

Addressing Question Over Home Rule Charter County Model

Hi xxx,

You ask a very good and pertinent question, and let me try to respond to it. Others may want to weigh in as well.

First, since Ottawa County has less than 1.5 million people, the only form open to it with a home rule charter is the elected county executive one. So in very practical terms, one major difference between the current County structure versus the home rule charter county structure is that in the home rule charter structure the executive/administrative officer position is elected by the citizens rather than appointed by the Board. I personally believe that is marginally an advantage of the home rule charter county structure over the current structure, inasmuch as the citizens have more say in who rules over us.

Second, by going about attaining the charter in the way we are (ie, working to obtain 12,000 citizen petition signers at very low cost), I think we are establishing a very important precedent in citizen engagement that I think can carry over in many other ways. Part of our current problem is that many citizens have grown accustomed to political disengagement rather than engagement, in part because they do not think it makes a difference. If they see how their engagement actually results in concrete constitutional and structural change, that lesson can be applied in many other important ways in county political life. For instance, it is an important precedent for recalling a Commissioner when needed, and this is very important since Commissioners will start having 4-year terms by Michigan law. It will also be important in standing up against unjust laws arising from Lansing.

Third, I believe the county charter affords the citizens far more opportunity to build in constitutional protections than we currently have, at least at the county level. I argue this at <https://savethecampbell.com/returning-to-bottom-up-governance-in-this-savethecampbell-com-effort-with-home-rule-charter-put-in-place-by-petition-and-then-votes-of-the-citizens-of-ottawa-county/>. Of course, it will ultimately be the majority of citizens who decide what the charter will say, and not you or me alone. I look at that as good, because I do not want to live in a place of one-man rule, even if that one man were to be me. I want a place where the citizens vote on who represents us and whether to approve or not to approve a proposed county charter.

Fourth, various provisions can be put in the charter to make sure the county executive does not have undue power either, such as the right of the Board of Commissioners to force the executive to a recall election, making spending bills originate in the Board, etc.

Fifth, I see our main problem today as not being county elected officers exceeding their constitutional authority, but players in Washington, DC and Lansing (combined with the U.N., W.H.O., etc.) exceeding their constitutional authority. Since I see that as the major problem we now face, I welcome a tool like the home rule county charter which affords more local control. Of course, the major practical area where this group is concerned is local control of our electric,

and specifically the Campbell plant. Distant actors want to force its premature closure and demolition and replace it with something not even yet in place and that seems unreliable, costly and environmentally hazardous.

In summary, I personally believe in the path we are on, and I think it is the most viable path to address various of the challenges we face.

Thanks,

Joseph Parnell

On Friday, February 9th, 2024 at 2:33 PM, xxx wrote:

I have one question that I can't seem to find an answer to. As much as I hate to cite wikipedia:

"A charter county is organized under Public 293 of 1966 (amended in 1980) which permits a county to exercise limited [home rule](#) under a [charter](#).^[5] The charter form of government is the most flexible of the three forms of county government.^[2] For counties whose population is at least 1,500,000, the proposal submitted to the electorate for reorganization as a charter county must provide for two alternative officers:^[6]

- *a county executive elected on a [partisan](#) basis;*
- *a chief administrative officer selected by the board of commissioners for a four-year term who may only be removed by a 2/3 majority of the board.*

The major difference between the two options is that the elected county executive has veto power.^[6] The proposed options may also differ in how the county executive or chief administrative officer is removed.^[6] For counties whose population is less than 1,500,000, only the elected county executive alternative is permitted.^[6] In all counties organized under the charter form of government, the county board of commissioners must have no fewer than 5 members and no more than 21 members.^[6] Unlike in the general law or optional unified counties, the size of the board in a charter county is not additionally limited in size by the population of the county.

[Macomb County](#) and [Wayne County](#) operate under the charter form of government, and both have chosen the county executive option"

Are there considerations on the risks associated with having an administrator selected by a BOC that is left leaning or chosen by establishment RINOs? I trust our current BOC to select a good administrator but if we get new commissioners in 2024, could we be setting up something worse for the county?

xxx