

# Pros & Cons: City of Westlake Charter Amendments, 3 November 2020

*In keeping with its mission to provide citizens with nonpartisan information about candidates and ballot issues, the Westlake/North Olmsted Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland offers the following pro and con arguments for the proposed charter amendments that will be on the November 3, 2020 ballot for the City of Westlake.*

## 56

Shall the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to replace all male pronouns and terminology with gender neutral pronouns and terminology and to repeal Article XI, Section 8 "REFERENCES TO GENDER" as no longer necessary?

### **PRO**

**Brings charter up-to-date and encourages gender equity in the city's operations.**

### **CON**

**Does not address gender variance/identity as directly as may be ideal.**

## 57

Shall Article II, Section 2 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide that the Mayor appoints his office staff and department heads, except the elected Director of Law and to provide that the Mayor supervises and is responsible to the electors of the City for the operation of all departments and divisions, except the Department of Law and Council?

### **PRO**

**Consistent with 2010 Charter Amendment making the Law Director an elected, rather than appointed, position.**

### **CON**

**Redundant. It is already codified that the Law Director is elected rather than appointed.**

## 58

Shall Article II, Section 6 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide that the salary of Acting Mayor shall be established by Council for the position of Mayor, provide for a special election only if the office becomes vacant with twelve (12) or more months remaining in the Mayor's term, provide for a run-off election for Mayor if no one candidate gets greater than forty percent (40%) of the vote, and to reduce the number of signatures required on the nominating petition from five hundred (500) to two hundred fifty (250) qualified electors, to be filed with the Board of Elections no later than sixty (60) days prior to the day of the special election?

### **PRO**

**Adds specificity to mayoral replacements and mayoral elections; reduces signature requirements for mayoral candidates.**

### **CON**

**Reduces citizen awareness of interested mayoral candidates; overly specific about reasons for special and run-off elections.**

## 59

Shall Article III, Section 8 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide that Regular Meetings of Council shall be set at a time as determined by the Council President?

### **PRO**

**Codifies a Council President responsibility that has been informally practiced. Provides Council with more flexibility in meeting times.**

### **CON**

**Establishes a single authority for meeting time decisions that could be more collegial.**

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## 60

Shall Article III, Section 13 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide for electronic means of publishing notices of public hearings on changes to the zoning maps, ordinances or regulations in addition to publication by newspaper or posting at public buildings?

### PRO

**By broadening notifications, may provide wider awareness by citizens of proposed changes.**

### CON

**Does not specify that such postings meet specific timelines.**

## 61

Shall Article IV, Section 1(a) of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to add the Department of Engineering, Department of Buildings, Structures and Inspections and Department of Purchasing as departments established in the Charter?

### PRO

**Codifies departmental organization that is currently in use.**

### CON

**Requires future charter amendments to alter the departmental structure.**

## 62

Shall Article IV, Subsections 2(c) and (d) and Article VI, Section 10 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide for the merger of the Board of Building Appeals into the Board of Zoning Appeals, provide that the term of the newly merged Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and various Commissions within the City shall be four (4) years, and provide that the appointments to the Board and various Commissions shall continue until the expiration of the term or until the appointment of a successor, whichever occurs later, and to repeal Article IV, Section 11 "Board of Building Appeals" as no longer necessary?

### PRO

**Combines related activities into the responsibilities of a single board and specifies appointment conditions.**

### CON

**Reduces number of citizens participating in city affairs; permits delayed appointments, thus limiting turnover.**

## 63

Shall Article IV, Section 4 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide that the Director of Law shall have been engaged in the practice of law in Ohio for a period of six (6) continuous years immediately preceding their election, to provide that the salary of the Acting Director of Law shall be established by Council for the position of Acting Director of Law, to provide a special election, with no preliminary primary, to be held one hundred days from the date of the vacancy to fill such vacancy; and to provide that candidates seeking to fill the vacancy are required to file nominating petitions to be signed by not less than two hundred fifty (250) qualified electors no later than 4:00 p.m. of the 60<sup>th</sup> day prior to the day of the special election?

### PRO

**Codifies requirements and electoral arrangements for Director of Law position. Ensures that candidates have recent experience.**

### CON

**Does not require municipal law experience. Reduces citizen awareness of persons who seek the position of Director of Law.**

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## 64

Shall Article VI, Section 4 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to renew the existing 0.9 mill tax levy for the purpose of providing funds to pay for the salaries and other expenses of the Police and Fire Departments, for five years, to be renewed only upon approval by the electors?

### **PRO**

**Provides continuing funds that are important to the police and fire departments.**

### **CON**

**May not ensure that additional expenses can be managed within budget for the five-year period.**

## 65

Shall Article VII, Section 3 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to reduce the number of signatures needed for nominating petitions for the office of Mayor, Council President and Director of Law from five hundred (500) to two hundred fifty (250) qualified electors?

### **PRO**

**Eases the process for citizens desiring to run for the specified offices.**

### **CON**

**May reduce citizen awareness of the persons who are interested in elective office.**

## 66

Shall Article X, Section 1 of the Charter of the City of Westlake be amended to provide for an increase in the number of members on the Charter Review Commission from nine (9) to eleven (11), to consist of six (6) members to be appointed, one from each ward by the ward Council member, who shall reside in their ward; one (1) member appointed by the Council President; one (1) member to be appointed by the Director of Law, and (3) members appointed by the Mayor, and to provide for an eighteen (18) month residency requirement; and to change the name of the Charter Review Committee to the Charter Review Commission?

### **PRO**

**Increases citizen participation and elevates the group's importance to the city.**

### **CON**

**Reduces mayoral appointment power.**