



City of Dallas

City Council Term Lengths and Limits

**Charter Review Commission
November 7, 2023**

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Presentation Overview



- Background/History
- Purpose
- Comparing Dallas With Peer Cities
- Sharing Current Amendment Proposals
- Next Steps





- At the October 24 meeting of the Charter Review Commission, staff was directed to put together a presentation looking at proposed options for the length of council terms.



- Benchmark Dallas to other cities' term lengths, term limits, and election cycles.
- Provide information on current suggested amendments and possible methods for implementation.



- Establishes 2-year terms as "Regular Term," but provides for Home Rule Cities to allow by charter 2-, 3-, or 4-year terms.
- No terms longer than 4 years allowed.
- No term limitations by state law.



Current Dallas City Council Terms



- 2-year terms for Councilmembers; 4-year term for Mayor
- 4-term limit for Councilmembers; 2-term limit for Mayor.
- Not staggered; all Councilmembers are up for election every two years.



Comparison to Other Texas Cities



Information below applies to both councilmembers and mayors, unless otherwise noted.

	<u>Houston</u>	<u>Austin</u>	<u>San Antonio</u>	<u>El Paso</u>	<u>Fort Worth</u>
<u>Term Length</u>	4 years	4 years	2 years	4 years	2 years
<u>Term Limit</u>	2 terms	2 terms	4 terms	10 years*	No term limit
<u>Election Cycle</u>	Not staggered	Staggered; half every 2 years	Not staggered	Staggered; half every 2 years	Not staggered

*El Paso Charter reads: "No Mayor or Representative may hold such office for more than a total of ten years throughout their lifetime."



Comparison to Other Texas Cities



Information below applies to both councilmembers and mayors, unless otherwise noted.

	<u>Irving</u>	<u>Arlington</u>	<u>Laredo</u>	<u>Corpus Christi</u>	<u>McKinney</u>
<u>Term Length</u>	3 years	3 years	4 years	2 years	4 years
<u>Term Limit</u>	3 terms	3 terms*	2 terms	4 terms**	2 terms
<u>Election Cycle</u>	Staggered; 1/3 every year	Staggered; half every 1st and 2nd year	Staggered; half every 2 years	Not staggered	Staggered; half every 2 years

*no person may serve more than 12 years in combination as Councilmember and Mayor.

**or six two-year terms consecutively in any combination of council member and mayor.



Comparison to Other U.S. Cities



Information below applies to both councilmembers and mayors, unless otherwise noted.

	<u>Phoenix</u>	<u>San Jose</u>	<u>Philadelphia</u>	<u>San Diego</u>	<u>Jacksonville</u>
<u>Term Length</u>	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years
<u>Term Limit</u>	2 terms for mayor; 3 for council	2 terms	2 terms for mayor; no limit for city council	2 terms	2 terms
<u>Election Cycle</u>	Staggered; half every 2 years	Staggered, half every 2 years	Not staggered	Staggered, half every 2 years	Not staggered



Examples of Charter Language Changes



- Houston provided specific language based around the November 2015 election to provide a one-time extension of term limits for some sitting Councilmembers.
- Arlington voted to go from 2- to 3-year terms in November 2022.



Examples of Houston Charter



Section 6a. - Term of office; limitation of terms.



- (a) For the purposes of term limits, City elective offices are Mayor, City Controller, and City Council Member (either At-Large or District). The term of office for a City elective office shall be four years. Except as otherwise provided herein, no person shall be eligible to be elected to more than two four-year terms in the same City elective office.
- (b) For positions to be elected at the City General Election to be held in November 2015, the eligibility of persons then holding City elective office to seek re-election to a City elective office shall be as follows:
 - 1. A person serving his or her first two-year term shall be eligible to seek two additional terms of four years duration in that same office. A person having then served two additional terms of four years duration shall not be eligible to seek re-election to the same office.
 - 2. A person serving his or her second two-year term shall be eligible to seek one additional term of four years duration in that same office. A person having then served one additional term of four years duration shall not be eligible to seek re-election to the same office.
 - 3. A person serving his or her third two-year term shall not be eligible to seek election to that same office.
- (c) In all City General Elections after the City General Election to be held in November 2015, a term to which a City elective officer was elected or appointed shall be counted only if the City elective officer served one-half or more of the term.
- (d) Persons term limited under prior law shall continue to be term limited. Persons who served a single term prior to 2016 who are not serving in City elective office in 2015 and thus not subject to subsection (b), shall be eligible to serve one additional four-year term in the same City elective office.
- (e) A prohibition against eligibility to seek election to a certain City elective office shall not bar a person from seeking election to another City elective office that such person has not previously held. (Added by amendment November 5, 1991; amended 11-3-2015)



Example of Arlington Charter



Section 9. Term Limits: No person shall serve as Mayor for more than three (3) elected terms, and no person shall serve as a Council Member for more than three (3) elected terms. Under no circumstances may any person ever serve for more than nine (9) years as a Council Member and for more than nine (9) years as Mayor. For purposes of this section and computing the limitations on terms:

- (1) a Mayor or Council Member who vacates, for any reason the office before the end of the term for which he was elected shall be considered to have completed that term.
- (2) an appointment or election to fill an unexpired Council Member term, or unexpired Mayor term if applicable, shall be computed as follows:
 - a. if fifty percent (50%) or more of the term is remaining, it shall be included in the computation of term limits; or
 - b. if less than fifty percent (50%) of the term is remaining, it shall not be included in the computation of term limits.
- (3) Council Member terms are counted by including together terms served as both single-member and at-large districts.

The term that each person as Mayor or as a Council Member is currently filling, and all terms served prior to that current term, shall be counted for purposes of determining whether three (3) terms have been served.

This amendment shall become effective immediately upon adoption at the next municipal election, shall apply to all persons currently occupying the Office of Mayor or Council Member, and shall apply to all municipal elections conducted after the date of adoption. Any resident of the city may seek injunctive relief to enforce this prohibition. (Adopted by Charter Amendment, November 22, 2022)



Current Amendment Proposals



- 3-year terms, 3-term limit, staggered cycles; includes mayoral election. (Bryant)
- 4-year terms, 2-term limit, not staggered. (Kingston)





- Mechanical considerations:
 - Council must be divided into blocks to begin staggering.
 - May require term limit extension for certain seats on Council.





- Mechanical considerations:
 - 7 current CMs & Mayor term limited in 2027
 - 5 current CMs & 2 new CMs may require an extension to term limits.



Next Steps



- Further Commission consideration and direction.





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Appendix – Submitted Amendments



Suggested Amendment	Chapter	Section	Proposed By	Date	Category	Rationale
4-yr council terms, not staggered	III	1	Philip Kingston	10/9/2023	Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The 2-year terms create huge swaths of the elected terms where the council member is too timid b. Staggering is a bad idea bc it will reduce turnout c. Can't move the elections to November bc of state law
The City of Dallas conducts its council and mayoral on a three year staggered cycle and change the term limits to (3) three-year terms.	III	5	Randall Bryant	10/19/2023	Policy	This amendment will extend council representation limits by one year while reducing respective council elections by one cycle.

