

Article 5.

Form of Government.

Part 1. General Provisions.

§ 160A-59. Qualifications for elective office.

All city officers elected by the people shall possess the qualifications set out in Article VI of the Constitution. In addition, when the city is divided into electoral districts for the purpose of electing members of the council, council members shall reside in the district they represent. When any elected city officer ceases to meet all of the qualifications for holding office pursuant to the Constitution, or when a council member ceases to reside in an electoral district that he was elected to represent, the office is ipso facto vacant. (1973, c. 609.)

§ 160A-60. Qualifications for appointive office.

Residence within a city shall not be a qualification for or prerequisite to appointment to any city office not filled by election of the people, unless the charter or an ordinance provides otherwise. City councils shall have authority to fix qualifications for appointive offices, but shall have no authority to waive qualifications for appointive offices fixed by charters or general laws. (1870-1, c. 24, s. 3; Code, s. 3796; Rev., s. 2941; C.S., s. 2646; 1951, c. 24; 1969, c. 134, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-61. Oath of office.

Every person elected by the people or appointed to any city office shall, before entering upon the duties of the office, take and subscribe the oath of office prescribed in Article VI, § 7 of the Constitution. Oaths of office shall be administered by some person authorized by law to administer oaths, and shall be filed with the city clerk. (R.C., c. 111, s. 12; Code, s. 3799; Rev., s. 2920; C.S., s. 2628; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-62. Officers to hold over until successors qualified.

All city officers, whether elected or appointed, shall continue to hold office until their successors are chosen and qualified. This section shall not apply when an office or position has been abolished, when an appointed officer or employee has been discharged, or when an elected officer has been removed from office. (R.C., c. 111, s. 8; Code, s. 3792; Rev., s. 2943; C.S., s. 2648; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-63. Vacancies.

A vacancy that occurs in an elective office of a city shall be filled by appointment of the city council. If the term of the office expires immediately following the next regular city election, or if the next regular city election will be held within 90 days after the vacancy occurs, the person appointed to fill the vacancy shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term. Otherwise, a successor shall be elected at the next regularly scheduled city election that is held more than 90 days after the vacancy occurs, and the person appointed to fill the vacancy shall serve only until the elected successor takes office. The elected successor shall then serve the remainder of the unexpired term. If the number of vacancies on the council is such that a quorum of the council cannot be obtained, the mayor shall appoint enough members to make up a quorum, and the council shall then proceed to fill the remaining vacancies. If the number of vacancies on the council is such that a quorum of the council cannot be obtained and the office of mayor is vacant, the Governor

may fill the vacancies upon the request of any remaining member of the council, or upon the petition of any five registered voters of the city. Vacancies in appointive offices shall be filled by the same authority that makes the initial appointment. This section shall not apply to vacancies in cities that have not held a city election, levied any taxes, or engaged in any municipal functions for a period of five years or more.

In cities whose elections are conducted on a partisan basis, a person appointed to fill a vacancy in an elective office shall be a member of the same political party as the person whom he replaces if that person was elected as the nominee of a political party. (R.C., c. 111, ss. 9, 10; Code, ss. 3793, 3794; Rev., ss. 2921, 2931; C.S., ss. 2629, 2631; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 11; c. 827, s. 1; 1983, c. 827, s. 1.)

§ 160A-64. Compensation of mayor and council.

(a) The council may fix its own compensation and the compensation of the mayor and any other elected officers of the city by adoption of the annual budget ordinance, but the salary of an elected officer other than a member of the council may not be reduced during the then-current term of office unless he agrees thereto. The mayor, councilmen, and other elected officers are entitled to reimbursement for actual expenses incurred in the course of performing their official duties at rates not in excess of those allowed to other city officers and employees, or to a fixed allowance, the amount of which shall be established by the council, for travel and other personal expenses of office; provided, any fixed allowance so established during a term of office shall not be increased during such term of office.

(b) All charter provisions in effect as of January 1, 1972, fixing the compensation or allowances of any city officer or employee are repealed, but persons holding office or employment on January 1, 1972, shall continue to receive the compensation and allowances then prescribed by law until the council provides otherwise in accordance with this section or G.S. 160A-162. (1969, c. 181, s. 1; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 12; c. 1145; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 1.)

§ 160A-64.1. Withholding compensation; money judgment against council member.

(a) In addition to any other enforcement available, the finance officer of a city that obtains a final judgment awarding monetary damages against an elected or appointed member of the city council, either individually or jointly, may enforce that final judgment using any of the remedies set forth in G.S. 105-366(b) or the procedure for attachment and garnishment set forth in G.S. 105-368 as if final judgment awarding monetary damages were delinquent taxes and that finance officer were the tax collector.

(b) In addition to any other enforcement available, the finance officer of the city shall garnish compensation paid under G.S. 160A-64 to any mayor or council member to collect any unpaid monies due to the city for city services until such debt is paid in full using the procedure for attachment and garnishment set forth in G.S. 105-368 as if unpaid monies due to the city for city services were delinquent taxes and that finance officer were the tax collector.

(c) The provision of G.S. 105-368(a) that limits the amount of compensation that may be garnished to not more than ten percent (10%) for any one pay period shall not apply to this section. (2014-40, s. 1; 2021-191, s. 2(b).)

§ 160A-65. Repealed by Session Laws 1975, c. 514, s. 17.)

Part 2. Mayor and Council.

§ 160A-66. Composition of council.

Unless otherwise provided by its charter, each city shall be governed by a mayor and a council of three members, who shall be elected from the city at large for terms of two years. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-67. General powers of mayor and council.

Except as otherwise provided by law, the government and general management of the city shall be vested in the council. The powers and duties of the mayor shall be such as are conferred upon him by law, together with such other powers and duties as may be conferred upon him by the council pursuant to law. The mayor shall be recognized as the official head of the city for the purpose of service of civil process, and for all ceremonial purposes. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

Part 3. Organization and Procedures of the Council.

§ 160A-68. Organizational meeting of council.

(a) The council may fix the date and time of its organizational meeting. The organizational meeting may be held at any time after the results of the municipal election have been officially determined and published pursuant to Subchapter IX of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes but not later than the date and time of the first regular meeting of the council in December after the results of the municipal election have been certified pursuant to that Subchapter. If the council fails to fix the date and time of its organizational meeting, then the meeting shall be held on the date and at the time of the first regular meeting in December after the results of the municipal election have been certified pursuant to Subchapter IX of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes.

(b) At the organizational meeting, the newly elected mayor and councilmen shall qualify by taking the oath of office prescribed in Article VI, Section 7 of the Constitution. The organization of the council shall take place notwithstanding the absence, death, refusal to serve, failure to qualify, or nonelection of one or more members, but at least a quorum of the members must be present.

(c) All local acts or provisions of city charters which prescribe a particular meeting day or date for the organizational meeting of a council are hereby repealed. (1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 13; c. 607; 1979, c. 168; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 2; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 160A-69. Mayor to preside over council.

The mayor shall preside at all council meetings, but shall have the right to vote only when there are equal numbers of votes in the affirmative and in the negative. In a city where the mayor is elected by the council from among its membership, and the city charter makes no provision as to the right of the mayor to vote, he shall have the right to vote as a council member on all matters before the council, but shall have no right to break a tie vote in which he participated. (1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 3.)

§ 160A-70. Mayor pro tempore; disability of mayor.

At the organizational meeting, the council shall elect from among its members a mayor pro tempore to serve at the pleasure of the council. A councilman serving as mayor pro tempore shall be entitled to vote on all matters and shall be considered a councilman for all purposes, including the determination of whether a quorum is present. During the absence of the mayor, the council may confer upon the mayor pro tempore any of the powers and duties of the mayor. If the mayor

should become physically or mentally incapable of performing the duties of his office, the council may by unanimous vote declare that he is incapacitated and confer any of his powers and duties on the mayor pro tempore. Upon the mayor's declaration that he is no longer incapacitated, and with the concurrence of a majority of the council, the mayor shall resume the exercise of his powers and duties. In the event both the mayor and the mayor pro tempore are absent from a meeting, the council may elect from its members a temporary chairman to preside in such absence. (1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 4.)

§ 160A-71. Regular and special meetings; recessed and adjourned meetings; procedure.

(a) The council shall fix the time and place for its regular meetings. If no action has been taken fixing the time and place for regular meetings, a regular meeting shall be held at least once a month at 10:00 A.M. on the first Monday of the month.

(b) (1) The mayor, the mayor pro tempore, or any two members of the council may at any time call a special council meeting by signing a written notice stating the time and place of the meeting and the subjects to be considered. The notice shall be delivered to the mayor and each councilman or left at his usual dwelling place at least six hours before the meeting. Only those items of business specified in the notice may be transacted at a special meeting, unless all members are present or have signed a written waiver of notice. In addition to the procedures set out in this subsection or any city charter, a person or persons calling a special meeting of a city council shall comply with the notice requirements of Article 33C of General Statutes Chapter 143.

(2) Special meetings may be held at any time when the mayor and all members of the council are present and consent thereto, or when those not present have signed a written waiver of notice.

(3) During any regular meeting, or any duly called special meeting, the council may call or schedule a special meeting, provided that the motion or resolution calling or scheduling any such special meeting shall specify the time, place and purpose or purposes of such meeting and shall be adopted during an open session.

(b1) Any regular or duly called special meeting may be recessed to reconvene at a time and place certain, or may be adjourned to reconvene at a time and place certain, by the council.

(c) The council may adopt its own rules of procedure, not inconsistent with the city charter, general law, or generally accepted principles of parliamentary procedure. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13, s. 1; C.S., s. 2822; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 14; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1191, s. 7; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 5; 1989, c. 770, s. 37.)

§ 160A-72. Minutes to be kept; ayes and noes.

Full and accurate minutes of the council proceedings shall be kept, and shall be open to the inspection of the public. The results of each vote shall be recorded in the minutes, and upon the request of any member of the council, the ayes and noes upon any question shall be taken. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13, s. 1; C.S., s. 2822; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 15.)

§ 160A-73. Repealed by Session Laws 1971, c. 896, s. 16.

§ 160A-74. Quorum.

(a) A majority of the actual membership of the council plus the mayor, excluding vacant seats, shall constitute a quorum. A member who has withdrawn from a meeting without being

excused by majority vote of the remaining members present shall be counted as present for purposes of determining whether or not a quorum is present.

(b) Any member present by means of simultaneous communication in accordance with G.S. 166A-19.24 shall be counted as present for the purposes of whether a quorum is present only during the period while simultaneous communication is maintained for that member. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13, s. 1; C.S., s. 2821; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1975, c. 664, s. 5; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 6; 2020-3, s. 4.31(f).)

§ 160A-75. Voting.

(a) No member shall be excused from voting except upon matters involving the consideration of the member's own financial interest or official conduct or on matters on which the member is prohibited from voting under G.S. 14-234 or G.S. 160D-109. In all other cases except votes taken under G.S. 160D-601, a failure to vote by a member who is physically present in the council chamber, or who has withdrawn without being excused by a majority vote of the remaining members present, shall be recorded as an affirmative vote. The question of the compensation and allowances of members of the council is not a matter involving a member's own financial interest or official conduct.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a vote or failure to vote by any member present by means of simultaneous communication in accordance with G.S. 166A-19.24 shall be treated as if the member were physically present only during the period while simultaneous communication is maintained for that member.

(c) An affirmative vote equal to a majority of all the members of the council not excused from voting on the question in issue, including the mayor's vote in case of an equal division, shall be required to adopt an ordinance, take any action having the effect of an ordinance, authorize or commit the expenditure of public funds, or make, ratify, or authorize any contract on behalf of the city. In addition, no ordinance nor any action having the effect of any ordinance, except an ordinance on which a public hearing must be held pursuant to G.S. 160D-601 before the ordinance may be adopted, may be finally adopted on the date on which it is introduced except by an affirmative vote equal to or greater than two thirds of all the actual membership of the council, excluding vacant seats and not including the mayor unless the mayor has the right to vote on all questions before the council. For purposes of this section, an ordinance shall be deemed to have been introduced on the date the subject matter is first voted on by the council. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13, s. 1; C.S., s. 2821; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 16; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 7; 1983, c. 696; 2001-409, s. 9; 2005-426, s. 5.1(a); 2013-126, s. 11; 2015-160, s. 5; 2019-111, s. 2.5(n); 2020-3, ss. 4.31(h), 4.33(a); 2020-25, s. 51(a), (b), (d).)

§ 160A-76. Franchises; technical ordinances.

(a) No ordinance making a grant, renewal, extension, or amendment of any franchise shall be finally adopted until it has been passed at two regular meetings of the council, and no such grant, renewal, extension, or amendment shall be made otherwise than by ordinance.

(b) Any published technical code or any standards or regulations promulgated by any public agency may be adopted in an ordinance by reference subject to G.S. 143-138(e). A technical code or set of standards or regulations adopted by reference in a city ordinance shall have the force of law within the city. Official copies of all technical codes, standards, and regulations adopted by reference shall be maintained for public inspection in the office of the city clerk. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13; C.S., s. 2823; 1963, c. 790; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 17.)

§ 160A-77. Code of ordinances.

(a) Not later than July 1, 1974, each city having a population of 5,000 or more shall adopt and issue a code of its ordinances. The code may be reproduced by any method that gives legible and permanent copies, and may be issued as a securely bound book or books with periodic separately bound supplements, or as a loose-leaf book maintained by replacement pages. Supplements or replacement pages should be adopted and issued annually at least, unless no additions to or modifications of the code have been adopted by the council during the year. The code may consist of two separate parts, the "General Ordinances" and the "Technical Ordinances." The technical ordinances may be published as separate books or pamphlets, and may include ordinances regarding the construction of buildings, the installation of plumbing and electric wiring, the installation of cooling and heating equipment, the use of public utilities, buildings, or facilities operated by the city, the zoning ordinance, the subdivision control ordinance, the privilege license tax ordinance, and other similar technical ordinances designated as such by the council. The council may omit from the code designated classes of ordinances of limited interest or transitory nature, but the code should clearly describe the classes of ordinances omitted therefrom.

(b) The council may provide that one or more of the following classes of ordinances shall be codified by appropriate entries upon official map books to be retained permanently in the office of the city clerk or some other city office generally accessible to the public:

- (1) Establishing or amending the boundaries of zoning districts;
- (2) Designating the location of traffic control devices;
- (3) Designating areas or zones where regulations are applied to parking, loading, bus stops, or taxicab stands;
- (4) Establishing speed limits;
- (4a) Restricting or regulating traffic at certain times on certain streets, or to certain types, weights or sizes of vehicles;
- (5) Designating the location of through streets, stop intersections, yield-right-of-way intersections, waiting lanes, one-way streets, or truck traffic routes; and
- (6) Establishing regulations upon vehicle turns at designated locations.

(b1) The council may provide that the classes of ordinances described in paragraphs (2) through (6) of subsection (b) above, and ordinances establishing rates for utility or other public enterprise services, or ordinances establishing fees of any nature, shall be codified by entry upon official lists or schedules of the regulations established by such ordinances, or schedules of such rates or fees, to be maintained in the office of the city clerk.

(c) It is the intent of this section to make uniform the law concerning the adoption of city codes. To this end, all charter provisions in conflict with this section in effect as of January 1, 1972, are expressly repealed, except to the extent that the charter makes adoption of a code mandatory, and no local act taking effect on or after January 1, 1972, shall be construed to repeal or amend this section in whole or in part unless it shall expressly so provide by specific reference. (1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, ss. 8, 9.)

§ 160A-78. Ordinance book.

Effective January 1, 1972, each city shall file a true copy of each ordinance adopted on or after January 1, 1972, in an ordinance book separate and apart from the council's minute book. The ordinance book shall be appropriately indexed and maintained for public inspection in the office of the city clerk. Effective July 1, 1973, true copies of all ordinances that were adopted before January

1, 1972, and are still in effect shall be filed and indexed in the ordinance book. If the city has adopted and issued a code of ordinances in compliance with G.S. 160A-77, its ordinances shall be filed and indexed in the ordinance book until they are codified. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-79. Pleading and proving city ordinances.

(a) In all civil and criminal cases a city ordinance that has been codified in a code of ordinances adopted and issued in compliance with G.S. 160A-77 must be pleaded by both section number and caption. In all civil and criminal cases a city ordinance that has not been codified in a code of ordinances adopted and issued in compliance with G.S. 160A-77 must be pleaded by its caption. In both instances, it is not necessary to plead or allege the substance or effect of the ordinance unless the ordinance has no caption and has not been codified.

(b) Any of the following shall be admitted in evidence in all actions or proceedings before courts or administrative bodies and shall have the same force and effect as would an original ordinance:

- (1) A city code adopted and issued in compliance with G.S. 160A-77, containing a statement that the code is published by order of the council.
- (2) Copies of any part of an official map book maintained in accordance with G.S. 160A-77 and certified under seal by the city clerk as having been adopted by the council and maintained in accordance with its directions (the clerk's certificate need not be authenticated).
- (3) A copy of an ordinance as set out in the minutes, code, or ordinance book of the council, certified under seal by the city clerk as a true copy (the clerk's certificate need not be authenticated).
- (4) Copies of any official lists or schedules maintained in accordance with G.S. 160A-77 and certified under seal by the city clerk as having been adopted by the council and maintained in accordance with its directions (the clerk's certificate need not be authenticated).

(c) The burden of pleading and proving the existence of any modification or repeal of an ordinance, map, or code, a copy of which has been duly pleaded or admitted in evidence in accordance with this section, shall be upon the party asserting such modification or repeal. It shall be presumed that any portion of a city code that is admitted in evidence in accordance with this section has been codified in compliance with G.S. 160A-77, and the burden of pleading and proving to the contrary shall be upon the party seeking to obtain an advantage thereby.

(d) From and after the respective effective dates of G.S. 160A-77 and 160A-78, no city ordinance shall be enforced or admitted into evidence in any court unless it has been codified or filed and indexed in accordance with G.S. 160A-77 or 160A-78. It shall be presumed that an ordinance which has been properly pleaded and proved in accordance with this section has been codified or filed and indexed in accordance with G.S. 160A-77 or 160A-78, and the burden of pleading and proving to the contrary shall be upon the party seeking to obtain an advantage thereby.

(e) It is the intent of this section to make uniform the law concerning the pleading and proving of city ordinances. To this end, all charter provisions in conflict with this section in effect as of January 1, 1972, are expressly repealed, and no local act taking effect on or after January 1, 1972, shall be construed to repeal or amend this section in whole or in part unless it shall expressly so provide by specific reference. (1917, c. 136, subch. 13, s. 14; C.S., s. 2825; 1959, c. 631; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 18; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 10.)

§ 160A-80. Power of investigation; subpoena power.

(a) The council shall have power to investigate the affairs of the city, and for that purpose may subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, and compel the production of evidence.

(b) If a person fails or refuses to obey a subpoena issued pursuant to this section, the council may apply to the General Court of Justice for an order requiring that its order be obeyed, and the court shall have jurisdiction to issue these orders after notice to all proper parties. No testimony of any witness before the council pursuant to a subpoena issued in exercise of the power conferred by this section may be used against him on the trial of any civil or criminal action other than a prosecution for false swearing committed on the examination. If any person, while under oath at an investigation by the council, willfully swears falsely, he is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 1991, c. 512, s. 1. (1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1991, c. 512, s. 1; 1993, c. 539, s. 1083; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 160A-81. Conduct of public hearings.

Public hearings may be held at any place within the city or within the county in which the city is located. The council may adopt reasonable rules governing the conduct of public hearings, including but not limited to rules (i) fixing the maximum time allotted to each speaker, (ii) providing for the designation of spokesmen for groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions, (iii) providing for the selection of delegates from groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions when the number of persons wishing to attend the hearing exceeds the capacity of the hall, and (iv) providing for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the hearing.

The council may continue any public hearing without further advertisement. If a public hearing is set for a given date and a quorum of the council is not then present, the hearing shall be continued until the next regular council meeting without further advertisement. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-81.1. Public comment period during regular meetings.

The council shall provide at least one period for public comment per month at a regular meeting of the council. The council may adopt reasonable rules governing the conduct of the public comment period, including, but not limited to, rules (i) fixing the maximum time allotted to each speaker, (ii) providing for the designation of spokesmen for groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions, (iii) providing for the selection of delegates from groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions when the number of persons wishing to attend the hearing exceeds the capacity of the hall, and (iv) providing for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the hearing. The council is not required to provide a public comment period under this section if no regular meeting is held during the month. (2005-170, s. 3.)

§ 160A-82. Applicability of Part.

Nothing in this Part, except G.S. 160A-77, 160A-78 and 160A-79, shall be construed to repeal any portion of any city charter inconsistent with anything contained herein. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-83. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-84. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-85. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 3A. Ethics Codes and Education Programs.

§ 160A-86. Local governing boards' code of ethics.

(a) Governing boards of cities, counties, local boards of education, unified governments, sanitary districts, and consolidated city-counties shall adopt a resolution or policy containing a code of ethics to guide actions by the governing board members in the performance of the member's official duties as a member of that governing board.

(b) The resolution or policy required by subsection (a) of this section shall address at least all of the following:

- (1) The need to obey all applicable laws regarding official actions taken as a board member.
- (2) The need to uphold the integrity and independence of the board member's office.
- (3) The need to avoid impropriety in the exercise of the board member's official duties.
- (4) The need to faithfully perform the duties of the office.
- (5) The need to conduct the affairs of the governing board in an open and public manner, including complying with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records. (2009-403, s. 1.)

§ 160A-87. Ethics education program required.

(a) All members of governing boards of cities, counties, local boards of education, unified governments, sanitary districts, and consolidated city-counties shall receive a minimum of two clock hours of ethics education within 12 months after initial election or appointment to the office and again within 12 months after each subsequent election or appointment to the office.

(b) The ethics education shall cover laws and principles that govern conflicts of interest and ethical standards of conduct at the local government level.

(c) The ethics education may be provided by the North Carolina League of Municipalities, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, North Carolina School Boards Association, the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, or other qualified sources at the choice of the governing board.

(d) The clerk to the governing board shall maintain a record verifying receipt of the ethics education by each member of the governing board. (2009-403, s. 1.)

§ 160A-88. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-89. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-90. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-91. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-92. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-93. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-94. Reserved for future codification purposes.

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§ 160A-96. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-97. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-98. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-99. Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 160A-100. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 4. Modification of Form of Government

§ 160A-101. Optional forms.

Any city may change its name or alter its form of government by adopting any one or combination of the options prescribed by this section:

- (1) Name of the corporation:
The name of the corporation may be changed to any name not deceptively similar to that of another city in this State.
- (2) Style of the corporation:
The city may be styled a city, town, or village.
- (3) Style of the governing board:
The governing board may be styled the board of commissioners, the board of aldermen, or the council.
- (4) Terms of office of members of the council:
Members of the council shall serve terms of office of either two or four years. All of the terms need not be of the same length, and all of the terms need not expire in the same year.
- (5) Number of members of the council:
The council shall consist of any number of members not less than three nor more than 12.
- (6) Mode of election of the council:
 - a. All candidates shall be nominated and elected by all the qualified voters of the city.
 - b. The city shall be divided into single-member electoral districts; council members shall be apportioned to the districts so that each member represents the same number of persons as nearly as possible, except for members apportioned to the city at large, if any; the qualified voters of each district shall nominate and elect candidates who reside in the district for seats apportioned to that district; and all the qualified voters of the city shall nominate and elect candidates apportioned to the city at large, if any.

- c. The city shall be divided into single-member electoral districts; council members shall be apportioned to the districts so that each member represents the same number of persons as nearly as possible, except for members apportioned to the city at large; and candidates shall reside in and represent the districts according to the apportionment plan adopted, but all candidates shall be nominated and elected by all the qualified voters of the city.
- d. The city shall be divided into electoral districts equal in number to one half the number of council seats; the council seats shall be divided equally into "ward seats" and "at-large seats," one each of which shall be apportioned to each district, so that each council member represents the same number of persons as nearly as possible; the qualified voters of each district shall nominate and elect candidates to the "ward seats"; candidates for the "at-large seats" shall reside in and represent the districts according to the apportionment plan adopted, but all candidates for "at-large" seats shall be nominated and elected by all the qualified voters of the city.
- e. The city shall be divided into single-member electoral districts; council members shall be apportioned to the districts so that each member represents the same number of persons as nearly as possible, except for members apportioned to the city at large, if any; in a nonpartisan primary, the qualified voters of each district shall nominate two candidates who reside in the district, and the qualified voters of the entire city shall nominate two candidates for each seat apportioned to the city at large, if any; and all candidates shall be elected by all the qualified voters of the city.

If either of options b, c, d or e is adopted, the council shall divide the city into the requisite number of single-member electoral districts according to the apportionment plan adopted, and shall cause a map of the districts so laid out to be drawn up and filed as provided by G.S. 160A-22 and 160A-23. No more than one half of the council may be apportioned to the city at large. An initiative petition may specify the number of single-member electoral districts to be laid out, but the drawing of district boundaries and apportionment of members to the districts shall be done in all cases by the council.

(7) Elections:

- a. Partisan. – Municipal primaries and elections shall be conducted on a partisan basis as provided in G.S. 163-291.
- b. Nonpartisan Plurality. – Municipal elections shall be conducted as provided in G.S. 163-292
- c. Nonpartisan Election and Runoff Election. – Municipal elections and runoff elections shall be conducted as provided in G.S. 163-293.
- d. Nonpartisan Primary and Election. – Municipal primaries and elections shall be conducted as provided in G.S. 163-294.

(8) Selection of mayor:

- a. The mayor shall be elected by all the qualified voters of the city for a term of not less than two years nor more than four years.

- b. The mayor shall be selected by the council from among its membership to serve at its pleasure.

Under option a, the mayor may be given the right to vote on all matters before the council, or he may be limited to voting only to break a tie. Under option b, the mayor has the right to vote on all matters before the council. In both cases the mayor has no right to break a tie vote in which he participated.

(9) Form of government:

- a. The city shall operate under the mayor-council form of government in accordance with Part 3 of Article 7 of this Chapter.
- b. The city shall operate under the council-manager form of government in accordance with Part 2 of Article 7 of this Chapter and any charter provisions not in conflict therewith. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; c. 1076, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 19; c. 1001, ss. 1, 2; 1975, c. 19, s. 64; c. 664, s. 6; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 160A-102. Amendment by ordinance.

By following the procedure set out in this section, the council may amend the city charter by ordinance to implement any of the optional forms set out in G.S. 160A-101. The council shall first adopt a resolution of intent to consider an ordinance amending the charter. The resolution of intent shall describe the proposed charter amendments briefly but completely and with reference to the pertinent provisions of G.S. 160A-101, but it need not contain the precise text of the charter amendments necessary to implement the proposed changes. At the same time that a resolution of intent is adopted, the council shall also call a public hearing on the proposed charter amendments, the date of the hearing to be not more than 45 days after adoption of the resolution. A notice of the hearing shall be published at least once not less than 10 days prior to the date fixed for the public hearing, and shall contain a summary of the proposed amendments. Following the public hearing, but not earlier than the next regular meeting of the council and not later than 60 days from the date of the hearing, the council may adopt an ordinance amending the charter to implement the amendments proposed in the resolution of intent.

The council may, but shall not be required to unless a referendum petition is received pursuant to G.S. 160A-103, make any ordinance adopted pursuant to this section effective only if approved by a vote of the people, and may by resolution adopted at the same time call a special election for the purpose of submitting the ordinance to a vote. The date fixed for the special election shall be the next date permitted under G.S. 163-287(a) that is more than 70 days after adoption of the ordinance.

Within 10 days after an ordinance is adopted under this section, the council shall publish a notice stating that an ordinance amending the charter has been adopted and summarizing its contents and effect. If the ordinance is made effective subject to a vote of the people, the council shall publish a notice of the election in accordance with G.S. 163-287, and need not publish a separate notice of adoption of the ordinance.

The council may not commence proceedings under this section between the time of the filing of a valid initiative petition pursuant to G.S. 160A-104 and the date of any election called pursuant to such petition. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 20; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, s. 11; 2014-111, s. 18; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 160A-103. Referendum on charter amendments by ordinance.

An ordinance adopted under G.S. 160A-102 that is not made effective upon approval by a vote of the people shall be subject to a referendum petition. Upon receipt of a referendum petition bearing the signatures and residence addresses of a number of qualified voters of the city equal to at least 10 percent of the whole number of voters who are registered to vote in city elections according to the most recent figures certified by the State Board of Elections or 5,000, whichever is less, the council shall submit an ordinance adopted under G.S. 160A-102 to a vote of the people. The date of the special election shall be fixed on a date permitted by G.S. 163-287. A referendum petition shall be addressed to the council and shall identify the ordinance to be submitted to a vote. A referendum petition must be filed with the city clerk not later than 30 days after publication of the notice of adoption of the ordinance. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, ss. 13, 15; 2013-381, s. 10.27; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 160A-104. Initiative petitions for charter amendments.

The people may initiate a referendum on proposed charter amendments. An initiative petition shall bear the signatures and resident addresses of a number of qualified voters of the city equal to at least ten percent (10%) of the whole number of voters who are registered to vote in city elections according to the most recent figures certified by the State Board of Elections or 5,000, whichever is less. The petition shall set forth the proposed amendments by describing them briefly but completely and with reference to the pertinent provisions of G.S. 160A-101, but it need not contain the precise text of the charter amendments necessary to implement the proposed changes. The petition may not propose changes in the alternative, or more than one integrated set of charter amendments. Upon receipt of a valid initiative petition, the council shall call a special election on the question of adopting the charter amendments proposed therein, and shall give public notice thereof in accordance with G.S. 163-287. The date of the special election shall be fixed on a date permitted by G.S. 163-287. If a majority of the votes cast in the special election shall be in favor of the proposed changes, the council shall adopt an ordinance amending the charter to put them into effect. Such an ordinance shall not be subject to a referendum petition. No initiative petition may be filed (i) between the time the council initiates proceedings under G.S. 160A-102 by publishing a notice of hearing on proposed charter amendments and the time proceeding under that section have been carried to a conclusion either through adoption or rejection of a proposed ordinance or lapse of time, nor (ii) within one year and six months following the effective date of an ordinance amending the city charter pursuant to this Article, nor (iii) within one year and six months following the date of any election on charter amendments that were defeated by the voters.

The restrictions imposed by this section on filing initiative petitions shall apply only to petitions concerning the same subject matter. For example, pendency of council action on amendments concerning the method of electing the council shall not preclude an initiative petition on adoption of the council-manager form of government.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the submission of more than one proposition for charter amendments on the same ballot so long as no proposition offers a different plan under the same option as another proposition on the same ballot. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1; 1973, c. 426, s. 21; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1247, ss. 12, 14; 2013-381, s. 10.28; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 160A-105. Submission of propositions to voters; form of ballot.

A proposition to approve an ordinance or petition shall be printed on the ballot in substantially the following form:

"Shall the ordinance (describe the effect of the ordinance) be approved?"

- YES
- NO"

The ballot shall be separate from all other ballots used at the election.

If a majority of the votes cast on a proposition shall be in the affirmative, the plan contained therein shall be put into effect as provided in this Article. If a majority of the votes cast shall be against the proposition, the ordinance or petition proposing the amendments shall be void and of no effect. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-106. Amendment of charter provisions dependent on form of government.

The authority conferred by this Article to amend charter provisions within the options set out in G.S. 160A-101 also includes authority to amend other charter provisions dependent on the form of city government to conform them to the form of government amendments. By way of illustration and not limitation, if a charter providing for a five-member council is amended to increase the size of the council to seven members, a charter provision defining a quorum of the council as three members shall be amended to define a quorum as four members. (1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-107. Plan to continue for two years.

Charter amendments adopted as provided in this Article shall continue in force for at least two years after the beginning of the term of office of the officers elected thereunder. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-108. Municipal officers to carry out plan.

It shall be the duty of the mayor, the council, the city clerk, and other city officials in office, and all boards of election and election officials, when any plan of government is adopted as provided by this Article or is proposed for adoption, to comply with all requirements of this Article, to the end that all things may be done which are necessary for the nomination and election of the officers first to be elected under the new plan so adopted. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-109. Effective date.

The council may submit new charter amendments proposed under this Article at any regular or special municipal election, or at a special election called for that sole purpose. Any amendment affecting the election of city officers shall be finally adopted and approved at least 90 days before the first election for mayor or council members held thereunder. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-110. Charters to remain in force.

The charter of any city that adopts a new form of government as provided in this Article shall continue in full force and effect notwithstanding adoption of a new form of government, except to the extent modified by an ordinance adopted under the authority conferred and pursuant to the procedures prescribed by this Article. (1969, c. 629, s. 2; 1971, c. 698, s. 1.)

§ 160A-111. Filing certified true copies of charter amendments.

The city clerk shall file a certified true copy of any charter amendment adopted under this Part with the Secretary of State and the Legislative Library. (1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 935, s. 2; 1989, c. 191, s. 2.)

§§ 160A-112 through 160A-115. Reserved for future codification purposes.