

Minneapolis Charter Reform

Responses to the 2005 Candidate Questionnaire

Co-sponsored by



The Star Tribune newspaper late last year initiated a discussion about the structure of Minneapolis city government and its effect on the accountability, affordability, effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and transparency of city government. The newspaper editorialized that Minneapolis city government has a Byzantine structure, with too many bosses resulting in waste and lack of accountability. The structure, governed by the city's charter, leaves Minneapolis paying more for fewer and lower quality services, and with a bad reputation at the State Capitol, argued the newspaper. Others have become engaged in the discussion, with some countering that the current system has served the city well, making charter reform an important subject in this year's election campaign. The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the candidates' views on how to structure Minneapolis government to best serve its residents.

Seventeen of the twenty-seven candidates who will be on the general election ballot submitted responses to the questionnaire. The responses of each candidate are presented as submitted and categorized by ward and question beginning on the following pages:

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Question 1

Minneapolis currently has a “strong council-weak mayor” structure with no professional city manager. Some see 14 bosses (mayor and 13 council members) as dysfunctional and have proposed strengthening the mayor’s role as the manager of city government or appointing a professional city manager to perform this function. Others defend the current arrangement for a resident’s ability to getting problems addressed through their councilmember. What arrangement do you think would best serve the city?

MAYOR	
<p>R.T. Rybak One premise of the question is incorrect. If Minneapolis had a “weak-mayor” system, the mayor would not develop the city budget nor have a veto. The Mayor of Minneapolis has both these powers, which I’ve used to restore fiscal responsibility. To reform our unique “hybrid” charter, we must move beyond simple, inaccurate labels and ask this question: “What should Council Members’ role be?” Possible answers include 1. policy-makers, 2. constituent service providers, and 3. administrators. By answering this question, we can design reforms that preserve the best of our current charter, but also increase the agility and accountability of government.</p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin Minneapolis needs a stronger mayor, not a stronger mayoral system of governance. While some changes would be advisable, the existing powers of the mayor, properly used based on a vision for a 21st Century Minneapolis, can provide more than adequate leadership for our city. I believe it would be an error to spend the next four years fighting structural battles instead of marshaling the energies and aspirations of the people, neighborhoods and businesses of this city to make real our collective vision for our future. In my view, we need better leadership more than we need structural change.</p>
WARD 1	
<p>Paul Ostrow Increasing the power of the Mayor and reducing the role of the Council will always create concerns that city government will be less responsive to diverse communities and to the unique needs of all neighborhoods in the City. Increasing the effectiveness of city government requires elected officials to make policy and to allow professional managers to manage their departments within business plans and budgets. I believe we may need to look closely at strengthening the role of a city manager in order to make cross departmental efforts such as 311 and one stop shop effective and to ensure accountability.</p>	<p>Erik Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire</p>
WARD 2	
<p>Cam Gordon First we need to define qualities of our government we value. Efficiency, clarity, transparency, accessibility, fairness, responsiveness and accountability must all be considered. The goal must be a structure that reflects, responds to and serves the will of the people. I oppose a "strong mayor" system. I support clarifying the roles of the city coordinator and mayor's office and establishment of an Office of Constituent Services to ensure that resources are shared fairly and everyone benefits equally from City Hall's services.</p>	<p>Cara Letosfsky City Council is the level of government that oversees the public services that most directly touch people's everyday lives: their block, streets, lighting, air quality, public safety. I believe residents of Minneapolis value direct access to their council member that the current structure provides. While increased access makes for a less efficient process, it makes for a government that is closer, more accountable, to the people. Instead of shifting to a strong mayor system, I will look for ways to improve the current structure that will increase the ability of the Council to serve city-wide concerns along with geographic ones.</p>

WARD 3	
<p>Diane Hofstede The mayor currently has the ability to set the budget and appoint key members of the administration which are the two main components of a strong mayor system. The Mayor has the bully pulpit to rally, influence members of the council and other jurisdictions in the city. The answer lies in the ability to lead, set priorities, and work in partnership with the city council, department heads, stay focused and move together in the agreed upon direction. Regardless of a strong/weak mayor/or city manager system without strong, cooperative leadership and a vision for the city the governmental structure will falter.</p>	<p>Aaron Neumann Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 4	
<p>Barb Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>No opponent</p>
WARD 5	
<p>Don Samuels The City of Minneapolis should examine the entire gamut of working models that are out there at the moment, determine which of them are best serving their constituency, and then consider adopting those best practices. The bottom line is that city government needs to be more about public policy and less about micromanaging, but at the same time we must be sure it is delivering high quality, accessible services that provide its citizenry the best value for their dollar.</p>	<p>Natalie Johnson Lee I am strongly in favor of maintaining the current structure of Minneapolis government which includes a strong form of representational democracy as well as an effective method of responding to vital constituent service needs through each individual city council ward office. Although the City of Minneapolis does not have an official "city manager", our municipality employs a city coordinator who performs many of the same functions that a city manager would, only with greater checks and balances in place to protect the electorate.</p>
WARD 6	
<p>Dean Zimmerman I don't see a problem with the current structure. Minneapolis, under the City Coordinator's office, has professional management staff to oversee daily operations. So-called strong mayor systems often give rise to a cult of personality, which might be fine if your city has a mayor of the caliber of a Don Fraser, but a disaster if the caliber is that of a Charles Stenvig. Our system challenges each Councilmember to be an advocate for the special needs of our wards. For example, parking is the most common complaint I receive in the 6th Ward, while it is not a problem at all in the 4th Ward. A strong mayor system tends to short-change the poorest areas of town, leaving them without advocates.</p>	<p>Robert Lilligren Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 7	
<p>Lisa Goodman Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>Christopher Clark Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

WARD 8

Elizabeth Glidden

A change in which city staff reports to one authority would improve the efficiency of city government, making reporting structures clearer and resulting in quicker results for residents and business seeking service. I would seek more resident input on who should hold this authority -- the mayor, as elected official, or a city administrator or manager. The council should retain primary policy-making authority for our city, promoting citizen participation and diversity and a balance between legislative and executive authority.

Marie Hauser

Adequately serving more than 30,000 constituents, especially in a ward with many needs, is a challenging task. To increase that load by decreasing the number of council members is not a good idea. It may be beneficial to streamline the functioning of our City government by increasing the power of the mayor, however. This can be done by giving the mayor the power to make appointments of department heads without the approval of the Executive Committee. The current mayor has not had any of his appointments vetoed by the Executive Committee, so this would seem to be a noncontroversial change. To balance this change, the mayor could then be held responsible for his/her appointments by requiring that the mayor review the work of the appointees annually and present the reviews to the City Council for approval. While having the actual reviews done by committee would be a difficult at best, I believe the reviews should be overseen by the council. While increasing the power of the mayor, this process also ensures accountability of the mayor and his/her appointees.

WARD 9

Dave Bicking

Democracy can be messy and not easily described by a newspaper devoting less and less resources to covering City Hall. Constituent services are most effectively handled by the elected City Council members – perhaps not as efficiently, but with a more personal connection to City Hall for the citizens of Minneapolis. A strong City Council system provides a more direct connection between constituents and city departments for policy matters as well as constituent services. More power for the City Council also brings power closer to the hands of the people, and provides greater potential for grass-roots democracy.

Gary Schiff

Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.

WARD 10

Ralph Remington

I support efforts to find a better balance of power, and to establish clear lines of authority in city government. Making improvements to the decision making process would greatly benefit our city. I favor incremental changes—it will be easier to build the consensus we need if there is to be any charter reform. The council should be fully engaged in this process. Examples: allowing the mayor to vote with the council (provides more accountability, having a voting record to evaluate); establishing an appointed strong city manager position to

Scott Persons

The City of Minneapolis succeeds in spite of its system of government. The city government structure looks more like a University with balkanized, autonomous departments that find it difficult to work with one another. Our system of government in Minneapolis should be designed to engage residents in their local government. I also believe that accountability in government begins with clear lines of authority. What the City of Minneapolis needs is to look at municipal best management practices both regionally and

<p>run day-to-day administration of the city, with clearly defined roles/responsibilities.</p>	<p>nationally and convene a group of residents, institutions, small businesspeople, union leaders, corporate heads and city officials past and present to engage the community in developing a new charter. This group should work directly with the community throughout the city to examine how Minneapolis is organized and what other city governments are doing to deliver services effectively while keeping our neighborhoods engaged and informed at the same time. I am very supportive of charter change and believe strong mayor and council manager structures are both superior to our current arrangement. What the city needs to do is engage the whole community to evaluate these and other options to create a new structure that is clear and accountable to residents.</p>
<p>WARD 11</p>	
<p>Greg Iverson I like the current Ward System. It gives me a person to hold responsible.</p>	<p>Scott Benson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
<p>WARD 12</p>	
<p>Kevin McDonald I support reforming Minneapolis' management structure to include a professional city manager. Residents demand accountability and are deserving of confidence that tax dollars are wisely used. The Council and Mayor should focus on clearly articulating the city's future direction and specify realistic and measurable goals. A city manager should be appointed and given the authority to assure citywide perspectives, guide departments and assist public servants toward outcomes, as measured against the vision and goals.</p>	<p>Sandy Colvin Roy Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
<p>WARD 13</p>	
<p>Betsy Hodges Because the Mayor has a veto and develops the budget, Minneapolis' structure is not a true strong council-weak mayor system, but a hybrid. The question is, what duties should a City Council member perform? Currently there are three: 1) Setting policy 2) Constituent service 3) Administrating the city. While I fully support the first two, I believe we need a community conversation about whether to change the Council's administrative role. Until we have that conversation, I consider a stronger mayor system a way to both create greater efficiency and make certain that the top administrator is accountable to voters.</p>	<p>Lisa McDonald I support government reform to adopt a strong mayor-weak council system. Such a system provides accountability in city government that a city manager system does not. A city manager form of government is generally used with a part-time council arrangement. I would reduce the city council to nine full-time members. Basic complaints and requests are appropriate for handling by the new 311 system, however there will always be a need for council members to deal with development issues, public works projects, and other policy issues that apply to their wards.</p>

Question 2

Minneapolis currently has independent, elected boards to govern the city’s parks and libraries. Some have said the large number of elected officials in the city makes these boards less visible and less accountable. Some have said the services of these boards could be delivered more effectively either by making them departments of the city or by merging them with Hennepin County’s park and library systems. Others defend the independent, elected boards as a way to maximize the number of opportunities for public participation in city government. How would you propose to handle governance of the city’s parks and libraries?

MAYOR	
<p>R.T. Rybak</p> <p>In an era of state funding cuts, it is even more important that the City, the Park Board and the Library Board prioritize and coordinate to reduce duplication, save money and provide services in the best and most cost-efficient manner possible. While the Park and Library boards are independent as policymakers, we are <u>interdependent</u> financially. That is why I have successfully pushed for a citywide revenue policy. Other initiatives like a coordinated approach to city land and property have been less well-received. My point is this: we can get the benefits of coordination simply by electing people who demand it.</p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin</p> <p>Our world-class park and library systems are critical community assets that make this a great place to live and they help make us competitive. The independent park and library boards have served the people of Minneapolis well. Independent boards best protect the precious legacy that we have inherited. The key to improvement is a Mayor who will work in close partnership with these boards. We need to be VERY careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water by subjecting our precious parks and libraries to the ever-shifting priorities of City Hall.</p>
WARD 1	
<p>Paul Ostrow</p> <p>I do not propose the elimination of the park or library boards. I do advocate for improved partnerships between the Council and Mayor and the independent boards. We have missed opportunities to work more closely with Hennepin County in the construction, financing and operation of a new downtown library and coordinating neighborhood libraries with County facilities. Our libraries and parks provide opportunities for the city to provide services in the neighborhoods by sharing those facilities.</p>	<p>Erik Johnson</p> <p>Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 2	
<p>Cam Gordon</p> <p>I support our independent Park and Library Boards. They oversee special, critical assets of our City. Not only do they help increase participation in city government, but they result in more responsive and higher quality parks and libraries. They also ensure that our Minneapolis parks and libraries get the special attention and oversight they deserve because the boards who oversee them are directly accountable to the voters. While it may be productive to explore how the city and county may avoid duplicating services, share some costs and cooperate better together, I oppose merging the city systems with the county's.</p>	<p>Cara Letosfsky</p> <p>I support keeping the Library Board and Park Board independent bodies, with their representatives elected. While I understand that keeping those boards elected rather than appointed brings more politics into the equation, when a lot of what the parks and libraries do are just straight administration, I entirely disagree that changing board membership to be appointed rather than elected will somehow make them more visible and more accountable.</p>

WARD 3	
<p>Diane Hofstede The city's parks and library boards are elected, with meetings that are required to be open to the public; the parks' meetings are televised, the library board's will be in 2006; the library board's minutes are on the website. Activity of both boards is visible and accountable to the public. The public also has the opportunity to determine who serves on the board during elections every 4 years and appointments by the mayor and city council every 2 years, on the library board. The issue is to attract the best and the brightest leaders of our community to serve.</p>	<p>Aaron Neumann Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 4	
<p>Barb Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>No opponent</p>
WARD 5	
<p>Don Samuels Parks and libraries are two of the most critical assists we provide to the children of this City. We have to make it our goal to provide accessible, user friendly services, while also increasing the accountability and visibility of these branches of government. For the time being, I support maintaining these boards as independent.</p>	<p>Natalie Johnson Lee Both the Minneapolis Park Board and the Minneapolis Library Board have a rich history of serving the citizens of the city of Minneapolis well during past decades. The Minneapolis Park Board has constructed one of the most respected, if not the most respected park system, in the nation. The Minneapolis Library Board has contributed greatly to the fabric of our community, whether it be through the wonderfully maintained neighborhood library branches, or the unique Minneapolis Planetarium. In addition, we have the exciting new Central Library that we can look forward to enjoying for many years to come. Although these two boards have worked well to serve the public in the past, it is now more important than ever for the two independent bodies to continue to work closely with the Minneapolis City Council and the mayor to construct annual budgets, and creatively look toward the future to collaboratively and creatively continue to build the best park and library systems in the U.S.</p>
WARD 6	
<p>Dean Zimmerman These boards are highly visible to the constituencies that use them, although the press tends to give them too little attention. Independent boards open up opportunities for grassroots democracy, greater accountability, greater citizen participation, and more public input. I believe the Park Board and the Library Board do a better job at running their services than if they were combined with the City or County departments. I also think that the current system protects these valuable community resources from the often short-sighted political vagaries of city politics.</p>	<p>Robert Lilligren Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

WARD 7	
<p>Lisa Goodman Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>Christopher Clark Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 8	
<p>Elizabeth Glidden I support maintaining our independent elected boards for parks and libraries. More attention and energy must, however, be spent on fostering better partnerships and communication between the independent boards and the city. We must work better to align our resources and goals to serve residents, coordinating services rather than duplicating them.</p>	<p>Marie Hauser It is important that all levels of government continue to explore ways to best provide services to the city, even if that means joining departments, to save administrative costs. I believe the independent boards serve the interests of the citizens of Minneapolis. In tight financial times, the independent taxing power enables the functions of the parks and libraries to continue with out losing their funds to pressing city needs. It is essential that the different elected representatives work together to solve the problems we face as one city, rather than seeing themselves as parts of different fiefdoms. It is also essential that the citizens inform themselves of the issues and the candidates at every level.</p>
WARD 9	
<p>Dave Bicking The independent boards should remain independent. The boards are directly accountable and provide distinct subject areas for citizen participation. People who are very interested in parks, for instance, can help elect candidates specifically for their views on park issues. This has led to greatly increased citizen participation in these important aspects of city government.</p>	<p>Gary Schiff Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 10	
<p>Ralph Remington I support the independent boards. I am also open to changes, through careful study, that would make government more efficient, accountable and transparent. We may consider a mix of elected and appointed positions to these boards (but I would fight to ensure the strongest selection criteria for appointments). I would like to see how instant run-off voting (IRV) would affect the representation on the boards.</p>	<p>Scott Persons Our park and library systems are vital treasures that need to be maintained, staffed and preserved for all future generations to enjoy. Minneapolis is fortunate to have many active volunteers and activists who make our systems so wonderful. I believe that it is the advocates and activists for our park and library system that make them valuable amenities in our city. Observing the park board in particular these last few years has led me to question how accountable an independent board really is to our residents. I believe the role of the independent boards should be part of an overall community conversation about the structure of Minneapolis city government. If any changes were to be adopted I would like to see a comprehensive scope of services established that would include preservation of all parkland and keeping branch libraries in the city maintained as an absolute minimum before any changes were considered.</p>

WARD 11	
<p>Greg Iverson I like the current Ward System. It gives me a person to hold responsible.</p>	<p>Scott Benson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 12	
<p>Kevin McDonald I support independently elected park and library boards. As a council member, I will insist that we work as one city and speak with one voice. This is especially important as it relates to relations with the county, Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota legislature and Governor. I believe a city manager should be tasked with assuring strong coordination and communications between city operations and independent boards. The inevitable conflicts and policy issues should be anticipated and subsequently brought before elected officials for resolution.</p>	<p>Sandy Colvin Roy Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 13	
<p>Betsy Hodges I support an independent Park and Library Board. They provide protection from the temptation to sell their resources in challenging times. With an independent Park Board, we are less likely to sell off land to pay the bills during a recession. However, these boards have always been independent from the city regarding policy but financially interdependent through the property tax levy, LGA, and the capital budget process. As a result we must find ways to increase efficiency between boards and the city, and we must find ways to assure these boards function well and are accountable to the public.</p>	<p>Lisa McDonald Parks and libraries have special status in Minneapolis, and the public appreciates the opportunity to directly affect park and library policies through election of their boards. I would continue the present form of independent park and library boards. I believe that council members should have regular communications with park and library board members to alert them to issues in the council member's ward.</p>

QUESTION 3

Minneapolis property tax levies are currently set by a board of estimate and taxation, with membership from the city's other elected offices plus two elected citizen members. Some criticize the arrangement of one of the most important city functions being performed by the least visible and least accountable public body. They propose assigning taxing authority to the city council. Others defend the current arrangement for allowing the boards governing parks and libraries to get a larger share of funding than they would otherwise. Who do you think should have the authority to set the city's tax levy?

MAYOR	
<p>R.T. Rybak</p> <p>The levy should be set by the council and the mayor. Until this is changed, it's critically important we elect responsible people like Jill Schwimmer to the at-large seats on the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Responsibility and accountability should go together. If you ask the average person who sets federal taxes, they'll say congress and the president. If you ask who sets state income taxes, they'll say the legislature and the governor. If you ask who sets the City's tax levy, they'll say the council and mayor. For this last example, they would be wrong – but only in Minneapolis</p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin</p> <p>Our goal for Minneapolis should be more participation, not less. We've been served well by a structure that invites broad involvement. The sometimes-narrow views of City Hall too often limit our imagination and fence out the views of residents and other legitimate interests. The Board of Estimate and Taxation brings new voices to the dialogue and protects residents from the insider views of City Hall, just as the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) does. Moreover, this Board brings a focus to the interests of taxpayers in overseeing the property tax levy, the most regressive of the major taxes.</p>
WARD 1	
<p>Paul Ostrow</p> <p>Over the past four years, the Board of Estimate and Taxation has performed its function well. Specifically, the City Council, Mayor and the independent boards have reached agreement on a levy policy that has been reflected in the actions of the board. Rather than hinder effective government, the Board of Estimate and Taxation has facilitated the resolution of these funding issues. Giving complete taxing authority to the City Council would be fundamentally inconsistent with the independence of the park and library boards.</p>	<p>Erik Johnson</p> <p>Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 2	
<p>Cam Gordon</p> <p>The advantages of maintaining this compare rather evenly to the shortcomings. From the perspective of the average voter, this is a relatively obscure board and, in some ways, insulates the City Council from taxing decisions. Still, it does help the Council, Park and Library Boards cooperate in setting taxes and ensures that the interests of the Parks and Libraries will be represented. There might be benefits to assigning taxing authority to the city council in making the process more transparent and the council more accountable. Determining if these would offset the risks is something worthy of further study.</p>	<p>Cara Letosfsky</p> <p>As a supporter of independent Library and Park Boards, I believe the Board of Estimate and Taxation should have the authority to set the city's tax levy. By design, if the Library and Park Boards are separate from City Council, we need a BoE to coordinate the taxing activities of the three. Additionally, the BoE allows the city to issue general obligation bonds -- authority that the State Legislature doesn't give all Minnesota cities, including St. Paul. Without the BoE, Minneapolis would likely lose this independent authority and have to get Legislative authority each time it sought GO bonds.</p>

WARD 3	
<p>Diane Hofstede The Board of Estimate and Taxation is comprised of all elected members. The meetings are public and are advertised to the public. The City Council by its membership has the ability to control the tax levy of the independent jurisdictions and thus control the level of taxation in the city; a function that is important to the City's financial stability. Independent boards have the opportunity to argue their case for an increase in their levy during budget hearings with the mayor & council and in meetings with the board of estimate members. It is a good checks and balance system.</p>	<p>Aaron Neumann Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 4	
<p>Barb Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>No opponent</p>
WARD 5	
<p>Don Samuels I believe that the decision making around taxation should be as public as possible. In this respect, the City has too many layers of government. I don't believe that most people know or understand what this board really does or how it works. The transfer of this function to the jurisdiction of the City Council, would not only increase public knowledge, but would force the Council and Library and Park Boards to work more closely together.</p>	<p>Natalie Johnson Lee I support the current property tax levy structure. The Board of Estimate and Taxation allows for input from members of the public, elected officials, and other community stakeholders, while shielding the park and library board from unnecessary "taxation without representation", short-sighted public office holders, and dangerous revenue shortfalls that would put at risk the great library and park system that has been recognized for excellence across our nation.</p>
WARD 6	
<p>Dean Zimmerman Tax levies should be set by the public bodies directly elected by the voters. Under the current system, each public body sets their own levy, within the maximum levy established by the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The Board of Estimate and Taxation is truly the least visible and least accountable public body. I would support abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The authority to directly set their own levies should be given to the City Council, Park Board, Library Board and the School Board. This would let voters hold each Board directly responsible for their levy decisions.</p>	<p>Robert Lilligren Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 7	
<p>Lisa Goodman Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>Christopher Clark Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

WARD 8	
<p>Elizabeth Glidden I would maintain the board of estimate and taxation as the body with authority to set the city's tax levy.</p>	<p>Marie Hauser The current arrangement allows for give and take between the different taxing bodies in the City while maintaining some overall control of the total levy. The membership seems to provide a reasonable check and balance, between the city council and the independent boards.</p>
WARD 9	
<p>Dave Bicking This goes hand in hand with the independent boards for the parks and libraries. As with other independent boards, the Board of Estimate and Taxation encourages those with specific financial expertise to bring their skill and interests to city government. Moving this function to the city council would remove the independent nature of this board. Other cities who have the city council control the parks and libraries don't have the beautiful parks and strong library system that Minneapolis enjoys.</p>	<p>Gary Schiff Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 10	
<p>Ralph Remington I think the question isn't really about the body itself being the least visible and least accountable. It's the process —no one understands it. Assigning taxing authority to the City Council wouldn't necessarily change that. Having this board provides <i>some</i> balance between the City Council and the independent boards. Shining a brighter light on the process, educating and engaging our citizenry may be more effective.</p>	<p>Scott Persons When voters cast their ballots in Minneapolis, they do so with the expectation that the candidate they are voting for will have influence over that council or board's policy direction. If Park and Library Board members don't have a seat on the Board of Estimate and Taxation they have no influence in setting the fiscal direction of their boards. Unless broader structural reforms are considered and passed in Minneapolis I believe the Board of Estimate and Taxation should remain so the independent elected boards continue to have a voice in setting annual levies.</p>
WARD 11	
<p>Greg Iverson The city council should decide. Don't like the decision? That's why we have elections.</p>	<p>Scott Benson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 12	
<p>Kevin McDonald I support amending the Minneapolis Charter to abolish the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Structural reform as it relates to taxing authority is urgently needed. The current tax levying system is unnecessarily complex and lacks accountability. I believe a great majority of residents see the Council and Mayor as accountable for property taxes. Responsibility for taxing must be consistent with the perception and understanding of voters. Now more than ever, we must exercise fiscal</p>	<p>Sandy Colvin Roy Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

discipline. Direct lines of accountability for taxes are essential if Minneapolis is to achieve its full potential.

WARD 13

Betsy Hodges

I believe we need to reexamine this independent board. In Minneapolis, if we ask the average citizen who sets the tax levy, they will say the City Council and the Mayor. And they are right to assume that. At every other level of government – Congress, the State -- the responsibility for setting taxes correspond to the accountability for that decision. I believe reassessment of this board should be part of the community conversation regarding Minneapolis' city structure.

Lisa McDonald

The Board of Estimate and Taxation has low visibility and little accountability through elections. I favor government reform that abolishes the Board and puts the authority to adopt property tax levies in the City Council, which is more visible and accountable. (Although I do commend the citizen members of the current and past Boards for their service to the city.)

Question 4

Minneapolis currently has a primary election with the top two contenders for each position advancing to a general election, where the one with the most votes wins. Some say this method over-represents the majority and leaves Republicans unrepresented in city government, putting the city in a weak position at the State Capitol and denying the city the insights of the city's business leaders. Those bringing these concerns propose making Minneapolis's elected bodies more representative of all voters by adopting a proportional representation voting method. Others defend the current arrangement as the traditional way of voting and that changes should not be made without careful study. What voting arrangement would you support to best represent the city's voters?

MAYOR	
<p>R.T. Rybak</p> <p>I don't agree city leaders are denied insights of the business community or that some State leaders' hostility can be changed by electing City leaders of different parties. We are changing suburban impressions of Minneapolis by building relationships and coalitions for common interests like education and transit. As a Democrat who's gotten thousands of votes – and good ideas about our city – from Greens, Republicans, Independence Party members, independents, and others, I know Minneapolis belongs to everybody. My concern with proportional representation is the potential loss of geographic representation. Neighborhoods with low voter turnout deserve a strong voice in City government.</p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin</p> <p>The choice between the current winner-take-all and proportional representation raises a variety of tradeoffs that must be acknowledged and addressed. The implications for representation of women, racial and ethnic minorities, geographical areas of the city and political parties must be considered before adopting this system. Consider this fact: the most affluent areas of the city tend to have fewer children and thus more voting strength (as well, of course, as fewer people of color) in a proportional system. I oppose diluting the voting strength of lower income people, people of color and new Americans.</p>
WARD 1	
<p>Paul Ostrow</p> <p>I would not change the current voting arrangement. The representative role of the City Council Member is critical to provide all citizens access to City Hall. Further while the majority of City Council Members have traditionally been Democrats, most of our issues are nonpartisan making proportional representation be party inappropriate. I believe our relationship with city business leaders has been strengthened over the last several years.</p>	<p>Erik Johnson</p> <p>Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 2	
<p>Cam Gordon</p> <p>It is time to engage the people of Minneapolis in a thoughtful, informed debate about how we elect our city officials. Such a process will show that proportional systems result in a better, more representative and more effective government.</p> <p>Proportional representation ensures both majority rule and minority representation and gives better representation to citizens from all cultural, ideological and ethnic backgrounds. It also leads to better policies and fewer mistakes because different viewpoints are part of deliberations. I recommend establishing a "Blue</p>	<p>Cara Letosfsky</p> <p>As a strong advocate of voter reform that seeks to bring more voices into the political system, I am sympathetic to the argument that many of the city's non-DFL voters feel disenfranchised from the many elected bodies discussed above. I would be open to looking at a system of proportional representation for the at-large policy boards, such as Library Board and School Board. I think the main challenges to establishing a PR system would be to get people to vote for a party rather than an individual, and it would make those boards partisan boards. I would not be in favor of using PR to elect</p>

<p>Ribbon Commission" to study and present alternative voting systems for consideration by the people of Minneapolis</p>	<p>Councilmembers, since I strongly believe in ward-based representation on that body.</p>
<p>WARD 3</p>	
<p>Diane Hofstede This is not one of the many concerns that my constituents have indicated is a priority of our city or an issue that they indicated we should be devoting our time, energy, or limited resources. I think that careful study and analysis would be necessary of this issue along with the evaluating the priority of this issue with regard to our City's priorities and a cost benefit analysis</p>	<p>Aaron Neumann Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
<p>WARD 4</p>	
<p>Barb Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>No opponent</p>
<p>WARD 5</p>	
<p>Don Samuels I think we should consider a hybrid approach where we maintain geographical voting by electing a portion of people from districts, but also vote for "at large" members where issues, parties and other electoral dynamics can be more of a factor.</p>	<p>Natalie Johnson Lee I support a new form of "instant runoff" elections, thus emboldening the thousands of citizens who feel under-represented with our current form of primary elections.</p>
<p>WARD 6</p>	
<p>Dean Zimmerman It is true that the current system tends to give too much power to the majority and leaves small interest groups with nothing. If we wanted to assure representation for other groups or parties, we could adopt a system that has multimember districts. For example: Minneapolis could be divided into two huge districts: a southside district with seven members and a Northside district that has 6 members. Each Party could then put a slate of 6 or 7 candidates on the ballot. Each voter could vote for up to 6 or 7 candidates -- they could choose all from one party or they could votes for candidates from several parties. Each party would then get a certain number of seats depending on how many people voted for anyone on their list of candidates. If, for example, the Green Party received enough votes to get three seats, then the top three vote getters on the Green Party slate would be elected. Such a system would allow any party that gets one-sixth (one-seventh on the Southside) of the votes to have a seat on the council. This system would tend to have people identify with their elected Council members more by ideology than by geography and would make almost all people feel that they have some voice on the Council. This could also be a vehicle for issue groups, say on</p>	<p>Robert Lillgren Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

<p>discrimination. They would have a chance to articulate those concerns, similar to party primaries in Europe which show the strength of their appeal by voter turnout.</p>	
<p>WARD 7</p>	
<p>Lisa Goodman Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>Christopher Clark Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
<p>WARD 8</p>	
<p>Elizabeth Glidden Proportional representation voting has critical benefits for multi-seat races -- including encouraging more participation by female and minority candidates -- as contrasted with "winner take all" elections. I would recommend that Minneapolis take action by studying alternative voting methods such as proportional representation voting.</p>	<p>Marie Hauser I agree that this would require careful study before any change was made.</p>
<p>WARD 9</p>	
<p>Dave Bicking Proportional representation has merit in many situations, but it would not be good for electing our City Council. Proportional representation would require citywide elections for some or all of the City Council. Geographical representation (one member per ward) is far preferable in this city where voter demographics and wealth are not homogeneous throughout the city. Citywide representatives would tend to ignore areas of the city with less wealth, power, and voter turnout. Poorer, neglected areas need their own representatives. Also, it is hard for under-funded grass-roots candidates to have a chance in an area any larger than our current wards.</p>	<p>Gary Schiff Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
<p>WARD 10</p>	
<p>Ralph Remington The best way to strengthen our position at the State Capitol is for city government to become more efficient, accountable and transparent—much of which can be accomplished without charter change. I would support a careful study on municipal election charter changes that was concurrent with charter changes for restructuring city government. Changing to proportional voting would require a very different City Council structure than we currently have (would require having several at-large City Council members).</p>	<p>Scott Persons I believe our current non-partisan municipal voting system makes the most sense for these elections. There is quite a bit of political diversity in Minneapolis within our existing political parties already. There are conservative and moderate Democrats on the council as well as Greens and Independents. Our ability to be effective at the Capitol is a consequence of our system of government in Minneapolis rather than our lack of Republicans.</p>

WARD 11	
<p>Greg Iverson This sounds like Republican whining to me. I love it when Republicans whine. There are no republicans in Minneapolis.</p>	<p>Scott Benson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 12	
<p>Kevin McDonald Local elections are often described as "nonpartisan" races. Years ago, this was the case in Minneapolis. In the Ward 12 voting booths, residents can send a message by voting for my independent candidacy. Voters can shape future elections through their decisions and signal that party designation alone won't be the determining factor in choosing qualified elected officials. That said, I am supportive of proposals to pilot a proportional representation method of voting. I believe voters would be excited to try out new models as long as they are not overly complicated. Baby steps, strong communications and voter education will be key.</p>	<p>Sandy Colvin Roy Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 13	
<p>Betsy Hodges I am open to examining any voting structure that would deepen citizen participation and engagement, particularly in municipal elections which historically have low voter participation rates.</p>	<p>Lisa McDonald I would like to see the City look at a proportional representation voting method to provide more diversity on the City Council. I also favor having mayoral and city council members run without designation of party or principle on the ballot since City Council races are non-partisan and endorsements are not indicated. In that system candidates would have to campaign effectively to let people know what they stand for, instead of relying on party labels or machines.</p>

Question 5

The current two-stage election system is criticized by some as costly to the city and to campaigns, diminishing voter participation due to low turnout in primaries and reduced choice in general elections, and unnecessary since the two elections could be combined in an “instant runoff” on general election day. They propose to eliminate the primary election and allow voters to indicate their first choice and runoff choices who would receive their vote in the event their first choice cannot win. Others say the current system works just fine and that having multiple elections results in a better understanding of the will of the voters. What election system do you think would most efficiently and effectively discover the will of the voters?

MAYOR	
<p>R.T. Rybak</p> <p>I agree low election turnout is a problem, which is why I've spent a lot of time and energy registering voters and leading Get-Out-The-Vote drives – not just in my own elections, but in 2002 and 2004. The more people understand and experience Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), the more people will like it. The problem is most people don't understand it and have never experienced it. We should promote use of IRV at the grassroots level – at neighborhoods meetings, at party caucuses, in planning and development workshops. That is how we can build support to implement it in a city election.</p>	<p>Peter McLaughlin</p> <p>I support an experiment using the instant runoff method of voting in Minneapolis. I think it should be tried “live” on an election for a specific office so that everyone can see how it works, assess the implications and suggest modifications or expansion of its use. Such an experiment would allow all Minneapolis residents to make a full assessment before making a final decision on the extent of its future use. Keeping our democracy vibrant and representative is essential. Thus, a test of instant runoff voting is warranted.</p>
WARD 1	
<p>Paul Ostrow</p> <p>The city's primary system works well for a nonpartisan election. Since the top two candidates advance, we already have a form of runoff elections in Minneapolis. It is simply a fairer and more accurate system than instant runoff voting which is unnecessary in a nonpartisan election where the top two candidates advance. Turnout is most often low in a primary because there are two or fewer viable candidates.</p>	<p>Erik Johnson</p> <p>Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 2	
<p>Cam Gordon</p> <p>The system that effectively discovers the will of the people is proportional representation. In elections where a single winner is desirable, such as those for mayor, I support using preference voting. This could be done with a two-step runoff if party primaries were needed or with an "Instant Run-off." Preference voting solves the ‘spoiler’ problem, assures majority rule, and promotes cleaner, more positive campaigns. It also ensures that representatives are selected when voter turnout is the highest. In the context of non-partisan primaries, I am a strong advocate of Instant Run-off voting.</p>	<p>Cara Letosfsky</p> <p>I am a strong supporter of the instant runoff method of voting for the reasons listed above. Additionally, I think it would lead to more civil campaigns, as candidates would be working to earn the second place slot on the ballot, and as voters would be encouraged to look beyond their first choice and become more educated about all the candidates. The challenge would be in voter education, since it is not as transparent as the current system</p>

WARD 3	
<p>Diane Hofstede Voter participation is low. It is difficult for me to understand the lack of interest in the democratic process of electing our government's leaders. I believe that voter education and involvement should be required in our schools as it was when I was a social studies teacher. I would encourage greater absentee balloting and easier methods to ballot such as using the internet, phone, or mail as currently occurs with corporate proxy voting. I agree that increasing participation is an extremely important goal that needs to be achieved.</p>	<p>Aaron Neumann Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 4	
<p>Barb Johnson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>No opponent</p>
WARD 5	
<p>Don Samuels I think the City should explore instant runoff voting. Instant runoff voting simplifies the voting process and increases voter turnout. Most importantly, I believe this approach appropriately puts issues, and not campaign dynamics, at the forefront of the public debate.</p>	<p>Natalie Johnson Lee Instant runoff elections would allow for greater diversity in candidate representation, as well assist those candidates who are unable to raise as much money as other candidates who are beholden to "special interests" with the deep pockets.</p>
WARD 6	
<p>Dean Zimmerman If some type of proportional representation system is not adopted and single member districts retained, I would like to see us abandon our "delayed runoff system" in favor of what FairVote calls "Instant Runoff Voting" (IRV). I would prefer to call that system RVP "ranked preference voting" because I think it's a more accurate description of the process. This one-stage election would let a voter rank every candidate running on a first choice, second choice, third choice basis. The candidate receiving 50% is automatically elected. If no one receives 50%, the votes of the lowest ranking candidate would be redistributed to their second choice. If no one still receives 50%, the next lowest candidate is dropped and the second place choice on those ballots would be reassigned to the remaining candidates. This process continues until somebody receives 50%. This system allows voters to vote their hopes and dreams without fear that by doing so some very bad or undesirable candidate is going to sneak in with less than 50% of the votes – as Tim Pawlenty did. This system would allow voters to "smoke out the devil," so to speak.</p>	<p>Robert Lilligren Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

WARD 7	
<p>Lisa Goodman Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>	<p>Christopher Clark Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 8	
<p>Elizabeth Glidden I support Instant Runoff Voting -- an election system that promotes positive campaigning (since candidates are encouraged to appeal to voters to be their "second" choice) and encourages third parties. The current two-stage election system is costly and plagued by low voter turnout. IRV is a method that will more fairly and efficiently represent the will of the electorate.</p>	<p>Marie Hauser The current system allows time over the election season for candidates to develop and for voters to more thoroughly discern the strengths of the candidates. The instant runoff voting system shows intriguing promise, however, and further study is definitely indicated.</p>
WARD 9	
<p>Dave Bicking Instant Runoff Voting. We should focus on getting IRV implemented. I wouldn't say the current system is working just fine when 14% of the voters are selecting the final two candidates – clearly the system is working for one political party in Minneapolis, but not for the citizens of Minneapolis. IRV is particularly important in races with a large number of candidates, such as this year in the 8th ward. Several viable candidates in that ward were eliminated far too early in the process. Instant Runoff Voting also ensures the majority of voters support the eventual election winner.</p>	<p>Gary Schiff Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 10	
<p>Ralph Remington Our recent Primary's low voter turnout underscores the need for changing the type of elections we have. This year in Minneapolis, just 15% of registered voters have decided who will be in the upcoming General Election (where turnout is always much higher). I believe instant runoff voting (IRV) would be the most efficient way to discover the "will of the people." IRV would lead to more issues based campaigning, less polarization, end the "spoiler" problem—and most importantly, would fully enfranchise voters and increase participation. We should look at implementing IRV as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Scott Persons My experience as a candidate this year has firmly led me to believe that our current process for municipal elections is the best way to arrive at clear choices for voters to make a decision. Our primary had six candidates and voters were constantly evaluating, reevaluating and considering all their options. The primary winnowing has given them two choices now to consider for a final decision rather than ranking six candidates they may or may not know. For more obscure elections like these the primary serves an important function of making voters choose for one day and then have two choices to reconsider later. On state elections I believe IRV is a wonderful solution because the level of interest and education is so much higher. There is much more media attention paid to these races and a broader ideological spectrum is represented. Voters would be much better informed to rank their choices under this system on a statewide level.</p>
WARD 11	
<p>Greg Iverson I support the Primary</p>	<p>Scott Benson Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>

WARD 12	
<p>Kevin McDonald</p> <p>I am open-minded to new electoral models, as stated above. I do have concerns about the low turnout at primaries. I know of a great many Minneapolitans who care deeply about our city, are socially concious, take their civic responsibilities seriously and, yet, do not regularly vote in primaries. This clearly is not an indication that the "current system works just fine." On the other hand, I am wary that some alternatives may be viewed by the general public as overly complex. Could the medicine be worse than the illness? Our city would be well served to have a much more robust and inclusive discussion about this topic. Count me as a proponent for pursuing this conversation with Minneapolis voters.</p>	<p>Sandy Colvin Roy</p> <p>Candidate did not respond to questionnaire.</p>
WARD 13	
<p>Betsy Hodges</p> <p>I have a history of working with others toward electoral systems that allow all voices to be heard without creating disadvantages (like "spoiler" accusations) for some participants in the election process. I am open to working with others to examine instant runoff voting as a potential strategy to ensure that voters' voices are accurately heard in elections and represented in our elected bodies. I certainly support making sure that all voting equipment is flexible enough to allow for different kinds of voting.</p>	<p>Lisa McDonald</p> <p>I don't think low turn-out primaries necessarily provide good, diverse choices for voters in the general election. The present system also virtually guarantees overwhelming, if not unanimous, one-party control of the council. I favor study of instant run-off voting as a possible alternative to the current primary/general election system. Presently, I believe that most people do not understand instant run-off voting, and further debate is necessary to educate the public.</p>