

CHARTER HIGHLIGHTS

Legislative Branch – County Council

- Seven (7) members – five (5) elected by district; two (2) elected at large.
- Qualifications – U.S. citizen, resident/registered voter of FC for at least one year prior to election.
- Term – four (4) year term, can serve no more than 3 consecutive terms.
- Salary - \$22,500, until changed by ordinance.
- Vacancies – filled by appointment within 45 days by the Council.
- Meetings – legislative sessions limited to 45 days yearly; can meet in non-legislative sessions as needed.

Legislative Process

- Local legislation – Bills can be introduced by any Council member and then receives a public hearing with hearing advertised in advance. After hearing, Council may enact Bill into law. If Bill is amended, and if amendment substantive, Bill requires a new public hearing before it is enacted into law.
- Legislative Veto – County Executive can approve or veto a Bill within 10 days of its passage, otherwise Bill takes effect. If Bill is vetoed, Council can override veto with an affirmative vote of five members.
- Effective date of legislation – most Bills take effect 60 days after enactment.
- Referendum – voters can petition most Bills to a referendum where voters decide whether a Bill becomes law or not. Petition must be signed by 7 percent of voters and submitted to Council no later than 59 days after Bill is enacted.

Executive Branch – County Executive (elected at-large)

- County Executive – chief executive officer directs, supervises and oversees administration of executive departments, agencies and county offices.
- Qualifications – U.S. citizen, resident/registered voter for at least 2 years prior to election.
- Term – 4 year term, can serve no more than 2 consecutive terms.
- Salary - \$95,000 until changed by ordinance.
- Vacancies – filled by appointment within 45 days by the Council.
- Organization Plan – once each term, Executive evaluates structure and functions of government and reports to the Council.

Annual Budget Process

- County Executive holds two public hearings during preparation of proposed budget.
- Budget Passage – after proposed budget submitted to Council, at least one public hearing held. Council may reduce or delete items in proposed budget, but Council may not add items or increase any proposed expenditure. Council adopts budget by ordinance by end of May each year or proposed budget becomes law.
- Balanced Budget – budget is balanced so that proposed revenues equal proposed expenditures.
- Checks/Balances – Council may decrease or delete items from Executive's proposed budget but Council shall not add to the budget. Substantive changes by Council to Executive's budget require additional public hearing.

CHARTER HIGHLIGHTS (2)

Planning and Zoning/Land Use

Article 66B of Maryland Code governs land use. The laws that established the policies and procedures by which land use decisions have been made in the county will continue to control land decisions after the adoption of the Charter until this requirement in the Charter is amended by voters.

Redistricting Process

Redistricting occurs every 10 years following the census. Redistricting Commission is appointed by the Council and receives three nominees from two major political party Central Committees. Council also appoints three unaffiliated members of the Commission. No member can hold elected office while serving on the Commission. Commission recommends the district map. Council has authority to approve the district map.

Charter Amendment Process

Amendment process established under state law and requires voters to approve and adopt any proposed amendment or proposed amendment fails. Charter can be reviewed at any time, but the first scheduled review occurs in 2018 and at least 10 years thereafter by a Commission appointed by the Council.

Transition Process

After Charter is approved in 2012, most provisions of the Charter take effect December 1, 2014, when the first County Executive and members of the first Council take office following their election in November 2014.

Highlights prepared by the Charter Board