

Applications for Pro and Con Committees: Proposition No. 2

Proposition No. 2: ESTABLISHING A WHATCOM COUNTY OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

The Whatcom County Charter Review Commission has proposed an amendment to the Whatcom County Charter to create the office of the Whatcom County Ombuds. This measure would amend Article 2 of the Whatcom County Charter to require the County Council to establish an Office of the Ombuds. The Ombuds would receive and investigate complaints and inquiries about county government. The Council would be required to provide the office necessary funding and power to fulfill its duties. The office would start work no later than January 1st, 2027. In 2030, the Whatcom County Council would have the ability to eliminate this office.

PRO: Brian Estes, Colton Kaltenfeldt, Greg Thames, JG Sandy Phillips, Lane Davis Coury

CON: Lindsey Elenbaas, Ashley Butenschoen, Hannah Ordos

Pro and Con Committee Application: Proposed Charter Amendments

The Whatcom County Council seeks applicants to prepare statements for the Whatcom County Voters' Pamphlet on proposed amendments to the Whatcom County Charter. Council will appoint up to three members to each pro and con committee during their regular evening meeting on Tuesday, July 22 at 6 p.m.


To volunteer for one or more committees, please submit this form by 12:00 p.m. on Monday, July 14, 2025.

First Name	Brian
Last Name	Estes
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Whatcom County Residency	Yes

Committee Selection

Indicate your committee preference(s) from the list of proposed amendments below. (Additional information about each amendment is available at www.whatcomcounty.us/4576.)

Authorizing Councilmembers to Hire Dedicated Aides	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Pro Committee
Establishing Performance Audits	Pro Committee
Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Modifying the Redistricting Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments	<i>Field not completed.</i>

Modifying the Budget Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	Pro Committee
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	Pro Committee
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	My education, professional experience in evaluating federal, state, and local governments, and my non-profit and public service (see resume) make me a good candidate to serve on committees writing ballot statements. In addition, I worked for the King County Auditors Office, conducting performance audits for 6 years after retiring from the federal Government Accountability Office (GAO). So, I have a background relevant to several of the amendments-- county performance audits and the Ombuds function, among others.
Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.	The Charter Review Commission has done an excellent job adopting a number of amendments to improve the transparency and accountability of Whatcom County government, among other benefits. I would like to be a part of the process to ensure those amendments are put forward to voters in language clearly explaining the benefits of such changes.
Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.	
Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?	Yes

Resume of Brian A. Estes

Professional Experience

Real Estate Broker

RSVP Real Estate, Bellingham/Seattle, WA | 2007 – Present

Senior Principal Management Auditor

King County Auditor's Office | 2008 – 2014

- Led audits for Metro Transit, EMS, and Public Health

- Provided analytical guidance and advanced methodologies

- Developed actionable recommendations to improve agency performance

Executive Director, Intergovernmental Audit Forums

GAO Strategic Planning & External Liaison | 2003 – 2008

- Directed liaison initiatives with West Coast governments

- Produced 5+ annual intergovernmental forums

- Coordinated strategic planning committees for GAO

Senior Analyst, Infrastructure & Natural Resources

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) | 1978 – 2002 (Seattle/San Francisco)

- Led high-profile audits, including on the Exxon Valdez oil spill

- Evaluated national issues in seismic safety, environmental policy, and infrastructure

Nonprofit Leadership & Public Service

Current Treasurer and former Past-President, Board of Directors, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Whatcom County Chapter (2020–Present)

Member, NAMI Washington Public Policy Committee (2021–Present)

Commissioner, Whatcom County Parks & Recreation (2021–2022)

Co-Chair, Behavioral Health Committee of the Whatcom County Incarceration and Prevention Task Force (Member since 2023; Co-Chair as of May 2025)

2nd Vice-Chair, Whatcom Democrats (2018–2019); Former Chair, Issues & Advocacy Committee (2017–2020)

Member, Levy to Move Seattle Oversight Committee, (2016-2019)

Member, Seattle Municipal League Candidate Evaluation Committee (2007–2010)

Past President, Evergreen Chapter, American Society for Public Administration (1989-1991)

Personal Political Experience

Co-Chair, Bellingham Transportation Fund Campaign (2020)

Candidate, Whatcom County Council, District 4 (2019)

PCO, Precinct 201, (2024-Present)

Education

Master of Public Administration, University of Washington, Evans School of Public Policy and Governance | 1978

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science University of California, Los Angeles | 1975

Certifications & Teaching Roles

Certified Government Financial Manager (Emeritus)

Adjunct Faculty (Retired), GAO Training Division

Instructor: The Art and Science of Audit Interviewing

Instructor: Teamwork

Contact info:



Pro and Con Committee Application: Proposed Charter Amendments

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First Name	Colton
Last Name	Kaltenfeldt
Email Address	
Phone Number	
Whatcom County Resident	Yes

Committee Selection

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Authorizing Councilmembers to Hire Dedicated Aides	Field not completed.
Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Pro Committee
Establishing Performance Audits	Pro Committee
Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	Field not completed.
Modifying the Redistricting Process	Field not completed.
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	Field not completed.
Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments	Field not completed.

Modifying the Budget Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	I served as a Charter Review Commissioner and wrote the amendment for the ombuds office and collaborated on development of the performance auditor amendment.
Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.	I'd like to ensure our voters are equipped with accurate information to make an informed decision on these two important amendments.
Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?	Yes

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(Section Break)

First Name	Greg
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Last Name	Thames
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Whatcom County Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

Committee Selection

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Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Pro Committee
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Establishing Performance Audits	Pro Committee
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	Pro Committee
Modifying the Redistricting Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	Pro Committee
Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments	Pro Committee
Modifying the Budget Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	Pro Committee
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	Pro Committee
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	Con Committee

(Section Break)

Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	<p>My name is Greg Thames, and I am a longtime resident of Ferndale, Washington. I am dedicated to informed civic engagement and transparent local governance. With a practical background in community reporting and local issue analysis, I actively participate in discussions regarding Whatcom County's government structure and accountability.</p> <p>I hold a degree in Mass Communications with a focus on Photojournalism from Jackson State University. I have experience summarizing complex local government proceedings in clear, everyday language that working families can easily understand. Additionally, I have been involved in</p>
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community discussions about the Charter Review Commission's work, staying informed about proposed amendments and their broader impacts on transparency, fiscal responsibility, and citizen involvement. Also I have attended nearly every charter commission meeting. So I understand the ideas and goals of the commission work.

As a person with strong writing skills, I want to make sure that the public has a clear understanding of each issue. I am also personally committed to ensuring that Whatcom County's governance reflects the will and best interests of its citizens, and that voters receive clear, balanced information when they head to the ballot box. Good information is important for our democracy to work.

Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.

I am volunteering to serve on the Pro/Con Committees for several proposed Charter Amendments because I believe the voters deserve straightforward, unbiased information and fair arguments both for and against each measure. I am especially interested in measures concerning fiscal accountability, the duties of elected officials, redistricting processes, performance audits, and maintaining a fair initiative and referendum process. Serving on these committees is an opportunity for me to help ensure the Voters' Pamphlet accurately reflects diverse perspectives and upholds our County's democratic principles. I am dedicated to working collaboratively with fellow committee members to produce statements that meet the highest standards of clarity and integrity.

I am available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. and look forward to the possibility of contributing to this important civic process.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Yes

(Section Break)

Questions?

Please contact the Council Office at 360-778-5010 if you have any questions.

Pro and Con Committee Application: Proposed Charter Amendments

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(Section Break)

First Name	JG Sandy
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Last Name	Phillips
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Whatcom County Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

Committee Selection

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Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Pro Committee
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Establishing Performance Audits	Pro Committee
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Modifying the Redistricting Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	<i>Field not completed.</i>
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Modifying the Budget Process	Pro Committee
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	Pro Committee
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	<i>Field not completed.</i>
(Section Break)	
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	I was an unsuccessful candidate for the Charter Review Commission, but in conducting my campaign, I spoke with many of my constituents about the issues addressed by these proposed amendments. I was, and remain, unaligned with any political party and believe that I can bring an independent voice to writing the statements. I attended in person or on zoom many of the commission meetings and tried to make my views as an individual citizen known to the commission about many of these issues.

Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.

I want to continue in my role as an active citizen providing support to our county.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Field not completed.

(Section Break)

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(Section Break)

First Name	Lane
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Last Name	Davis Coury
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Whatcom County Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

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Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Pro Committee
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	Pro Committee
Modifying the Redistricting Process	Pro Committee
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Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	<i>Field not completed.</i>
(Section Break)	
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	<p>I am a voter who has lived in Bellingham for 4 years. As an observer of every Review Commission meeting, I have a reasonable understanding of each proposed amendment.</p> <p>My 35-year career as a technical instructor gave me experience in simplifying explanations of complex concepts.</p>
Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.	<p>At the Commission meeting on July 12, I heard that few volunteers had signed up for this important task.</p> <p>Most amendments seem straightforward. But providing a quick</p>

summary of pros and cons helps voters make informed decisions with confidence.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Yes

(Section Break)

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(Section Break)

First Name	Lindsey
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Last Name	Elenbaas
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Whatcom County Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

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Establishing Performance Audits	Field not completed.
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Modifying the Redistricting Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments	Pro Committee
Modifying the Budget Process	Pro Committee
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	Pro Committee
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	Pro Committee
(Section Break)	
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	I have an extensive background in finance, real estate and business. I've served the board of a nonprofit credit union and many other local organizations. I believe these experiences make me uniquely qualified to serve in this capacity.
Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.	I was either a sponsor or worked extensively on the amendments I've applied to serve on the pro/con committee for. I am eager for an opportunity to follow these particular amendments through to the ballot in November.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Yes

(Section Break)

Questions?

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(Section Break)

First Name	Ashley
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Last Name	Butenschoen
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Whatcom County Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

Committee Selection

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Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Con Committee
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Establishing Performance Audits	Field not completed.
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	<i>Field not completed.</i>
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Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	Con Committee
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	<i>Field not completed.</i>
(Section Break)	
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	As a 22-year Whatcom County resident, small business owner, parent, and dedicated community leader, I am committed to transparency, civic engagement, and amplifying the voice of the people in local government. I serve on multiple local nonprofit boards, advocating for disaster survivors, veterans, and our most vulnerable. In my professional role, I work locally and statewide, leading large-scale grassroots efforts focused on ballot initiatives and voter engagement.

Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.

I am seeking to serve on these committees because I believe each of these proposed charter amendments will significantly shape the effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness of our local government.

I am requesting to serve on the Con Committee for the proposed Office of the Ombuds because I am concerned about the cost, redundancy, and oversight challenges of creating a new government office. I believe we should first improve and strengthen existing mechanisms for public feedback and accountability before expanding government bureaucracy.

I would like to serve on the Pro Committee for the amendment prohibiting County Government from interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments, as I have firsthand experience with the initiative process. I strongly support protecting the public's right to petition their government without interference. This amendment reinforces trust in our democratic process and ensures elected officials cannot use their positions to obstruct the will of the voters.

I also wish to join the Con Committee for the amendment adjusting the signature calculation for Charter Amendments. While civic engagement is essential, I believe the current threshold helps ensure proposals have broad public backing before moving forward. Reducing the requirement may unintentionally weaken the standard needed to place foundational changes before voters.

Finally, I am requesting to serve on the Pro Committee for the amendment authorizing Councilmembers to hire dedicated aides. I believe this change would enhance transparency, communication, and accessibility between Councilmembers and their constituents. Dedicated staff support can help ensure Councilmembers are more informed, responsive, and effective in representing their districts.

Serving on these committees aligns with my passion for civic engagement, good governance, and citizen-led reform. I would be honored to help facilitate meaningful public dialogue on these important measures.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Yes

(Section Break)

Questions?

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(Section Break)

First Name	hannah
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Last Name	ordos
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Email Address	
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Phone Number	
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Residency	Yes
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(Section Break)

Committee Selection

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Authorizing Councilmembers to Hire Dedicated Aides	Pro Committee
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Establishing a Whatcom County Office of the Ombuds	Con Committee
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Establishing Performance Audits	Field not completed.
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Clarifying the Power and Duties of Elected Officials	Field not completed.
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Modifying the Redistricting Process	Field not completed.
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Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Referendum	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Prohibiting County Government from Interfering with Initiatives and Charter Amendments	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Modifying the Budget Process	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adding Accountability to Financial Reporting Requirements	Pro Committee
Determining Initial Rules for the Charter Review Commission Meetings	<i>Field not completed.</i>
Adjusting the Calculation of Signatures Required for a Charter Amendment	Con Committee
Requiring Land Supply and Construction Cost Analysis	Pro Committee
(Section Break)	
Please provide additional information for Council to consider when making committee appointments (e.g. qualifications, background, resume highlights).	I have a strong background in team leadership, policy engagement, and process development across both professional and civic roles. As a member of the 2025 Whatcom County Charter Review Commission, I worked collaboratively with fellow commissioners to create and or evaluate proposed amendments, engage with the public, and advocate for policies that support transparency, accountability, and fair representation. I have attended most County Council and committee meetings since 2021, which has given me a strong understanding of Council processes and the practical implications of Charter language. My professional experience has emphasized clear communication, organizational leadership, and informed decision-making—skills that translate well to serving on one of these committees. I look forward to the opportunity.
Please describe your interest in serving on the committee(s) you selected.	My interest in serving stems from a strong belief that voters deserve clear, factual, and accessible information when considering Charter amendments. Having been directly involved in the development of some of these proposals, I feel a responsibility to contribute to the

public discussion in a way that is grounded in both the intent and broader context of each measure.

Upload a resume or other supporting documentation.

Field not completed.

Are you available to attend the Council meeting on July 22 at 6 p.m. in case Councilmembers have questions for you?

Yes

(Section Break)

Questions?

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