



## 2024 ORANGE COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION (CRC)

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### **Governmental Structure Committee**

#### **Term Limits**

#### **Final Report and Recommendation to the Charter Review Commission**

**May 6, 2024**

Committee Members:

Angel de la Portilla, Chair  
Mark Arias  
Tom Callan  
Chuck O'Neal  
Cornita Riley  
Eugene Stoccardo  
Beverly Winesburgh  
Dotti Wynn

### **Summary of Recommendation**

**The Governmental Structure Committee recommends no changes to the term limits applicable to the County Commissioners and County Mayor.**

### **Overview of Committee Process**

At its June 15, 2023 meeting, the 2024 Orange County Charter Review Commission ("CRC") assigned to the Expansion of County Commission Committee (now titled the Governmental Structure Committee due to its expanded scope) (the "Committee") the study of whether to increase the number of terms allowed under the term limits applicable to the County Commissioners and County Mayor (a current limitation of two consecutive terms).

From June 28, 2023 through April 5, 2024, the Committee held 13 public meetings to hear public input and discuss the matter, amongst its other assigned subject matters. The Committee reviewed the various term limits applicable across Florida's 20 charter counties. (Nine charter counties, including 5 of the 6 largest, have a two-term limit; three have a three-term limit, and eight have no term limits.) The Committee heard from multiple members of the public for and against the increase in allowable terms, and spoke with multiple current County Commissioners. In the course of its in-depth discussions on a number of its assigned topics, the Committee discussed term limits and their potential expansion with multiple individuals integral to the establishment and practice of the County's current form of government, including:

- Tom Wilkes, former Orange County Attorney, Chairman of the 1986 Orange County Citizens Charter Government Study Committee, and Member of the 1988 CRC
- Former County Mayor Linda Chapin
- Former County Mayor Teresa Jacobs
- County Mayor Jerry Demings

In the course of the Committee's various discussions, the primary reason presented in favor of the increase in the number of allowed terms was to provide an opportunity for County Commissioners to see projects that they championed through to completion, with examples provided of both road and park projects. Supporters also noted that with the increasing complexity of county government, more time may be necessary to "learn the ropes" and become a more effective Commissioner.

A number of points were raised against an increase in term limits. First, individuals are not precluded from running for the same district Commissioner seat again after being termed out, so long as the service is not continuous (that is, so long as the individual sits out an election cycle). This has occurred in Orange County on at least one occasion. Second, Commissioner term limits do not preclude Commissioners from running for and serving on the County Commission as County Mayor, which occurred in the case of Mayor Jacobs. Additionally, a number of Committee members expressed doubt about whether a charter amendment increasing the number of terms allowed under the County's term limits would have a reasonable chance of success with the voters of Orange County.

Ultimately, the Committee identified the following options for it to consider:

- Maintain the status quo (two-term limit for Commissioners and Mayor)
- Add one additional term (three-term limit for Commissioners and Mayor)
- Add two additional terms (four-term limit for Commissioners and Mayor)
- Remove all term limits
- Leave Mayor with two-term limit, increase Commissioners to three- or four-term limit

After consideration of the information presented, the Committee voted 4-3 at its April 5, 2024 Committee meeting to recommend no changes to the term limits applicable to the County Commissioners and County Mayor.