

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-16

A RESOLUTION OF CITY COUNCIL PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE X, SECTION 2 OF THE CITY'S CHARTER TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF SIGNATURES REQUIRED TO PROPOSE AN INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, the Charter of the City of Bellingham provides for direct legislation by initiative petition; and

WHEREAS, initiatives strengthen democracy through increasing voter turnout and letting voters act directly on the issues they care about; and

WHEREAS, in the past 20 years, there have been 60 statewide initiatives, but only two City of Bellingham initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the percentage of signatures required for ballot initiatives in both Whatcom County and the State of Washington is 8%; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Auditor has recommended that the 20-day grace period for gathering additional signatures be removed because of the practical impossibility of verifying signatures on initiative petitions after Primary Day; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM:

Section 1. Article X, Section 2 of the Charter shall be amended to read as follows:

The first power reserved by the people is the initiative. The registered electors of the City may propose any ordinance, or amendments to any existing ordinance, relating to matters within the legislative, as distinguished from administrative, powers of the City as a corporate entity. Notwithstanding the above classification, no ordinance shall be initiated relating to the annual budget or capital expense budget, making or repealing any appropriation, fixing the salaries or wages of officers or employees, or authorizing or repealing the levy of taxes.

An initiative may be exercised on petition of a number of qualified voters equal to not less than ~~20%~~ 10% of the total number of votes cast for the office of Mayor at the last preceding municipal general election, proposing the enactment, as an ordinance, of a bill, the full text of which shall be included in the petition.

Every initiative petition shall be filed with the Finance Director, who shall verify the sufficiency of the signatures to the petition, and transmit it, together with a report thereon, to the City Council at a regular meeting not more than 20 days after the filing of the petition, and such transmission shall be the introduction of the initiative bill in the City Council. ~~If the Finance Director shall find any petition to be insufficient in signatures, the Finance Director shall notify the principal petitioners, and an additional 20 days shall be allowed them in which to obtain the required percentage.~~

Consideration of initiatives shall take precedence over all other business before the City Council, except appropriation bills and emergency bills necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health or safety.

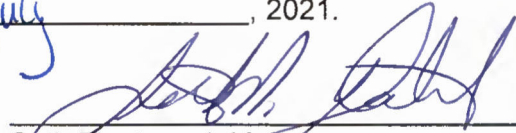
Section 2. The Finance Director shall submit a copy of this resolution to the Whatcom County Auditor's office for submission to the qualified electors for approval or rejection at the next general municipal election.

PASSED by the Council this 12th day of July, 2021.



Hannah Stone, Council President

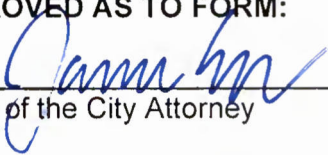
APPROVED by me this 19 day of July, 2021.



Seth Fleetwood, Mayor

ATTEST: 

Andy Asbjornsen, Finance Director

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Office of the City Attorney