



Charters 101




What is the
charter?

The charter is the document that defines Somerville's government organization, powers, and functions. It is essentially the constitution – the most important document for the city.




What is charter
review?

Charter review is a process when a City or Town evaluates how well its charter reflects the needs of its residents. Charter review can happen because a charter is outdated, its government structure no longer aligns with its residents values, or for many other reasons.




Why is charter
review happening
now?

Mayor Curtatone and City Council President Matthew McLaughlin started the charter review process in December 2020. Somerville's Charter hasn't been updated since the 1800s. We want to make sure that the charter makes sense for Somerville in 2021.



What is the current
Somerville form of
government?

Somerville has a Strong Mayor – City Council form of government. Our Mayor, the head of the executive branch, is elected by the voters and has power over the majority of Somerville's decisions. Our City Council, the legislative branch, is made up of 11 Councilors representing the 7 Wards plus 4 At-Large members.



How does the
charter affect me?

A charter controls:
how Somerville helps you
how you are represented
term limits
who in Somerville has certain responsibilities
who is responsible to who
if people are appointed or elected
the budget process