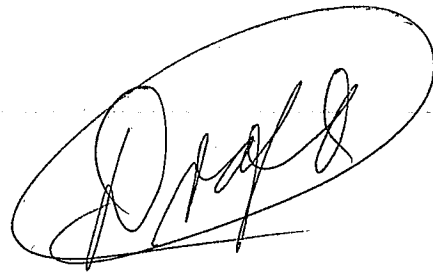


DATE: July 19, 1995
TO: Daily Hampshire Gazette
Springfield Union
WHMP
FROM: Mayor Mary L Ford
RE: Press Release



PRESS RELEASE

HOME RULE CHARTER

ck. quotes

Mayor Mary Ford today called for a Home Rule Charter for Northampton. She is appealing for the help of volunteers and citizens in getting a modernized charter for Northampton. "Right now very few local government procedures can be revised unless we get a vote of the legislature." "If Charter change passes and I'm still Mayor in three years, I'll probably lose the position of City Council Chair, that's a small price to pay for an overall, thorough, effort to update the administration of city government."

According to Christine Skorupski, City Clerk, the process is slow, requiring more than two years to make any change. Attorney Steve Samolewicz and member Suzanne Petersson of the Mayor's informal Charter Study Group say, "The next step is we now want nine elected citizens to be elected to formally review the Charter starting in January, which is done by a ballot this November. Then, they prepare a new version after holding public hearings, and bring that new version before the voters with a ballot two years from this November. Any changes would begin in January 1998."

"The language alone is so outdated, it's a reason for change," offers Ward 4 Councilor Michael Bardsley. Ward 7 Councilor Maureen Tobin says citizens may want to take a look at term lengths and the question of relative power of the Mayor and Council. Council President Pat Goggins ^{decried} described the current lack of centralized financial accountability and said, "I worked on this twenty years ago, and I can't believe we still don't have home rule allowing us to make minor changes in the way we do business."

Ford is asking people who can devote an hour or two this weekend to gathering signatures in downtown Florence, the dump, and the Farmer's Market to call MARJORIE HESS at 584-XXXX and leave a time. She stressed, "Citizens don't have to vote for any change for two more years. But unless we get this on a ballot this November, it will be the year 2000 before any modification could happen."

FACTS ABOUT THE CURRENT NORTHAMPTON CITY CHARTER

What is the City Charter?

The City Charter - established in 1883 - governs the current structure of Northampton's city government and has undergone very little substantive changes in its 112-year history.

Why should the Charter be changed?

A Charter Study Committee, appointed by Mayor Mary L. Ford, recently recommended that the city overhaul its current charter, calling it outdated and inconsistent. Presently, the city charter does not allow for Home Rule; meaning the State Legislature must weigh-in on even the slightest structural changes, giving Northampton less control over its own government. The committee's other recommendations for further review included:

- ◆ Structure of the city's financial departments and accountability
- ◆ Updating and improving the 19th-Century language of the current Charter
- ◆ Civil Service
- ◆ City officers: elected vs. appointed

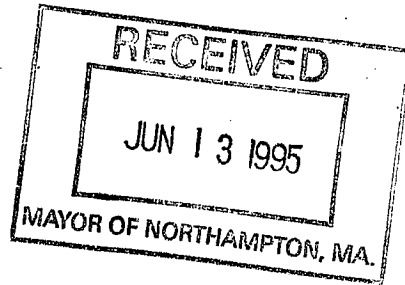
What does signing this petition mean?

Signing this petition will simply help put a referendum question on the upcoming November ballot. Approximately 2,300 signatures are needed. The referendum will ask voters whether they want to elect a nine-member Charter Committee to take on a two-year process of studying the entire 100-page Charter document. If they choose, the elected committee will make recommended Charter changes that eventually would be brought back before the voters in two years. If the changes are approved, the new Charter would be adopted in January, 1998.

Why does changing the Charter take so long?

Because the city does not have a Home Rule Charter, this lengthy process is mandated by the State Legislature. If a Home Rule Charter is eventually approved, the city would have more local control and, in the future, necessary changes could be done in a much more timely fashion.

Press Release



SIGNATURES NEEDED FOR NEW CHARTER COMMISSION

Now that an appointed, advisory Charter Study Committee has unanimously recommended that the city's 19th-Century Charter needs some modern revision, a petition drive is underway to begin a more formal charter study.

Some members who served on the Charter Study Committee are looking for volunteers to help them collect the 2,300 signatures needed, by July 28. The signatures are needed to place a referendum on the November ballot, asking voters whether a nine-member Charter Commission should be elected next November to review the 1883 document.

The current structure of Northampton's city government is laid out in the Charter. Members of the study committee, appointed by Mayor Mary L. Ford in January, unanimously agreed that the document is antiquated and needs to be brought up-to-date.

"The current Charter is downright inadequate to serve the city's needs today," said Suzanne Petersson, who served on the study committee and is a former School Committee member. Former City Councilor Steven Samolewicz, a lawyer who chaired The mayor's study committee stressed that people need to act quickly. "That means collecting 2,300 signatures before the July 28 deadline," he said.

Some of the topics suggested for review by the study committee are: Home Rule (city could change its own charter without review of the state Legislature), accountability of city finance departments (treasurer is elected, budget analyst answers to the mayor, auditor, assessor and tax collector answer to the City Council), who should preside at City Council and School Committee meetings.

People interested in running for a seat on the Charter Commission can take out nomination papers from the City Clerk's office and submit them to the Register of Voters office no later than Sept. 19.

People who would like to volunteer to collect signatures should call Suzanne Petersson at 584-5541.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Mary L. Ford

FROM: Kathleen G. Fallon, City Solicitor

SUBJECT: Timeframe for submission of charter petition

DATE: July 26, 1995

M.G.L. Chapter 43B, Sections 3 and 4, (attached), outlines the timeframe for submitting a petition for revision of a city charter and election of a charter commission.

Section 4 states that, within thirty (30) days of receipt of a certified petition for revision of a charter, a city council may vote to place the matter on the ballot for the next regular city election to be held sixty (60) or more days after said vote. The vote must also call for the nomination of charter commissioners. Nominations for charter commission must be submitted on or before the twenty-eighth (28th) day preceding the election.

Section 3 states that the Board of Registrars must certify the signatures on the petition and report to the city council within ten (10) days of the filing of the petition. Section 3 also provides that the petition need not be filed at one time. Proponents may submit signature sheets at any time prior to the deadline. The petition will be deemed filed when the persons responsible for it notify the Board of Registrars in writing that the petition is complete. The Board may begin to certify signatures prior to the completion of the filing.

Therefore, working backward, the absolute deadline for filing a charter revision petition would be seventy (70) days prior to the scheduled election date. In theory, it could be less if the Board of Registrars guaranteed that it would certify signatures and submit its report to the City Council in less than ten (10) days. However, I would not recommend such a procedure since there is no legal obligation on the Board to comply with such a promise.

Please take note that the above timeframe is predicated on having a City Council meeting held on the sixty-first day prior to the November election. The sixty-first day appears to be September 8th. The last day for filing the petition if the ten (10) day certification period is used would be August 29th.

There will be a regularly scheduled Council meeting on September 7th. The charter petition could be a regular agenda item for that meeting if the Board of Registrars completes the certification process by noon on September 1st. It could even be placed on the agenda prior to completion of the certification process if the Board of Registrars agrees that its report will be ready for the meeting on the 7th. Finally, the petition could be a "late file" agenda item if certification is not completed by September 1st if the Council votes to allow its submission.

In theory, the petition could be submitted as late as the day of the City Council meeting if the Board of Registrars could complete certification of the signatures by the time of the Council meeting that night. If the signatures were submitted on an ongoing basis throughout August, this might be possible. However, my recommendation is to have the petition submitted and certification completed in time for the matter to be a regularly scheduled agenda item on September 7th. This will avoid any appearance that the proponents of the petition are slipping the matter through without public notice.

If you have any questions, please call me.

cc: Patte Shaughnessy, Registrar of Voters



NORTHAMPTON BOARD OF REGISTRARS

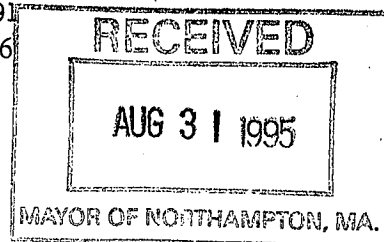
ANNUAL CITY CENSUS

Wallace J. Puchalski Memorial Office Building
212 Main Street • Room 302
Northampton, Massachusetts 01060
(413) 586-6950 ext. 290, 291
FAX (413) 586-3726

BOARD OF REGISTRARS

Harold S. Craig
Karen J. Phillips
Patricia A. Rowe
Patricia A. Shaughnessy

August 29, 1995

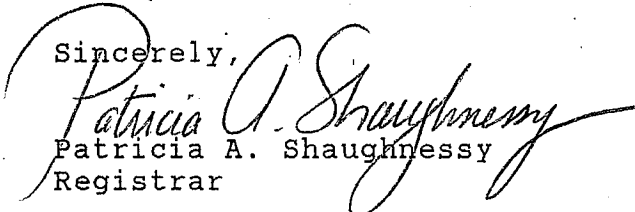


Dear Mayor Ford and the Northampton City Council,

All Charter Revision papers submitted for certification to the Northampton Board of Registrars have been certified. A total of one thousand one hundred and seventy five signatures were certified. The total number of signatures needed for the question to placed on the ballot was two thousand two hundred and sixty one (2,261) or 15% of the total number of registered voters at the last state election.

If you require additional information, please call me at extension 291.

Sincerely,


Patricia A. Shaughnessy
Registrar

cc: Suzanne Petersson
Christine Skorupski