

## EVALUATION OF PROPOSED CITY CHARTER CHANGES

### VOTE NO on April 2

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**Preamble:** *In November 2010 the People of Bartlesville chose to install a well-crafted and durable Council-Manager style of City government modeled after a U.S. government described by our founding Constitution. The benefits of this style of City government include empowering the People to duly elect City Council members whose volunteer duties include the hiring of a well-compensated City Manager and providing checks and balances for the City Manager's authority. Thus, the People govern from the 'bottom-up' via an elected Council government that represents their interests (such as morals, principles, goals and desires) and provides checks and balances for those paid employees responsible for determining direction and administering rules and regulations. The hallmarks of this style of government include power imbued upon the People; decentralization and diffusion of governmental power; and electing a benevolent government controlled by checks and balances and transparency. On April 2<sup>nd</sup> voters in the City of Bartlesville will be asked if the City Charter should be modified.*

**Question:** With respect to the proposed City Charter Changes... did you or any people in your social circles recommend these changes?

**Answer:** No! Personnel running our City government recommended these changes.

**Question:** Why would our government officials recommend changes to the City Charter?

**Answer:** Self-protection, self-service, entrenchment of incumbents, and minimization of community involvement in government.

### **Discussion on Articles 2 and 3:**

1. Lengthening the term of an elected City Council person from 2 years to 3 years essentially provides that person more entrenched security, more overall authority, and more time to garner influence from sources outside the People that elected them. In fact, the current 2 year term is modeled after the US Constitution where members of the House of Representatives hold a 2 year term in order to continually provide fresh perspective, make government dynamic and ensure entrenched government officials (such as Senators and Cabinet members) have little opportunity to represent their interests over those of the People that elected them. Keep in mind, if a Council member is doing a great job, the People can simply reelect them to reward them for accurately representing the People's interests. *When functioning properly, the existing system is not broken and does not need to be fixed!*

2. Additionally, the proposal to stagger council terms (so no more than two member's terms are expiring at the same time) further entrenches the entire City Council and distances them from responsibility to represent the People. For instance, if the proposed Charter changes are made, and the people of Bartlesville find the City Council is grossly failing to represent their interests, it will be nearly impossible to oust the council through what's called a 'recall effort' and elect a new slate of individuals that will do the will of the People. *Staggering Council terms has the effect of ensuring necessary personnel changes are not easily made.*

3. And while moving City elections to the month of April in order to ‘keep elections clear of getting lost in the noise and politics of state and federal elections’ gives the appearance of providing the People a benefit - the opposite is true! Contacting the Washington County Election Board will verify that in fact these off-cycle elections in April actually experience much lower voter turn-out, thereby having the effect of distancing the Council from the People and creating an environment where incumbency continues unabated. *Unfortunately, if more people would vote in local elections the City’s argument would hold-up - but the facts show this is not true! **Vote No** on these Articles.*

#### **Discussion on Article 4:**

Not surprisingly, you’ll notice that the City Council is also recommending changes to the already difficult ‘recall’ process mentioned above, thus further protecting their incumbency and further insulating themselves from the People that elected them. *This reeks of fear and simply supports and proves-out the People’s arguments regarding Articles 2 and 3 above. **Vote No** on Article 4.*

#### **Discussion on Article 16:**

Again, do you have issues with the City’s purchasing and contracting procedures? No, but the elected officials want ‘more efficient’ processes to spend the various taxes and fees collected from the People. On the surface this sounds beneficial, but look closely at the language used. Do you really support an incestuous system where the City Council simply cedes over certain undefined purchasing power to the City Manager and City employees? Where are the checks and balances of government? Are you OK with opaque terms such as ‘a limit’ for purchasing; ‘consortiums that have been approved’ by council and contracts that ‘do not exceed the limits’? By voting Yes on Article 16 are the People signing blank checks or are you being responsible stewards of government funds? Because the City government lacks transparency, you’ll won’t know until you approve it. How convenient. Sound like Bidenomics to anyone? *Insist on transparency and **Vote No** on Article 16.*

#### **In summary:**

In a true Republican form of government, elected officials are installed by the people they represent in order to implement the People’s interests (such as morals, principles, goals and desires). Checks and balances are used to prevent the concentration of power by selfish interests.

The proposed changes to the City Charter seriously erode those hallmarks, under the guise of efficiency, by allowing the City Council to entrench themselves in government; make changes by the People more impractical and difficult; cede power to an unelected official (the City Manager); and then use a lack of transparency to codify checks and balances that should be dynamic and unique to circumstances. *In order to retain your rights as a voter in the City of Bartlesville, and oppose movement towards ‘top-down’ Big Government, you must **Vote No** on City Charter Changes on April 2, 2024.*

**Note:** *Any benefits potentially gained by a few legitimate administrative changes are FAR outweighed by the detriment of the other self-serving changes. Don’t let the complexity confuse you...make your life easy and **VOTE NO** on all items.*