall not prevent a city
24 employee who vacated a position to serve as a member of the city council from returning to the same
25 position upon the expiration of the term for which that person was elected.

1 (b) Interference with Administration - The city council or any member of the city council shall not give
2 orders or directions to any employee of the city appointed by the mayor, either publicly or privately.

3

4 SECTION 2-3: COMPENSATION

5 The members of the city council shall receive compensation for their services as set by ordinance. An
6 ordinance increasing or reducing the compensation of the members of the city council shall not be
7 effective unless:

8 (i) it is adopted by a 2/3 vote of the full city council;

9 (ii) it is adopted during the first 18 months of the council's term; and

10 (iii) it provides that the compensation increase or reduction is to take effect upon the organization
11 of the city government following the next regular city election.

12

13 SECTION 2-4: GENERAL POWERS

14 Except as otherwise provided by the General Laws or by this charter, all powers of the city shall be vested
15 in the city council which shall provide for the performance of all duties and obligations imposed upon the
16 city by law.

17

18 SECTION 2-5: EXERCISE OF POWERS; QUORUM; RULES

19 (a) Exercise of Powers - Except as otherwise provided by General Laws or by this charter, the legislative
20 powers of the city council may be exercised in a manner determined by the city council.

21 (b) Quorum - Once a quorum is present, the affirmative roll call vote of a majority of members present
22 shall be required to adopt any ordinance, except as otherwise provided by General Laws or by this
23 charter.

24 (c) Rules of Procedure - The city council shall adopt rules regulating the procedures of the city council,
25 which shall include, but not be limited to, the following rules:

1 (i) regular meetings of the city council shall be held at a time and place fixed by ordinance and all
2 regular meetings of the city council shall provide for a period of public comment; the city council
3 may make rules that regulate the period of public comment;

4 (ii) special meetings of the city council shall be held at the call of the president or at the call of
5 any 3 or more members, for any purpose. Except in an emergency as declared by the city council
6 president, notice of the meeting shall be delivered to each member at least 2 business days in
7 advance of the time set and shall specify the date, time, location, and purpose for which the
8 meeting is to be held. A copy of each notice shall immediately be posted.

9 (iii) all sessions of the city council and every city council committee or subcommittee shall, at all
10 times, be open to the public, unless otherwise specified by law; and

11 (iv) a full, accurate, up-to-date account of the proceedings of the city council shall be maintained
12 by the city clerk, which shall include a record of each vote taken and be made available with
13 reasonable promptness following each meeting. Executive session minutes shall be made
14 available as soon as publication of the minutes would not defeat the purpose of the executive
15 session, unless otherwise provided by law.

16
17 SECTION 2-6: ELECTION, TERM, AND POWERS OF CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND VICE-
18 PRESIDENT

19 (a) Election and Term - As soon as practicable after the councilors-elect have been qualified following
20 each regular city election, as provided in section 7-4, the city council shall elect from among its members
21 a president and vice-president who shall serve for 1-year terms. The member of the council with the most
22 years of service shall preside at such election. If two or more members have the same term of service the
23 council with the last name that is first in alphabetical order from among such councilors shall preside. The
24 conduct of all elections of the city council president and vice president shall otherwise be prescribed
25 within the rules of the city council.

- 1 (b) Powers and Duties - The president shall have the following powers and duties:
- 2 (i) prepare the agenda for city council meetings;
- 3 (ii) preside at all meetings of the city council, regulate its proceedings, and decide all questions of
- 4 order, but the vice-president shall preside in the absence of the president;
- 5 (iii) appoint all members of committees of the city council, whether special or standing;
- 6 (iv) have the same powers to vote upon measures coming before the city council as any other
- 7 member of the city council; and
- 8 (v) perform any other duties consistent with the office that are established by this charter,
- 9 ordinance or other vote of the city council.

10

11 SECTION 2-7: APPOINTMENTS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

12 (a) Advisory Legal Counsel - The city council may secure legal services, either by employment or on a

13 contractual basis. Such legal services shall be solely in the service of the council and may include

14 research, analysis, and drafting assistance. The mayor shall annually provide to the city council a sum of

15 money sufficient to satisfy the estimated cost of legal services as presented to the mayor, in writing, by

16 the city council. The legal services provided to the council shall not include representation of the council

17 or any councilor in any court matter or related litigation, or the issuance of formal legal opinions on

18 behalf of the city. The city solicitor shall remain the only authorized officer of the city in all legal matters

19 involving the city's government.

20 (b) Other Staff - Subject to appropriation, the city council may employ staff as it deems necessary.

21 (c) Removals and Suspensions of City Council Staff – City council appointments may be removed at the

22 sole discretion of the city council subject to limitations and requirements imposed by federal and state

23 laws, rules and/or regulations.

24

25 SECTION 2-8: CITY COUNCIL CONFIRMATION OF CERTAIN APPOINTMENTS

1 (a) Department Heads - The mayor shall refer to the city council and simultaneously file with the city
2 clerk the name of each person the mayor desires to appoint as a department head. The city council shall
3 have 30 days after the date on which notice of the proposed appointment was filed with the city clerk to
4 vote to approve the appointment with approval not to be unreasonably withheld. An approved
5 appointment shall be effective immediately. The city council shall accompany a rejection of the
6 appointment with a written statement describing the reason, which shall be delivered to and placed on file
7 with the city clerk within 30 days of filing. If the city council does not take up the appointment within 30
8 days, the appointment shall be deemed approved. The question on rejection of any appointment made by
9 the mayor shall not be subject to the procedure of charter objection provided in section 2-9(b) of this
10 charter.

11 (b) Multiple Member Bodies - The mayor shall refer to the city council and simultaneously file with the
12 city clerk the name of each person the mayor desires to appoint as a member of a multiple member body.
13 The city council shall have 45 days after the date on which notice of the proposed appointment was filed
14 with the city clerk to vote to approve or reject the appointment, with approval not to be unreasonably
15 withheld. If the city council does not approve or reject the appointment within 45 days, it may file a 15-
16 day extension with the city clerk. If the time period elapses and no extension has been filed, the
17 appointment shall be deemed approved. Multiple member body members may be removed at the
18 discretion of their appointing authority subject to limitations and requirements imposed by federal and
19 state laws, rules, and/or regulations.

21 SECTION 2-9: ORDINANCES AND OTHER MEASURES

22 (a) Measures - Every adopted measure shall become effective at the expiration of 10 days after adoption
23 or upon the signature of the mayor, whichever occurs first, unless the ordinance or this charter provides
24 otherwise. An ordinance shall not be amended or repealed except by another ordinance adopted in
25 accordance with this charter.

1 (b) Charter Objection - On the first occasion that the question on adoption of a measure is put to the city
2 council, a single member present may object to the taking of the vote, and postpone the vote until the next
3 meeting of the city council, whether regular or special. If two or more present members object, the vote
4 shall be postponed until the next regular meeting. This procedure shall not be used more than once for any
5 specific matter regardless of whether it has been amended. A charter objection shall have privilege over
6 all motions but shall be raised prior to or at the call for a vote by the presiding officer and all debate shall
7 cease.

8

9 SECTION 2-10: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

10 (a) In General - The city council may make investigations into the affairs of the city and into the conduct
11 and performance of any city agency. Absent compelling circumstances or an emergency which shall be
12 declared on record and noted in the city council minutes, the city council shall give a minimum of 14
13 days' notice to a person it may require to appear before it under this section. In circumstances involving
14 compelling circumstances or emergency, 7 days' notice shall be allowed. The notice shall include specific
15 questions on which the city council seeks information and any person called to appear before the city
16 council under this section shall not be required to respond to any question not relevant or related to those
17 questions presented in advance and in writing. The mayor shall receive a copy of any notice issued under
18 this section at the same time as the person who is requested to appear before the council. Any notice
19 under this section shall not be issued without first being authorized by a majority vote of the city council.

20 (b) Department Head - The city council may require, by majority vote, specific information from a
21 department head or their designee on any matter related to the municipal services, functions and powers
22 or duties which are within the scope of responsibility of that person. The department head or their
23 designee shall not be required to answer questions relating to any other matter outside the scope of the
24 matter noticed.

25 (c) Mayor - The city council may request, by majority vote, specific information from the mayor on any
26 municipal matter. The mayor or their designee shall appear before the city council and respond to the

1 questions. The mayor or their designee shall not be required to answer questions relating to any other
2 matter. The mayor may bring to this meeting any assistant, department head or other city officer or
3 employee that the mayor may consider necessary to assist in responding to the questions posed by the city
4 council.

6 SECTION 2-11: GROUP PETITIONS

7 The city council shall hold a public hearing and act with respect to every petition which is addressed to it
8 and which is signed by at least 100 municipal voters as certified by the Board of Election Commissioners.

9 The hearing shall be held by the city council or by a committee or subcommittee thereof, and the city
10 council shall act on the petition within 3 months of filing with the city clerk. Hearings on two or more
11 petitions filed under this section may be held at the same time and place. At least 14 days before the
12 hearing, the city clerk shall notify the ten petitioners whose names first appear on each such petition,
13 publish a general summary of the subject matter of the petition, and post notice of the date and time of the
14 public hearing. A hearing shall not be held upon any subject more than once in a given 12-month period,
15 as determined by the city council president.

17 SECTION 2-12: FILLING OF VACANCIES

18 (a) Councilor At-large – Whenever a vacancy occurs in the office of councilor at-large the process for
19 filling of the vacancy shall be determined by the number of days remaining until the next municipal
20 election. In all occurrences of a vacancy, the city clerk shall notify the city council and the chairperson of
21 the board of election commissioners of the vacancy within 7 days. Within 7 days after notification, the
22 chairperson of the board of election commissioners or a designee shall certify, in writing, to the city clerk
23 that the defeated candidate for the office of councilor-at-large with the next highest number of votes at the
24 municipal election at which councilors-at-large were elected for the term in which the vacancy occurs
25 shall serve as councilor-at-large. If the person is eligible and willing to serve, the city clerk shall
26 administer the oath of office to the person within 15 days after certification and the person shall serve. If

1 the person who is eligible declines the office, is not eligible and willing to serve, or fails to take the oath
2 of office within the time period set forth in this section, then the person with the next highest number of
3 votes at the election who is eligible and willing to serve shall serve.

4 If a vacancy occurs:

5 (i) more than 180 days until the next municipal election, the next highest candidate serves the
6 remainder of the unexpired term. If there is no defeated candidate eligible and willing to
7 serve who has taken the oath of office, there shall be a special election

8 (ii) 180 days or less prior to any regular municipal election in the office of councilor at-large, the
9 next highest candidate serves until the next municipal election. If there is no eligible and willing
10 candidate from the most recent municipal election, then the seat remains vacant until the next
11 regular municipal election. The person elected shall fill the vacancy for the remainder of the
12 unexpired term and the term to which elected. The city clerk shall administer the oath of office to
13 them at the next meeting of the city council.

14 (b) Ward Councilor - If a vacancy occurs in the office of ward councilor more than 180 days prior to any
15 regular municipal election, the city council shall immediately order a special election to fill the vacancy
16 for the remainder of the unexpired term. If a vacancy occurs 180 days or less prior to any regular
17 municipal election, the seat shall remain vacant until the next regular municipal election for the office and
18 the person elected shall fill the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term and the term to which
19 elected. The city clerk shall administer the oath of office to the person at the next meeting of the city
20 council.

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1 ARTICLE 3

2 EXECUTIVE BRANCH

3 SECTION 3-1: MAYOR: ROLE; TERM OF OFFICE; ELIGIBILITY

4 (a) Role – The chief executive officer of the city shall be a mayor, elected by the municipal voters of the
5 city at large.

6 (b) Term of Office – The term of office for mayor shall be four years, beginning on the first business day
7 in January following the municipal election.

8 (c) Eligibility – Any statewide voter in Somerville, shall be eligible to hold the office of mayor. The
9 mayor shall devote full-time to the office and shall not hold any other elective public office.

10
11 SECTION 3-2: PROHIBITIONS

12 The mayor shall not hold another compensated city position or other elected public office. A former
13 mayor shall not hold a compensated appointed city office or city employment for 1 year after termination
14 of their service as the mayor. Any former mayor shall not receive compensation for contracted work
15 authorized during their tenure as the mayor, however, they may be compensated for limited hours
16 advising the incoming mayor. This subsection shall not prevent a city officer or other city employee who
17 has vacated a position to serve as the mayor from returning to the same office or other position of city
18 employment held when the position was vacated. This prohibition shall not apply to persons covered by a
19 leave of absence under section 37 of chapter 31 of the General Laws.

20
21 SECTION 3-3: COMPENSATION

22 The mayor shall receive compensation for their services as set by the city council by ordinance. An
23 ordinance increasing or reducing the compensation of the mayor shall not be effective unless:

24 (i) it is adopted by a 2/3 vote of the full city council;

25 (ii) it has been adopted on or before the 42nd month of the mayor's term; and

1 (iii) it provides that the compensation increase or reduction is to take effect upon the organization
2 of the city government following the next regular city election.

3
4 SECTION 3-4: EXECUTIVE POWERS

5 (a) Executive Powers - The executive powers of the city shall be vested solely in the mayor and may be
6 exercised by the mayor either personally or through the city agencies under the general supervision and
7 control of the office of the mayor. The mayor shall cause this charter, laws, ordinances and other orders of
8 the city government to be enforced and shall cause a record of all official acts of the executive branch of
9 the city government to be kept. The mayor shall supervise, direct, and be responsible for the efficient
10 administration of all city activities and functions placed under the control of the mayor by law or by this
11 charter.

12 (b) Supervision of City Agencies - The mayor shall exercise general supervision and direction over all
13 city agencies, unless otherwise provided by law or by this charter. Each city agency shall furnish to the
14 mayor, upon request, any information or materials the mayor may request and as the needs of the office of
15 mayor and the interest of the city may require. The mayor shall be responsible for the efficient and
16 effective coordination of the activities of all city agencies and may call together for consultation,
17 conference and discussion, at reasonable times, all persons serving the city.

18 (c) Multiple Member Bodies - The mayor shall be, by virtue of the office, a *ex officio* member of every
19 appointed multiple member body of the city. The mayor may, as an *ex officio* member, attend any meeting
20 of an appointed multiple member body of the city, including executive sessions, to participate in the
21 discussions of that body, but shall not have the right to vote.

22
23 SECTION 3-5: APPOINTMENTS BY THE MAYOR

24 (a) Department Heads - The mayor shall appoint, subject to review by the city council under section 2-
25 8(a), all department heads for whom no other method of appointment or selection is provided by this

1 charter. Department heads serve at the discretion of the mayor subject to the limitations and requirements
2 imposed by federal and state laws, rules, and/or regulations.

3 (b) Multiple Member Bodies - The mayor shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the city council under
4 section 2-8(b), all members of multiple member bodies for whom no other method of appointment or
5 selection is provided by administrative order or General Laws. All members shall serve terms as defined
6 by administrative order or General Laws.

7 (c) City Employees - The method of appointment for all other city employees shall be prescribed by
8 administrative order.

9

10 SECTION 3-6: APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

11 The mayor shall appoint a chief administrative officer to coordinate and direct the operations and
12 functions of municipal government. The chief administrative officer shall be appointed by the mayor,
13 subject to review by the city council under section 2-8(a). The appointee shall be chosen on the basis of
14 strong administrative and executive qualifications and shall have a combination of experience, training,
15 and/or education to perform the duties of the office.

16

17 SECTION 3-7: TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS TO CITY OFFICES

18 Whenever a temporary or permanent vacancy occurs in a city office that is appointed under section 3-
19 5(a), the mayor may designate a person to perform the duties of the office on a temporary basis for up to
20 150 days until the position can be filled as provided by law or by this charter. Persons serving as
21 temporary officers under this section shall have only those powers indispensable and essential to the
22 performance of the duties of the office during the period of temporary appointment and no others.

23 (a) Filing of a Temporary Appointment - When the mayor designates a person under this section, the
24 mayor shall file a certificate with the city clerk in substantially the following form:

25 "I designate (*name of person*) to perform the duties of the office of (*office in which*
26 *vacancy exists*) on a temporary basis until the office can be filled by (*the regular*

1 *procedure for filling the vacancy or when the incumbent shall return*). I certify that this
2 person is qualified to perform the duties which will be required and that I make this
3 designation solely in the interests of the City of Somerville.”

4 (b) Extension of Temporary Appointments - If an extension of a temporary appointment is necessary, the
5 mayor may seek additional extensions in 60-day increments, which shall be authorized by a majority vote
6 of the city council. If an extension is not approved, the position shall be deemed vacant.

7
8 SECTION 3-8: TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS TO MULTIPLE MEMBER BODIES

9 Whenever a temporary or permanent vacancy occurs on a multiple member body that is appointed under
10 section 3-5(b), the mayor may designate a person to perform the duties of the office on a temporary basis
11 for up to 150 days until the position can be filled as provided by law or by this charter. If an extension of
12 a temporary appointment is necessary, the mayor may seek additional extensions in 60-day increments,
13 which shall be authorized by a majority vote of the city council. If an extension is not approved, the
14 position shall be deemed vacant, except on multiple member bodies where such vacancy would prevent a
15 quorum. In such instance, a temporary appointment shall be permitted to remain until a successor is
16 qualified, however, the authority of the temporary appointment shall be limited to matters where failure to
17 act by the multiple member body may have adverse consequences to the City.

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19
20 SECTION 3-9: APPROVAL OF MAYOR, VETO

21 Every order, ordinance, resolution, or vote adopted or passed by the city council, except any matters
22 relating to the internal affairs of the city council, shall be presented to the mayor for approval within 3
23 days of such adoption or passage. If the mayor approves the measure, the mayor shall sign it; if the mayor
24 disapproves the measure, the mayor shall return the measure with the specific reason for such disapproval
25 attached to the measure in writing to the city council. The city council shall enter the objections of the
26 mayor on its records, and reconsider the same measure after 14 days but before 30 days from the date of

1 its return to the city council. If the city council, regardless of the disapproval by the mayor, shall again
2 pass the identical measure by a 2/3 vote of the full council, it shall then be deemed in force. If the mayor
3 has neither signed a measure nor returned it to the city council within 10 days following the date it was
4 presented to the mayor, the measure shall be deemed approved and in force.

5
6 SECTION 3-10: COMMUNICATIONS; SPECIAL MEETINGS

7 (a) Communications to the City Council - The mayor shall, by written communication: (i) recommend to
8 the city council for its consideration measures as the needs of the city require; and (ii) keep the city
9 council fully informed of the financial and administrative condition of the city and shall specifically
10 indicate any fiscal, financial, or administrative issues facing the city.

11 (b) Special Meetings of the City Council - The mayor may call a special meeting of the city council for
12 any purpose. Unless the mayor designates an emergency, notice of the meeting shall be delivered at least
13 2 business days in advance of the time set and shall specify the date, time and location of the meeting and
14 the purpose for which the meeting is to be held. A copy of the notice shall be posted immediately.

15
16 SECTION 3-11: TEMPORARY ABSENCE OF THE MAYOR

17 (a) Acting Mayor – Whenever the mayor is unable to perform the duties of the office, the president of the
18 city council shall be the acting mayor. In the event that the city council president is unable to serve as
19 acting mayor under this section, the city council shall elect a councilor to serve as acting mayor from
20 among its membership. The city council, by the affirmative vote of eight members, shall determine
21 whether the mayor is unable to perform the duties of the office. Notwithstanding any general or special
22 law to the contrary, the vote shall be taken in public session by a roll call vote.

23 (b) Powers of Acting Mayor – The acting mayor shall have only those powers of the mayor as are
24 indispensable and essential to conduct the business of the city and on which action may not be delayed.
25 The acting mayor shall have no authority to make a permanent appointment or removal from city service
26 unless the absence of the mayor shall extend beyond 60 days, nor shall the acting mayor approve or

1 disapprove of any measure adopted by the city council unless the time within which the mayor must act
2 would expire before the return of the mayor. The city council president or another councilor serving as
3 acting mayor shall not vote as a member of the city council.

4

5 SECTION 3-12: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY BY MAYOR

6 The mayor may authorize and subsequently remove authorization from a subordinate officer or employee
7 of the city to exercise or perform a power, function, or duty of the office of the mayor, provided, however,
8 that all acts performed under any such delegation of authority during the period of authorization shall be
9 and remain the acts of the mayor. Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize the mayor to
10 delegate the powers and duties of a school committee member, the power of appointment to city office or
11 employment, or to sign or return measures approved by the city council unless the provisions of Section
12 3-11 apply.

13

14 SECTION 3-13: FILLING OF VACANCY

15 Whenever a vacancy occurs in the office of mayor by death, removal, resignation, or any other reason, the
16 process for filling of the vacancy shall be determined by the month of the mayoral term in which the
17 vacancy occurs. Following an election to fill a mayoral vacancy, the winning candidate shall start
18 immediately and serve the remaining unexpired term.

19 (a) Whenever a vacancy occurs during:

20 (i) Months 1 through 17: The city council shall call a special election to be held within 90
21 days following the date of the vacancy.

22 (ii) Months 18 through 21: A special election need not be held and the position shall be filled
23 by vote at the upcoming regular city election.

24 (iii) Months 22 through 41: The city council shall call a special election to be held within 90
25 days following the date of the vacancy.

1 (iv) Months 42 through 46: A special election need not be held and the position shall be filled
2 by vote at the upcoming regular city election.

3 (b) The city council president shall serve as the acting mayor in all cases until the vacancy is filled.

4 In the event that the city council president is unable to serve as the acting mayor under this
5 section, the city council shall elect a councilor to serve as the acting mayor from among its
6 membership. If the councilor serving as the acting mayor under this section chooses to run for
7 mayor, they shall not be entitled to have the words “candidate for reelection” printed with that
8 person’s name on the subsequent election ballot. Any person serving as the mayor under this
9 section shall receive the compensation then in effect for the position of mayor and shall not vote
10 as a member of the city council.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT

1 ARTICLE 4

2 SCHOOL COMMITTEE

3 SECTION 4-1: COMPOSITION; TERM OF OFFICE; ELIGIBILITY

4 (a) Composition – There shall be a school committee of nine members. Seven members shall be
5 nominated and elected by the municipal voters of the city, one member elected from each ward. The
6 mayor and the president of the city council shall serve, *ex officio*, with the same powers and duties as
7 other school committee members, but neither shall serve as chair.

8 (b) Term of Office – The term for the school committee shall be two years, beginning on the first business
9 day in January following the municipal election.

10 (c) Eligibility – A school committee member shall be a statewide voter in the ward from which election is
11 sought. If a school committee member removes from the city during the committee member’s term, that
12 office shall immediately be deemed vacant and filled in the manner provided in section 4-6. If a school
13 committee member removes to another ward in the city, the member may continue to serve for the
14 balance of the current term.

15
16 SECTION 4-2: PROHIBITIONS

17 A member of the elected school committee shall not hold any other compensated city position. A former
18 member of the elected school committee shall not hold any compensated appointed city office or city
19 employment for 1 year after termination of their service on the school committee. This section shall not
20 prevent a city officer or other city employee who has vacated a position in order to serve as an elected
21 member of the school committee from returning to the same office or other position of city employment
22 held at the time the position was vacated.

23
24 SECTION 4-3: COMPENSATION

1 Members of the school committee shall receive compensation for their services as set by ordinance by the
2 city council. An ordinance increasing or reducing the compensation of the members of the school
3 committee shall not be effective unless:

- 4 (i) it is adopted by a 2/3 vote of the full city council;
- 5 (ii) it is adopted during the first 18 months of the school committee's term; and
- 6 (iii) it provides that the compensation increase or reduction is to take effect upon the organization
7 of the city government following the next regular city election.

8

9 SECTION 4-4: SCHOOL COMMITTEE RULES AND PROCEDURES

10 School committee officers and procedures shall be determined by the school committee.

11

12 SECTION 4-5: SCHOOL COMMITTEE POWERS AND DUTIES

13 The school committee shall have all powers which are conferred on school committees by the General
14 Laws and the additional powers and duties provided by this charter, including but not limited to:

- 15 (i) selecting and removing a superintendent of the schools who shall be charged with the
16 administration of the school system, and all other personnel as provided by the General Laws;
- 17 (ii) making all policies for the management of the public school system and for conducting the
18 business of the school committee as deemed necessary or desirable;
- 19 (iii) adopting and overseeing the administration of an annual operating budget for the school
20 department, subject to appropriation by the city council;
- 21 (iv) providing ordinary maintenance of all school buildings and grounds, unless a central
22 municipal maintenance department, which may include maintenance of school buildings and
23 grounds, is established; and
- 24 (v) provided further at least one member of the school committee, or a designee of the school
25 committee, shall serve on the agency, board, or committee for the planning or construction of a
26 new, remodeled, or renovated school building.

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SECTION 4-6: FILLING OF VACANCIES

If a vacancy on the school committee occurs with 1 year or more remaining in the term, the city council shall order a special election to fill the vacancy. If a vacancy on the school committee occurs with less than 1 year before the end of the term but more than 120 days before any regular municipal election, the school committee shall appoint a replacement to serve for the remainder of the term from the qualified statewide voters of the ward. The school committee shall publicly post a public notice of the vacancy and solicitation of nominations, and appoint the replacement in accordance with school committee policy. If a vacancy occurs within 120 days of a regular municipal election, the vacancy shall be filled by the regular election and the newly elected school committee member’s term shall begin on the first day following the election. The person elected shall fill the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term and the term to which elected. The city clerk shall administer the oath of office to them on or before the next meeting of the school committee.

1 ARTICLE 5

2 ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

3 SECTION 5-1: ORGANIZATION OF CITY AGENCIES

4 The organization of the city into agencies to provide services and administer the government may be
5 accomplished only through an administrative order submitted to the city council by the mayor. An
6 administrative order may not originate with the city council. The mayor may, subject only to express
7 prohibitions of General Laws or this charter, propose administrative orders to establish a new agency,
8 reorganize, consolidate or abolish any agency, in whole or in part, as is deemed necessary for the orderly,
9 efficient, or convenient conduct of the business of the city. The mayor may also propose administrative
10 orders to establish terms of office and prescribe the functions and administrative procedures to be
11 followed by all such agencies.

12 These proposed administrative orders shall be accompanied by a message from the mayor which explains
13 the expected benefits and advises the city council if an administrative order shall require amendments,
14 insertions, revisions, repeal, or otherwise of existing ordinances. Whenever the mayor proposes an
15 administrative order, the city council shall hold one or more public hearings on the proposal and post
16 notice. An organization or reorganization plan shall become effective at the expiration of 60 days from
17 filing, unless the city council has voted to disapprove the plan prior to that date. The city council may
18 vote only to approve or to disapprove the plan and may not vote to amend or to alter it.

19
20 SECTION 5-2: QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

21 All appointments and promotions of city officers and employees shall be made on the basis of fitness
22 demonstrated by examination, past performance, or by other evidence of competence and suitability. Each
23 person appointed to fill an office or position shall be a person who has the experience, training, and/or
24 education to perform the duties of the office or position.

1 SECTION 5-3: COMPENSATION OF CITY EMPLOYEES

2 The mayor and city council shall provide a review to be made of all municipal employee compensation at
3 5-year intervals to ensure compensation is distributed equitably across all municipal employees and to the
4 greatest extent possible compensation is sufficient to live in the city. This review shall be made by a
5 special committee to be established by ordinance, and the initial review shall be implemented as provided
6 in Section 9-7(b). The special committee shall receive a budget sufficient to hire qualified consultants
7 and/or any other resources necessary to undertake a thorough review. The special committee shall file its
8 report with the city clerk on a date specified by ordinance. This report shall include an analysis of the
9 current pay and compensation structure with recommendations for adjustments to that structure, taking
10 into consideration the city's current and expected financial situation and the impact of the
11 recommendations on the budget. The review of compensation shall be under the supervision of the chief
12 administrative officer.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT

1 ARTICLE 6

2 FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

3 SECTION 6-1: FISCAL YEAR

4 The fiscal year of the city shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30, unless another period is required by
5 the General Laws.

6
7 SECTION 6-2: COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL BUDGET INPUT

8 The city council shall hold a Community Budget Hearing on or before February 15th of each year in order
9 to solicit public input regarding budget priorities. The city council shall post notice of the Community
10 Budget Hearing 14 days in advance of the hearing. After the Community Budget Hearing but at least 10
11 days before the Annual Budget Meeting, the mayor shall solicit budget priorities from all city councilors.

12
13 SECTION 6-3: ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

14 On or before April 1st of each year, the mayor shall call a joint meeting of the city council and school
15 committee, including the superintendent of schools, to review the financial condition of the city, revenue
16 and expenditure forecasts for at least 3 years, and other relevant information prepared by the mayor in
17 order to develop a coordinated budget.

18
19 SECTION 6-4: SUBMISSION OF OPERATING BUDGET; BUDGET MESSAGE

20 On or about June 1st, the mayor shall submit to the city council a proposed operating budget for all city
21 agencies for the next fiscal year. The proposed operating budget shall include the school budget, as
22 adopted by the school committee, which shall be submitted to the mayor on or about May 15th. The
23 proposed operating budget shall be accompanied by a budget message and supporting documents. The
24 budget message shall explain the operating budget in fiscal terms and in terms of work programs for all
25 city agencies. It shall outline the proposed fiscal policies of the city for the next fiscal year, describe
26 important features of the proposed operating budget and include any major variations from the current

1 operating budget, fiscal policies, revenues and expenditures together with reasons for these changes. The
2 proposed operating budget shall provide a complete fiscal plan of all city funds and activities and shall be
3 in the form the mayor deems desirable; provided, however, that the budget proposals relative to elected
4 officials shall identify the cost of compensation and the cost of benefits for those officials. The mayor and
5 the superintendent of schools shall coordinate the dates and times of the school committee's budget
6 process under the General Laws.

7

8 SECTION 6-5: ACTION ON THE OPERATING BUDGET

9 (a) Public Hearing - The city council shall post a notice of the proposed operating budget as submitted by
10 the mayor. The notice shall state: (i) the times and places where copies of the entire proposed operating
11 budget are available for inspection by the public; and (ii) the date, time, and place when a public hearing
12 on the proposed operating budget shall be held by the city council, at least 7 days after posting of the
13 notice. The city council shall not act on the budget until after the public hearing has occurred.

14 (b) Adoption of the Budget - The city council shall adopt the proposed operating budget, which may have
15 amendments, before the end of the fiscal year. In amending the proposed operating budget, the city
16 council may delete or decrease amounts except expenditures required by law; provided, however, that
17 except on the recommendation of the mayor, the city council shall not increase any specific item or the
18 total of the proposed operating budget, unless otherwise authorized by the General Laws. If the city
19 council fails to act on an item in the proposed operating budget prior to the beginning of the fiscal year,
20 that amount shall, without any action by the city council, become a part of the appropriations for the year
21 and be available for the purposes specified.

22 (c) Availability of the Operating Budget – In addition to any other posting requirements under law,
23 immediately after the submission of the proposed budget to the city council, the mayor or their designee
24 shall post the entire budget document on the city website. Said proposed budget document shall remain
25 posted during the city council review process contained in this article. After the enactment of the budget,
26 the final budget shall be posted on the city website and shall remain there throughout the fiscal year for

1 which it is in effect. The final budget shall reflect any amendments made by the city council and approved
2 by the mayor and shall indicate that it is the final budget.

3

4 SECTION 6-6: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

5 (a) Submission - The mayor shall submit a capital improvement program to the city council on or about
6 October 15 of each year. This information shall be annually revised by the mayor regarding the capital
7 improvements still pending or in the process of being acquired, improved, or constructed.

8 The capital improvement program shall include:

9 (i) a general summary of its contents;

10 (ii) a list of all capital improvements proposed to be undertaken during the next 5 years, with
11 supporting information as to the need for each capital improvement;

12 (iii) cost estimates, methods of financing, and recommended time schedules for each
13 improvement; and

14 (iv) the estimated annual cost of operating and maintaining each facility and piece of major
15 equipment involved.

16 (b) Public Hearing - The city council shall post a notice stating: (i) the times and places where entire
17 copies of the capital improvements program are available for the public; and, (ii) the date, time, and place
18 of a public hearing on the plan to be held by the city council at least 14 days after posting of the notice.

19 (c) Adoption – Following the public hearing, but not later than December 1, the city council shall by
20 resolution adopt the capital improvements program. The adopted program may be amended, provided that
21 each amendment shall be voted on separately, and that an increase in the capital improvements program
22 as submitted shall clearly identify the method of financing to accomplish the proposed increase.

23

24 SECTION 6-7: INDEPENDENT AUDIT

25 The city council shall annually provide for an outside audit of the books and accounts of the city to be
26 conducted by a certified public accountant or a firm of certified public accountants, which has no personal

1 interest, direct or indirect, in the fiscal affairs of the city or any of its officers. The mayor shall annually
2 provide to the city council a sum of money sufficient to satisfy the estimated cost of conducting the audit
3 as presented to the mayor, in writing, by the city council. The award of a contract to audit shall be made
4 by the city council on or before September 15 of each year. The report of the audit shall be filed with the
5 city council not later than March 1 in the year following its award. At least every 5 years, the city council
6 shall conduct a competitive procurement process to retain these auditing services.

7

8 SECTION 6-8: EXPENDITURES IN EXCESS OF APPROPRIATIONS

9 Except as otherwise provided by law, an official of the City of Somerville shall not knowingly or
10 intentionally expend in a fiscal year sums in excess of the appropriations, awards, grants or gifts duly
11 made in accordance with law or involve the city in any contract for the future payment of money in
12 excess of these appropriations, awards, grants or gifts. It is the intention of this section that section 31 of
13 chapter 44 of the General Laws shall be strictly enforced. Any official who violates this section shall be
14 personally liable to the city for any amounts so expended to the extent that the city does not recover these
15 amounts from the person to whom the sums were paid.

1 ARTICLE 7

2 ELECTIONS

3 SECTION 7-1: ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

4 In addition to individuals eligible to vote according to the General Laws, in the City of Somerville the
5 following individuals may upon application have their names entered on a list of municipal voters
6 established by the Board of Election Commissioners for the City of Somerville and may thereafter vote in
7 any election for municipal offices and municipal ballot questions in accordance with this charter. Such
8 municipal voters shall remain eligible to vote in any election for municipal offices and municipal ballot
9 questions in the city for so long as they remain domiciled in the City of Somerville:

10 (i) Any non-citizen residing in the City of Somerville, who is ineligible to vote due to citizenship
11 status under federal or state law, rule, or regulation, but who is otherwise eligible to vote; and

12 (ii) Any 16 and 17 year old residing in the City of Somerville, who is ineligible to vote due to age
13 under federal or state law, rule, or regulation, but who is otherwise eligible to vote.

14
15 SECTION 7-2: PRELIMINARY ELECTIONS

16 A preliminary election to nominate candidates for mayor, councilors-at-large, ward city councilors, and
17 school committee members shall be held on the third Tuesday in September in each odd-numbered year in
18 which the candidates are to be elected. The city clerk may, with the approval of the city council,
19 reschedule the preliminary election to the fourth Tuesday in September to avoid a conflict with any civil
20 or religious holiday. Whenever a special election to fill a vacancy is to be held, a preliminary election
21 shall be conducted, if necessary, 28 days before the date established for the special election. A
22 preliminary election to fill a vacancy for ward councilor or school committee member shall be held only
23 in the ward where there is a vacancy.

1 SECTION 7-3: PRELIMINARY ELECTION PROCEDURES

2 (a) Signature Requirements - The number of signatures of municipal voters required to place the name of
3 a candidate on the official ballot to be used at a preliminary election shall be as follows:

4 (i) Mayor - at least 250 certified signatures;

5 (ii) At-Large City Councilor - at least 100 certified signatures;

6 (iii) Ward City Councilor - at least 50 certified signatures, all of which shall be certified as being
7 from the ward from which election is sought;

8 (iv) School Committee Member – at least 50 certified signatures, all of which shall be certified as
9 being from the ward from which election is sought.

10 (b) Forms - Signatures of municipal voters shall be made on a form prescribed by the Board of Election
11 Commissioners and shall be made available not earlier than April 2 in each city election year. The forms
12 shall be submitted to the Board of Election Commissioners for certification of the names on or before the
13 14th day preceding the date fixed for submission to the city clerk. The forms shall be submitted to the city
14 clerk on or before 5 o'clock in the afternoon on the 45th day prior to the declared date of the preliminary
15 election. An individual may appear on the ballot for only one office at any preliminary, regular or special
16 city election.

17 (c) Ballot Position - The order in which names of candidates for each office appear on the ballot shall be
18 determined by a drawing conducted by the city clerk at least 40 days before the preliminary election. The
19 drawing shall be open to the public.

20 (d) Determination of Candidates -

21 (i) Offices of Mayor, Ward Councilor, and School Committee - the two candidates who receive
22 the highest number of votes for nomination to each office at the preliminary election shall, except
23 as provided by section 7-3(d)(iii), be the candidates for that office. The candidates' names shall
24 be printed on the official ballot to be used at the regular or special city election at which the office
25 is to be voted upon and an acceptance of a nomination shall not be necessary to its validity.

1 (ii) Offices of City Councilor At-large - the eight people who receive the highest number of votes
2 for nomination to the office shall, except as provided by section 7-3(e), be the candidates for the
3 office. The candidates' names shall be printed on the official ballot to be used at the regular or
4 special city election at which the office is to be voted upon and an acceptance of a nomination
5 shall not be necessary to its validity.

6 (iii) Tied Preliminary - If there is a tie among candidates for the last available ballot position for
7 any given elected office, then all tied candidates for the office shall be printed on the general
8 election ballot, notwithstanding any other provisions in this charter specifying the number of
9 candidates to be printed on the election ballot.

10 (e) Condition Making Preliminary Unnecessary - If the time for filing statements of candidates to be on
11 the ballot for any preliminary election has expired, and the number of statements filed to the city clerk for
12 an office is not more than two for the office of mayor, any ward councilor or school committee member,
13 or eight for any city councilor at large, the candidates whose statements have been filed shall be deemed
14 nominated to that office. Those candidates shall be voted on for such office at the regular or special city
15 election. The city clerk shall not print those names on the ballot to be used at the preliminary election and
16 another nomination to the office shall not be made, and a preliminary election shall not be held for such
17 office or offices.

18 19 SECTION 7-4: REGULAR CITY ELECTION

20 The regular city election shall be held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in
21 each odd-numbered year.

22 23 SECTION 7-5: BALLOT POSITION, REGULAR CITY ELECTION

24 The order in which names of candidates for each office appear on the ballot shall be determined by a
25 drawing conducted by the city clerk not later than 7 days after the certification of the preliminary election
26 results. If there is no preliminary election in advance of the regular city election or a special election, the

1 drawing shall be conducted on the sixth Tuesday prior to the election. The drawing shall be open to the
2 public.

3

4 SECTION 7-6: NON-PARTISAN ELECTIONS

5 All elections for city offices shall be non-partisan and election ballots shall be printed without any party
6 mark, emblem or other political designation.

7

8 SECTION 7-7: WARDS

9 The territory of the city shall be divided into seven wards by the city clerk to consist of nearly an equal
10 number of inhabitants as it is possible to achieve, based on compact and contiguous territory, bounded as
11 far as possible by the center line of known streets or ways or by other well-defined limits. Each ward shall
12 be composed of voting precincts established under the General Laws. The city council shall review these
13 wards to ensure uniformity in the number of inhabitants at least once every 10 years.

14

15 SECTION 7-8: APPLICATION OF STATE GENERAL LAWS

16 Except as otherwise expressly provided in this charter and authorized by law, all city elections shall be
17 governed by the General Laws relating to the right to vote, the registration of voters, the nomination of
18 candidates, voting places, the conduct of preliminary, regular and special city elections, the submission of
19 charters, charter amendments and other propositions to the voters, the counting of votes, the recounting of
20 votes, and the determination of results.

1 ARTICLE 8

2 GENERAL PROVISIONS

3 SECTION 8-1: CHARTER CHANGES

4 This charter may be replaced, revised or amended in accordance with the state constitution or the General
5 Laws.

6
7 SECTION 8-2: SPECIFIC PROVISION TO PREVAIL

8 To the extent that a specific provision of this charter conflicts with any provision expressed in general
9 terms, the specific provision of this charter shall prevail.

10
11 SECTION 8-3: RULES AND REGULATIONS

12 A copy of all rules and regulations adopted by a city agency shall be posted to the city website. Unless an
13 emergency exists, as determined by the mayor, a rule or regulation adopted by a city agency shall not
14 become effective until at least 5 days following the date it is posted. This section shall not apply to
15 internal operating protocols and policies enacted by city departments.

16
17 SECTION 8-4: PERIODIC REVIEW OF CHARTER

18 The mayor and city council shall provide for a review to be made of the city charter at least once every 10
19 years to prepare recommendations for proposed revision. The manner of the review shall be established
20 by ordinance and incorporate community input. The recommendations shall be filed with the city clerk at
21 a date specified by ordinance.

22
23 SECTION 8-5: PERIODIC REVIEW OF ORDINANCES

24 The mayor and city council shall provide for a review to be made of some or all of the city ordinances at
25 least once every 10 years to prepare recommendations for proposed revision or recodification. The
26 manner of the review shall be established by ordinance. The review of city ordinances shall be under the

1 supervision of the city solicitor and incorporate community input. The recommendations shall be filed
2 with the city clerk at a date specified by ordinance.

3

4 SECTION 8-6: PERIODIC REVIEW OF MULTIPLE MEMBER BODIES

5 At least once every 10 years the mayor and the city council shall provide for a review to be made of all
6 multiple member bodies. This review shall be made by a special committee to be determined by
7 ordinance, and the initial review shall be implemented as provided in Section 9-7(d). All members of the
8 committee shall be municipal voters of the city. The special committee shall file its report with the city
9 clerk at a date specified by ordinance. The committee's report should include an assessment of the
10 function and relevance of all multiple member bodies, and recommendations to combine, remove, or add
11 new multiple member bodies to address redundancies or new concerns of the city. Recommendations
12 shall not conflict with multiple member bodies required by the General Laws.

13

14 SECTION 8-7: UNIFORM PROCEDURES GOVERNING MULTIPLE MEMBER BODIES

15 Open Meeting Law and procedures in the General Laws shall apply to the proceedings of multiple
16 member bodies, including the following:

17 (a) Officers – All appointed multiple member bodies shall elect a chair, a vice-chair and a clerk and any
18 other officer it deems necessary.

19 (b) Meetings - All appointed multiple member bodies of the city shall meet regularly at the times and
20 places that the multiple member body, by the body's own rules, prescribe. Special meetings of any
21 multiple member body shall be held at the call of the chair or by a majority of the members of the body.
22 Notice of the meeting shall be posted as required by law. Except as may otherwise be authorized by law,
23 all meetings of all multiple member bodies shall at all times be open to the public.

24 (c) Meeting Documents and Submissions - Each appointed multiple member body shall determine its own
25 rules and order of business. Each multiple member body shall provide for the keeping of agendas, minutes
26 and related submissions of its proceedings. All such documents shall be a public record and certified

1 copies shall be placed on file in the office of the city clerk within a reasonable period from the date of
2 approval.

3 (d) Voting - If requested by a member, a vote of an appointed multiple member body shall be taken by a
4 roll call vote and the vote of each member shall be recorded in the minutes, but if the vote is unanimous,
5 only that fact need be recorded.

6 (e) Quorum - A majority of the members of an appointed multiple member body shall constitute a
7 quorum. Unless some other provision is made by the multiple member body's own rules while a quorum
8 is present, except on procedural matters, a majority of the full membership of the body shall be required
9 to vote on any matter representing an exercise of the powers of the multiple member body. General Laws
10 related to a vote to meet in executive session shall always require a majority of members of the body.

11

12 SECTION 8-8: REFERENCES TO GENERAL LAWS

13 All references to General Laws contained in this charter refer to the General Laws of the Commonwealth
14 and are intended to refer to and to include any amendments or revisions to such chapters or sections or to
15 the corresponding chapters and sections of any rearrangement, revision or recodification of such statutes
16 enacted or adopted subsequent to the adoption of this charter.

17

18 SECTION 8-9: COMPUTATION OF TIME

19 In computing time under this charter, the day of the act or event after which the designated time period
20 begins to run shall not be included. The last day of the period shall be included, unless it is a Saturday,
21 Sunday or legal holiday, in which event the period shall be extended to the next business day.

22

23 SECTION 8-10: OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

24 (a) Officials Elected in Regular Elections - On the first business day in January of each even-numbered
25 year, the city council members-elect, the school committee members-elect, and, in years immediately
26 following a mayoral election, the mayor-elect, shall meet and take an oath or affirmation to faithfully

1 discharge the duties of their office. The oath or affirmation shall be administered by the city clerk. Each
2 official taking the oath or affirmation shall also sign a written version, which shall be kept in a bound
3 book maintained by the city clerk. If the mayor-elect or any member-elect of the city council or school
4 committee is absent on the day the oath is administered, the oath or affirmation may be administered at
5 any time after to that person by the city clerk, the assistant city clerk, a judge of a court of record or by a
6 justice of the peace. Modifications to this section may be made by ordinance.

7 (b) Other Elected Officials and Appointed Positions - Except as otherwise provided by law, every person
8 who is elected or appointed to an office or as a member of a multiple member body shall take an oath or
9 affirmation before performing any act under this election or appointment. A record of this oath or
10 affirmation shall be kept by the city clerk.

11 (c) Certificate - Every person who is elected or appointed to an office or as a member of a multiple
12 member body shall receive a certificate of that election or appointment from the city clerk.

13

14 SECTION 8-11: LIMITATION ON OFFICE HOLDING

15 Unless otherwise allowed by law or this charter, a person shall not simultaneously hold more than 1 office
16 or position of employment with the city. This section may be waived by the mayor by filing a notice of
17 the waiver with an explanation and justification with the city clerk.

18

19 SECTION 8-12: FELONY CONVICTION

20 An elected official who has been convicted of a state or federal felony while holding office shall be
21 deemed to have vacated the office.

22

23 SECTION 8-13: ENFORCEMENT OF CHARTER PROVISIONS

24 It shall be the duty of the mayor to see that this charter is faithfully followed and complied with by all city
25 agencies and employees. Whenever it appears to the mayor that a city agency or employee is not
26 following this charter, the mayor shall, in writing, cause notice to be given to that agency or employee

1 directing compliance with this charter. Whenever it appears to the city council that the mayor is not
2 following this charter, the city council shall, by resolution, direct the attention of the mayor to those areas
3 in which it believes there is a failure to comply with this charter. The procedures made available in
4 chapter 231A of the General Laws may be used to determine the rights, duties, or other legal relations
5 arising under this charter, including any question of construction or validity which may be involved in
6 such determination.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT

1 ARTICLE 9

2 TRANSITION PROVISIONS

3 SECTION 9-1: CONTINUATION OF EXISTING LAWS

4 All General Laws, special laws, city ordinances, city council votes, and rules and regulations of or
5 pertaining to Somerville that are in force when this charter takes effect, and not specifically or by
6 implication repealed by this charter, shall continue in full force and effect until amended or repealed, or
7 rescinded by due course of law, or until they expire by their own limitation. In any case in which the
8 provisions of this charter are found to be inconsistent with the provisions of any general or special law
9 that would otherwise be applicable, the provisions of this charter shall prevail.

10
11 SECTION 9-2: CONTINUATION OF GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

12 All city agencies and city officials shall continue to perform their duties until reappointed, or until
13 successors to their respective positions are appointed, or until their duties have been transferred and
14 assumed by another city agency.

15
16 SECTION 9-3: TRANSFER OF RECORDS AND PROPERTY

17 All records and property of any city agency, or part thereof, the powers and duties of which are assigned
18 in whole or in part to another city agency, shall be transferred forthwith to such agency.

19
20 SECTION 9-4: CONTINUATION OF PERSONNEL

21 All city office holders and employees shall retain the office, position, or employment they hold, and shall
22 continue to perform the duties of such office, position, or employment until their employment or position
23 is otherwise terminated or other provisions are made. A person in full-time service of the city shall not
24 forfeit accrued time in service of the city as a result of adoption of this charter.

1 SECTION 9-5: EFFECT ON OBLIGATIONS, TAXES, ETC.

2 All official bonds, recognizances, obligations, contracts, and other instruments entered into or executed
3 by, with, or on the behalf of the city before the adoption of this charter, shall continue to be obligations of
4 the city and all taxes, assessments, fines, penalties, forfeitures, incurred or imposed, due or owing to the
5 city, shall be enforced and collected; and all writs, prosecutions, actions, and causes of action, except as
6 herein otherwise provided, shall continue without abatement and remain unaffected by this charter; and
7 any legal act done by or in favor of the city shall not be rendered invalid by reason of the adoption of this
8 charter.

9

10 SECTION 9-6: DISPOSITION OF CERTAIN SPECIAL ACTS

11 (a) Certain Special Acts Recognized and Retained - The following special acts are hereby especially
12 recognized and retained: *[TO BE ADDED BY THE CITY COUNCIL]*

13

14 SECTION 9-7: TIME OF TAKING EFFECT

15 *[TO BE ADDED BY THE CITY COUNCIL]*

16

17 (a) CREATION OF PUBLIC FINANCING OF CAMPAIGNS COMMITTEE

18 Within 6 months of the adoption of this charter, the city council shall create a Public Financing of
19 Campaigns Committee to study public financing mechanisms and prepare recommendations with the goal
20 of making running for office in Somerville more accessible to potential candidates. The directive of this
21 study committee is to consider a full range of options as practicable, provide analysis on the potential
22 benefits and barriers of each option, and consider which are the best fit for Somerville. If the city council
23 has already taken action consistent with this provision, no action is necessary.

24

25 The committee shall consist of seven members: one shall be the Chairman of the Board of Elections
26 Commissioners or designee, two shall be community members appointed by the city council, two shall be

1 community members appointed by the school committee, two shall be community members appointed by
2 the mayor. The committee shall elect a chair and establish the schedule of its meetings.
3 The committee shall issue recommendations to the city council within 12 months of creation. The city
4 council shall take action on the recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

5
6 (b) CREATION OF THE INITIAL FIRST EQUITABLE COMPENSATION DISTRIBUTION
7 COMMITTEE

8 The mayor and the city council shall convene the initial Equitable Compensation Distribution Committee,
9 pursuant to section 5-3, within sufficient time that the committee's report can be delivered by the date of
10 the Annual Budget Meeting in the following calendar year. If the city council has already taken action
11 consistent with this provision, no action is necessary.

12 In addition to the subject matter required in section 5-3, the committee's initial report shall include: a)
13 proposed solutions to address existing compensation disparities or related issues, including but not limited
14 to tying mechanisms (a set ratio to determine pay of elected officials, tying the highest possible pay of an
15 elected official to the lowest paid municipal employee), b) a proposed implementation plan to establish
16 compensation distribution standards, c) an analysis of the proposed cost and timeline to implement such
17 standards d) a comparative analysis of other approaches to this issue in similar municipalities and f) an
18 analysis of the impacts on the Somerville community.

19 The committee shall consist of at least eight members including: the mayor or their designee, the city
20 council President or their designee, one member of the school committee or their designee, one member
21 of the Municipal Compensation Advisory Board, one member of the Charter Review Committee, one
22 community member appointed by the mayor, one community member appointed by the city council, and
23 the City Auditor or their designee. In addition, any other representation deemed necessary by the mayor
24 and city council may be jointly appointed. The committee shall elect a Chair and establish the schedule of
25 its meetings.

1 The committee shall be provided with an initial budget of at least \$50,000 for its expenses, including
2 hiring of consultants as required to assist with the examination and analysis.

3 The committee shall submit a report to the city council and city council shall respond to and vote on the
4 recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

5

6 (c) CREATION OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

7 Within 6 months of the passing of this charter, the city council shall create a Ranked Choice Voting
8 Committee to propose a measure to adopt ranked-choice voting and submit a report on ranked-choice
9 voting in Somerville. A voting method shall be considered ranked-choice voting if the municipal voter
10 ranks candidates in order of preference. The Committee's report shall include: a) the elected offices to be
11 selected by this voting method, b) a timeframe and strategy for implementation, c) infrastructure and
12 equipment requirements, d) a cost analysis, e) a comparative analysis of other voting methods, f) an
13 analysis of potential equity concerns, and g) a community education plan. If the city council has already
14 taken action consistent with this provision, no action is necessary.

15 The goal of this committee is to implement ranked-choice voting in order to more accurately reflect the
16 will of the voters, increase the number and diversity of candidates, lower barriers to candidate
17 participation, and increase transparency of elections.

18 The committee shall consist of seven members: one shall be the Chairman of the Board of Elections
19 Commissioners or their designee, two shall be community members appointed by the city council, two
20 shall be community members appointed by the school committee, two shall be community members
21 appointed by the mayor. The committee shall elect a Chair and establish the schedule of its meetings.

22 The committee shall propose a measure to the city council within 18 months. The city council shall take
23 action on the measure within 90 days of receipt.

24

25 (d) INITIAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF MULTIPLE MEMBER BODIES

26 The mayor and the city council shall convene the first Periodic Review of Multiple Member Bodies

1 Committee, pursuant to section 8-6, within 6 months of the passing of this charter. The committee's
2 report should include a) an assessment of the functions and relevancies of the city's current multiple
3 member bodies, b) a review of activities of multiple member bodies from recent years, c) the ability of
4 The City to fill appointments to the body, d) recommendations for combining, removing or adding new
5 multiple member bodies. If the city council has already taken action consistent with this provision, no
6 action is necessary.

7 The committee shall consist of at least eight members including: the mayor or their designee, the city
8 council President or their designee, one member of the school committee, one member of the Municipal
9 compensation advisory board, one member of the Charter Review Committee, one community member
10 appointed by the mayor, one community member appointed by the city council, and the City Auditor. In
11 addition, any other representation deemed necessary by the mayor and the city council may be jointly
12 appointed.

13 The committee shall elect a Chair and establish the schedule of its meetings. The committee shall be
14 provided with an initial budget of at least \$25,000 for its expenses, including hiring of consultants as
15 required to assist with the examination and analysis.

16 The committee shall submit a report to the city council and they shall respond to and vote on the
17 recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

18

19 (e) PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING STUDY COMMITTEE

20 Within 6 months of the adoption of this charter, the city council shall create a Participatory Budgeting
21 Committee to study participatory budgeting and related participatory mechanisms and prepare
22 recommendations with the goal of increasing resident participation in city government. The directive of
23 this study committee is to consider a full range of options as practicable, provide analysis on the potential
24 benefits and barriers of each option, review the results of previous participatory budgeting programs, and
25 consider which are the best fit for Somerville. If the city council has already taken action consistent with
26 this provision, no action is necessary.

1 The committee shall consist of seven members: one shall be the Director of Finance or their designee, two
2 shall be community members appointed by the city council, two shall be community members appointed
3 by the mayor, and two shall be community members appointed by the school committee. The committee
4 shall elect a chair and establish the schedule of its meetings.

5 The committee shall issue recommendations to the city council within 12 months of creation. The city
6 council shall take action on the recommendations within 90 days of receipt.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE DRAFT