

Date: April 17, 2026
To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Emily Smart Woerner, City Solicitor *ESW*
Copies: Anthony Covington, Clerk of Council
Subject: Review of Certified Copy of Referendum Petition

Pursuant to Article II, Section 8(A)(4) of the Charter of the City of Cincinnati, I have reviewed the enclosed certified copy of a petition submitted by Mikayla McClanahan to the Clerk of Council on April 15, 2026. The certified copy of the petition meets the requirements as to form provided by the Charter.

FINNEY LAW FIRM

4270 Ivy Pointe Boulevard, Suite 225, Cincinnati, OH 45245

April 15, 2026

Mikayla S. McClanahan

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL

Clerk of Council
City of Cincinnati
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

RE: Proposed Charter Amendment | Pre-Circulation Filing

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to Section 8 of the Charter of the City of Cincinnati, enclosed please find the following documents submitted in connection with a proposed amendment to the Charter of the City of Cincinnati:

1. The full text of the proposed Charter Amendment entitled: AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF CINCINNATI TO REQUIRE THAT THE POLICE CHIEF AND THE FIRE CHIEF BE APPOINTED AND REMOVED ONLY BY AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL.
2. The proposed petition form containing the full and correct copy of the title of the proposed amendment on the Secretary of State 6B Form.
3. The designation of the Committee of Petitioners, including names and addresses of the five electors authorized to act on behalf of the petition.
4. The required Petition Certification Form.

This submission is made for purposes of satisfying the pre-circulation filing requirements of the Cincinnati Charter and for review as to form by the Law Director.

Please confirm receipt of this filing and advise if any additional documentation is required to complete the City's review.

Clerk of Council
April 15, 2026
Page 2 of 2

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
FINNEY LAW FIRM, LLC

/s/ Mikayla S. McClanahan, Esq.
Mikayla S. McClanahan, Esq.

cc: Christopher Smithermann

Petition for Submission of Proposed Amendment to Charter

Constitution of Ohio, Art. XVIII, Section 9 and 14; R.C. 731.26 - 41, 3503.06

To be signed by ten percent of the electors, based upon the total vote cast at the last preceding general municipal election.

(NOTE – The below notice must be printed in red.)

NOTICE – Whoever knowingly signs this petition more than once, signs a name other than his own, or signs when not a legal voter is liable to prosecution.

To the Council, the legislative authority of the Cincinnati _____ of
(City or Village)
Hamilton _____, Ohio.

We, the undersigned, qualified electors of the Cincinnati _____ of
(City or Village)

Hamilton _____, Ohio respectfully petition the legislative authority to forthwith provide by

Ordinance, for the submission to the electors of said city or village, the following proposed amendment to the Charter of said city or village to-wit:

TITLE: AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF CINCINNATI TO REQUIRE THAT THE POLICE CHIEF AND THE FIRE CHIEF BE APPOINTED AND REMOVED ONLY BY AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL.

TEXT: Be it resolved by the people of the City of Cincinnati that Article V, Sections 5 and 6 of the Charter of the City of Cincinnati are hereby repealed and replaced as follows:

Article V, Section 5

The members of the police force engaged in police services shall consist of the following ranks:

1. Chief
2. Executive Assistant Police Chief
3. Assistant Chief
4. Captain
5. Lieutenant
6. Sergeant
7. Police Officer
8. Police Recruit

The positions of police chief, executive assistant police chief and assistant police chief shall be in the unclassified civil service of the city and exempt from all competitive examination requirements.

The city manager shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the council given by the affirmative vote of seven (7) members thereof, appoint the police chief to serve in such unclassified position. Upon the nomination of a police chief, the council shall be afforded the opportunity to interview all candidates considered by the city manager for nomination. The city manager shall appoint the executive assistant police chief and assistant police chiefs to serve in such unclassified positions. The police chief, executive assistant police chief and assistant police chiefs shall be nominated or appointed solely on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications in the field of law enforcement and need not, at the time of appointment, be residents of the city or state.

The police chief may be removed at any time or placed on administrative leave only upon an affirmative vote of seven (7) members of the council. Removal of the police chief may be initiated by the city manager or by the council. After the police chief has served six months, the police chief shall be subject to removal only for cause, including incompetency, inefficiency, dishonesty, insubordination, unsatisfactory performance, failure of good behavior, any other acts of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or conviction of any felony. If removal for cause is sought, the police chief may demand written charges and shall be entitled to be heard before the council. Any hearing before the council on the removal of the police chief and deliberations on the charges shall be open to the public.

Upon a vacancy occurring in the position of police chief, the city manager shall have the power to appoint an interim police chief to serve in said position for a period no greater than sixty (60) days unless the council, by an affirmative vote of seven (7) members thereof, consents to an extension of such appointment for a period as council may so provide. If council fails to grant such an extension and the interim police chief has served for said 60 day period, the position of police chief shall be deemed vacant and the city manager may appoint an interim police chief pursuant to this Section; provided, however, that

the city manager may not appoint any individual who has previously served as interim police chief arising from the original vacancy in the position of police chief.

Within the ranks below that of assistant police chief, the council shall establish such special positions having special duties with preferential pay as the council deems necessary; but the existence of such special positions shall not establish eligibility for promotion to the next higher rank. No special positions established by council within the ranks below that of assistant police chief shall be filled without promotional examinations.

Article V, Section 6

The members of the fire force engaged in fire protection services shall consist of the following ranks:

1. Chief
2. Assistant Chief
3. District Chief
4. Captain
5. Lieutenant
6. Fire Specialist
7. Fire Apparatus Operator
8. Fire Fighter
9. Fire Recruit

The positions of fire chief and assistant fire chief shall be in the unclassified civil service of the city and exempt from all competitive examination requirements.

The city manager shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the council given by the affirmative vote of seven (7) members thereof, appoint the fire chief to serve in such unclassified position. Upon the nomination of a fire chief, the council shall be afforded the opportunity to interview all candidates considered by the city manager for nomination. The city manager shall appoint assistant fire chiefs to serve in such unclassified positions. The fire chief and assistant fire chiefs shall be appointed solely on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications in the field of fire prevention and suppression and need not, at the time of appointment, be residents of the city or state.

The fire chief may be removed at any time only upon the affirmative vote of seven (7) members of the council. Removal of the fire chief may be initiated by the city manager or by the council. After the fire chief has served six months, the fire chief shall be subject to removal only for cause, including incompetency, inefficiency, dishonesty, insubordination, unsatisfactory performance, failure of good behavior, any other acts of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or conviction of any felony. If removal for cause is sought, the fire chief may demand written charges and shall be entitled to be heard before the council. Any hearing before council on the removal of the fire chief and deliberations on the charges shall be open to the public.

Upon a vacancy occurring in the position of fire chief, the city manager shall have the power to appoint an interim fire chief to serve in such position for a period no greater than sixty (60) days unless the council, by an affirmative vote of seven (7) members thereof, consents to an extension of such appointment for a period as council may so provide. If council fails to grant such an extension and the interim fire chief has served for said sixty (60) day period, the position of fire chief shall be deemed vacant and the city manager may appoint an interim fire chief pursuant to this Section; provided, however, that the city manager may not appoint any individual who has previously served as interim fire chief arising from the original vacancy in the position of fire chief.

Within the ranks below that of assistant chief, the council shall establish such special positions having special duties with preferential pay as the council deems necessary; however, the existence of such special positions shall not establish eligibility for promotion to the next higher rank. No special position established by council within the ranks below that of assistant chief shall be filled without promotional examination.

TITLE: AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF CINCINNATI TO REQUIRE THAT THE POLICE CHIEF AND THE FIRE CHIEF BE APPOINTED AND REMOVED ONLY BY AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL.

We hereby designate the following persons as a committee to represent the petitioners in all matters relating to this petition or its circulation.

Name	Residence
Christopher Smitherman	
Michelle Edwards	
Alfred Williams	
Tracy L. Gragston	
Marsha Joan Espich	

Signatures on this petition must be from only one county and must be written in ink.

	Signature	Voting Residence, Street Number and Address	City, Village or Township	County	Date of Signing
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	Signature	Voting Residence, Street Number and Address	City, Village or Township	County	Date of Signing
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	Signature	Voting Residence, Street Number and Address	City, Village or Township	County	Date of Signing
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Circulator Statement

Must be completed and signed by the circulator.

I, _____, declare under penalty of election falsification that I reside at the address
Printed Name of Circulator
 appearing below my signature; that I am the circulator of the foregoing petition containing _____ signatures;
Number
 that I witnessed the affixing of every signature; that all signers were to the best of my knowledge and belief
 qualified to sign; and that every signature is to the best of my knowledge and belief the signature of the person
 whose signature it purports to be or of an attorney in fact acting pursuant to section 3501.382 of the Revised Code.

**WHOEVER COMMITS ELECTION
 FALSIFICATION IS GUILTY OF A
 FELONY OF THE FIFTH DEGREE**

Signature of Circulator

 Permanent Residence Address

 City or Village State Zip Code

_____, Ohio

Form 6-B

Petition for the submission of a
 proposed amendment to charter

Filed _____, _____, _____ (Month, Day), _____ (Year)

 City Auditor or Village Clerk

FINNEY LAW FIRM

4270 Ivy Pointe Boulevard, Suite 225, Cincinnati, OH 45215

April 8, 2026

Mikayla S. McClanahan



Please see below a full list of the Committee of Petitioners for the proposed Charter Amendment entitled: AN AMENDMENT TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF CINCINNATI TO REQUIRE THAT THE POLICE CHIEF AND THE FIRE CHIEF BE APPOINTED AND REMOVED ONLY BY AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL.

Christopher Smitherman	A large solid black rectangular redaction box covering the names of the committee members.
Michelle Edwards	
Alfred Williams	
Tracy L. Gragston	
Marsha Joan Espich	

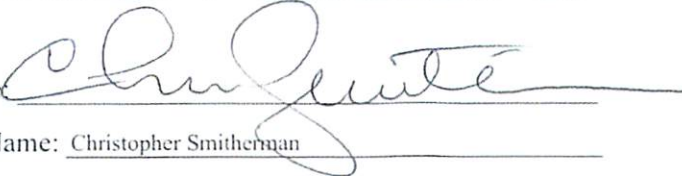
CERTIFICATION OF PROPOSED PETITION

I, Christopher Smitherman, being duly sworn and cautioned, depose and state as follows:

1. I am competent to testify to the matters herein on the basis of my own personal knowledge of the facts.
2. I am one of five committee members listed on a Petition for Submission of a proposal to amend the City of Cincinnati Charter. _____ to Require that the police chief and the fire chief be appointed and removed only by an affirmative vote of seven members of City Council (the "Petition").
3. Attached to this certification is a true and accurate copy of the petition, which I am filing with the Clerk of Council prior to circulating the petition for signatures so that the City Solicitor may determine the Petition addresses a single subject and meets the requirements as to form required by the City Charter.

Further, affiant sayeth naught.

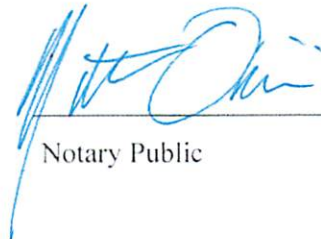
Executed this 7 day of April, 2026.

Signature: 
 Printed Name: Christopher Smitherman

Before me, a notary public in and for Hamilton County, State of Ohio, this 7 day of April, 2026, the above named Christopher Smitherman personally appeared and acknowledged his/her/their signature on the forgoing document.



Matthew Scott Okiishi, Attorney At Law
 NOTARY PUBLIC - STATE OF OHIO
 My commission has no expiration date
 Sec. 147.03 R.C.


 Notary Public