

**Citizen Charter Review Committee**

May 28, 2026

11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Leon County Main Library Programming Room

**SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA**

Call to Order and Opening

Mary Ann Lindley,  
Chair

***Consent***

- Approval of February 19, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- Receipt & File of Written Public Comments

***Public Comment***

***General Business***

- Agenda Item #1: Consideration of Advancing a Proposed Charter Amendment Addressing Historic Harmful Public Policy Decisions

**LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW  
COMMITTEE**

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 19, 2026 MEETING  
MINUTES**

**Citizen Charter Review Committee**  
**February 19, 2026**  
**11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.**  
**Leon County Main Library**  
**Programming Room**

The Leon County 2025-2026 Citizen Charter Review Committee (CCRC) met on February 19, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in the Leon County Main Library with Committee Members Mary Ann Lindley, Chauncy Haynes, Joey Davis, Linda Bond Edwards, Anita Favors, Max Herrle, Darryl Jones, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman, Ryan Ray, Shamarial Roberson, Temple Robinson, William Smith, Bruce Strouble, Jr., Jarrett Terry, Katrina Tuggerson and Barry Wilcox in attendance. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, Assistant County Administrator Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, County Attorney Chasity O’Steen, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives Nicki Hatch, Director of the Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships Abigail Thomas, Management Analyst Cameron Williams, and Clerks to the Board, Beryl Wood and Daniel J. Antonaccio.

Absent Members: Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray.

**Call to Order and Opening Mary Ann Lindley, Chair**

Chair Lindley called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

**Consent:**

*Ryan Ray moved, seconded by William Smith, to approve the consent agenda as presented.*

*The motion carried 13 – 0 with Committee Members Joey Davis, Liz Ellis, Max Herrle, Slaton Murray, Sean Pittman, Shamarial Roberson, Jarrett Terry and Katrina Tuggerson not present,*

*Approval of February 5, 2026 Meeting Minutes*

*Receipt & File of Written Public Comments*

**Public Comment:**

- Susan Robinson, 4656 Inisheer Drive, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems, stating the office would improve coordination, public awareness of services, and accountability. She noted many residents are unaware of available resources and emphasized the need for centralized coordination of existing efforts.
- Melanie Andrade Williams, 3349 Argonaut Drive, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems, emphasizing the importance of centralized coordination and accountability to ensure equitable access to food. She also expressed support for the proposed charter amendment related to restoring communities impacted by historic harms.
- Judy Shipman, 2145 Sand Dune Court, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Serenity Williams, 4011 Elder Lane, spoke in support of the proposed charter amendment addressing historic disparities, stating it would provide long-term stability and allow the County to assess historic impacts without mandating funding or creating quotas. She

emphasized the amendment would allow further evaluation of the issue and urged the Committee's support.

- Ebony Yarbrough, 1575 Paul Russell Road, spoke regarding barriers to food access, noting that while many assistance resources exist, residents often struggle to locate and utilize them due to limited awareness of services, hours, eligibility, and transportation options. She emphasized the need for centralized coordination and stated that establishing an information hub would improve nonprofit collaboration, resource management, accountability, and overall service delivery. She expressed support for establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Mary Miaisha Mitchell, 1009 Ellington Court, praised committee for their work and expressed that incorporating food security into the County Charter would provide the necessary structural dedication to strengthen and optimize services.
- Camille Lewis, 1639 Corey Wood Circle, spoke about food insecurity from the perspectives of public health, agriculture, and nonprofit work, acknowledging current County efforts while noting the lack of centralized coordination. She stated a unified structure could improve overall effectiveness of food system efforts.
- Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, thanked the committee for their time and efforts and shared his perspective on additional issues he believed the Committee should have addressed.
- Amanda Shebake Haynes, 808 Goodbread Lane, spoke on food insecurity in the community and the impact on mental health. She urged support for establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Jada Brown, 512 Norma Street, NACCP Tallahassee Chapter, urged support for all three agenda items. She highlighted the Weed to Seed Program where they learned how to be sustainable while growing up and thanked the library for a similar program.
- *Joey Davis, Max Herrle, Sean Pittman, Shamarial Roberson, Jarrett Terry and Katrina Tuggerson arrived at this juncture of the meeting.*

### **General Business:**

#### **Agenda Item #1: Consideration of Language Affirming Leon County's Commitment to Healthcare in the Leon County Charter**

Mr. Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator, introduced the item which provided a proposed charter amendment revising the Preamble of the Leon County Charter with language that affirms Leon County's commitment to healthcare access. He shared that no other charter counties in the State of Florida include healthcare in their charters, and a similar commitment is already expressed in the Leon County Strategic Plan, which envisions a community that is safe, healthy and vibrant. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the continuation of Leon County's long-standing commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

Temple Robinson expressed concerns that the options presented did not fully reflect her intended direction. While she described the proposed language as well written, she stated that it does not convey the strength of the message the Committee sought to communicate.

Shamarial Roberson sought clarification from staff regarding potential state and federal policy changes, asking whether the proposed language could have implications for the County's ability to access state or federal funding related to healthcare.

County Attorney O'Steen explained that some concerns relate to a federal executive order tied to grant funding that requires entities to certify they do not operate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs that violate federal anti-discrimination laws or provide preferential treatment based on protected classes. She also informed the Committee that a bill currently moving through the Florida Senate broadly defines diversity, equity, and inclusion and could restrict counties from funding or promoting such programs if enacted. She noted the bill has advanced through committees and could still be amended. She concluded that the proposed language is permissible under current law, though future interpretations could depend on whether the pending legislation becomes law.

Anita Favors asked for clarification regarding what additional language Temple Robinson believed should be included to better reflect the Committee's intent.

Temple Robinson stated that the intent was to include clear language affirming the County's commitment to access to primary care, including for uninsured and underserved residents, as an enduring statement of the County's values.

County Administrator Long explained that the proposed language was intentionally drafted to be broad and inclusive rather than focused on a specific program or policy area. He added that the County addresses health in many ways, including infrastructure, parks, emergency services, and primary care initiatives, making it difficult to highlight a single area within a value statement. He stated that staff would revise the language based on the direction of the Committee.

Darryl Jones suggested that the originator of the idea, Temple Robinson, provide guidance on how the Committee might proceed considering the discussion. He expressed interest in hearing further recommendations from members with public health expertise before determining a final recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Chair Lindley stated that, at that point in the discussion, no specific alternative language had been proposed by the Committee. She noted that the Committee still had additional agenda items to address and emphasized the need to move the discussion forward. Chair Lindley indicated she would be willing to entertain a motion if members wished to approve or reject the proposal or offer specific language revisions.

*Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes moved for Option #1 as amended: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the continuation of Leon County's long-standing commitment to ensuring ~~healthcare access for low income residents~~ access to public healthcare and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.*

*The motion failed for lack of a second.*

Temple Robinson requested that the item be temporarily postponed, asking that the Committee return to the matter later in the meeting to allow members time to consider the discussion and develop a motion.

Chair Lindley entertained discussion on temporarily postponing the discussion.

*Howard Kessler moved, seconded by Henry Lewis, III, to table Agenda Item #1 for the time being.*

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

The Committee later returned to Agenda Item #1 after the conclusion of Agenda Item #2.

Temple Robinson moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to bring Agenda Item #1 back for discussion.

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

Temple Robinson read her proposed ballot language.

Vice Chairman Haynes requested a five-minute break to allow staff to place the proposed ballot language on the screen. He explained that displaying the language would ensure clarity and prevent any confusion or debate about the exact wording of the motion that had been read aloud.

The proposed revision to the Preamble included the CCRC's previous recommendation from its February 5, 2026 meeting, regarding the esteemed humanity of all residents of Leon County in the Preamble (**bold**), with additional language (**bold and underlined**) to reflect the Committee's request to affirm the County's long-standing commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

Temple Robinson moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to accept the proposed Preamble language **as amended**: *We, the citizens of Leon County, Florida, united in the belief that governmental decisions affecting local interests should be made locally, rather than by the State, and that County government should be reflective of the people of the County and should serve them in achieving a more responsive and efficient form of government, hereby affirm the esteemed humanity of all residents of Leon County. We recognize in every person a shared dignity, not granted by government, but inherent and deserving of consideration in our public-affairs effort to create a community that is safe, vibrant, and provides access to healthcare for all citizens.*

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

## **Agenda Item #2: Proposed Charter Amendment on Food Insecurity**

Mr. Lamy introduced the item which discussed a proposed charter amendment establishing an Office of Food Systems to address food insecurity. He noted that no Florida county charters address food insecurity and that the Board of County Commissioners already has the authority to address these issues without a charter amendment. He highlighted new and existing initiatives of the Leon County Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships (HSCP) addressing food insecurity, as well as ongoing coordination through a food council led by Florida A&M University (FAMU). He also noted that the Charter cannot require participation from independent organizations, and that current collaboration efforts are voluntary. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to reducing food insecurity in the community.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., stated that community feedback indicates residents often lack awareness of available resources and that services can be improved. He noted that the County is in a unique position to organize and centralize these efforts. He also suggested including annual reporting and a countywide food systems plan.

*Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, for Option #2: Approve the proposed charter amendment for recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to address food insecurity in the Leon County Charter.*

*The motion was not voted on.*

William Smith asked for clarification regarding the difference between the proposed Office of Food Systems and the office that is currently addressing food insecurity and related services.

Mr. Lamy explained that the proposed office would perform the same functions currently carried out by HSCP.

Shamarial Roberson asked whether there is currently an annual plan or report related to food access or food systems that is publicly released. She also requested clarification on the current organizational structure within HSCP related to food insecurity efforts.

Ms. Abigail Thomas, Director of the Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships, explained that staff previously provided a report to the Board in the fall regarding food insecurity in the community, which highlighted current initiatives and provided general information about food insecurity. She noted that agencies funded by Leon County, such as Second Harvest, Elder Care Services, and Good News Outreach, are required to submit quarterly and annual reports because they receive County funding. She added that staff is currently preparing a Human Services report that will include FY 2025 data for programs funded by the County.

Mr. Lamy explained that the County created a Neighborhood Engagement position following community meetings held in 2021 across ten neighborhoods identified as having high food insecurity rates based on Feeding America and Second Harvest data.

Anita Favors stated that she supported the intent of the proposed Charter amendment but raised concerns about the potential cost of establishing a new Office of Food Systems. She asked whether the Committee's intent would allow the County Administrator or Board of County Commissioners flexibility to reorganize or combine existing functions rather than create a completely new office, to avoid significant administrative costs and ensure that resources are directed toward addressing food insecurity in the community. She asked Dr. Strouble to expound.

Barry Wilcox stated that while he supports the idea of coordinating food insecurity efforts and producing annual reports, he believes establishing an Office of Food Systems should be done through a recommendation to the Board rather than through a charter amendment. He suggested the office could be created within the existing Office of HSCP, like other divisions such as housing or veterans services.

*Barry Wilcox made a substitute motion, seconded by Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, to approve a policy recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners encouraging the establishment of a Division of Food Systems under the Leon County Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships.*

*The motion carried 12 – 7 with Committee Members Max Herrle, Howard Kessler, Ryan Ray, Shamarial Roberson, Temple Robinson, William Smith and Bruce Strouble, Jr., in opposition. Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray were not present.*

**Agenda Item #3: Proposed Charter Amendment on Persistent Disparities Resulting from Historic Public Policies**

Mr. Lamy introduced this item which provided a proposed charter amendment and corresponding ballot language to address disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions. He stated that there are no county charters in the State of Florida that include language related to disparities from historic public policies. He also explained that adoption of the proposed amendment into the Charter could put the County's federal and state funding in jeopardy, as well as result in legal challenges against the County. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to addressing poverty and inequities in the community.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., acknowledged the concerns raised by County staff about legal risks related to addressing historical harm in a charter amendment. He explained that, after discussions with the County Attorney, he prepared alternative language that removes references to race while still addressing the lingering impacts of historic unconstitutional policies. He distributed a handout with his revised alternative language and stated that this approach would avoid potential conflicts with federal and state laws while still addressing disparities caused by past policies. He then made a motion to recommend his revised language to the Board of County Commissioners.

*Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners a proposed charter amendment and ballot language (as distributed by Mr. Strouble during the meeting) to require the County to assess persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions and establish a framework for addressing those impacts, including periodic audits and potential restoration strategies.*

County Attorney O'Steen explained that the revised language removes explicit references to race or DEI, but potential legal risks remain. She noted that if any programs or policies developed under the amendment were ultimately based on a protected class, such as race, gender, or national origin, they could be subject to strict scrutiny under the U.S. Constitution. She added that case law on programs addressing historic wrongs is inconsistent, with many recent federal programs being struck down in court. She cautioned that such programs could also jeopardize federal funding depending on their structure and target population.

- *Joey Davis left at this juncture of the meeting.*

William Smith asked for clarification about the funding referenced in the proposed charter amendment, specifically regarding the creation of a restoration fund.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., explained that the proposed charter amendment would create a restoration fund, but it would not specify the funding sources within the charter itself. Instead, the County Commission would have discretion to determine how the fund is financed. He also questioned the legal concern raised by the County Attorney, asking how the County could conduct any data-driven programs if identifying disparities among protected classes automatically creates legal risk.

County Attorney O'Steen explained that the County's current programs are legally defensible because they rely primarily on socioeconomic data rather than targeting protected classes directly. While such programs may indirectly benefit individuals who belong to protected classes, the benefits are not explicitly tied to race, gender, or other protected characteristics. In contrast, the proposed amendment references historical policies like segregation, which specifically impacted certain protected classes. If programs are created based on that rationale, they could raise legal concerns because the benefits would be directly connected to a protected class, potentially violating anti-discrimination laws.

Vice Chairman Haynes asked the County Attorney what her professional recommendation would be to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the proposed ballot language.

County Attorney O'Steen stated that the proposed charter language itself is legally acceptable but federal and state constitutional and statutory restrictions could limit what the County is able to do in practice, even if the amendment was adopted.

Chair Lindley asked whether placing the language in the charter now, despite the current legal risks, could still be valuable because future circumstances might change. She suggested that even if the amendment cannot be fully implemented today due to legal constraints, a future County Commission might be able to act on it more freely if laws or policies change, since the language would already be embedded in the charter.

County Attorney O'Steen noted that the proposed charter language might have little practical effect right now due to current legal limitations, but future legal changes could either expand or further restrict what the County could do.

Henry Lewis, III, warned that the language might be used to challenge or dismantle single-member districts and other programs created to address past disparities.

*Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes made a substitution motion for Option #1: Approve the draft recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to addressing poverty and inequities in the community.*

*The motion failed for lack of a second.*

Linda Bond Edwards asked the County Attorney for further clarity on the viability of using economic data for related programs.

County Attorney O'Steen cited the County's MWSBE (Minority/Women-owned Small Business Enterprise) program as an example, which is based on a third-party disparity study showing a need for corrective action. She noted that similar programs across the country are currently being challenged in court, so the legal landscape is still evolving. She emphasized that legal risk increases when a program explicitly targets a protected class, because that triggers strict scrutiny under constitutional law. In contrast, policies based on geographic need or general socioeconomic data—such as addressing food access in an underserved area, are more legally defensible, even if they indirectly benefit members of a protected class.

Sean Pittman stated he would support the proposal, but suggested that the structure might be better implemented through an ordinance rather than a charter amendment.

*Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners a proposed charter amendment and ballot language (as distributed by Mr. Strouble during the meeting) to require the County to assess persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions and establish a framework for addressing those impacts, including periodic audits and potential restoration strategies.*

*The motion failed 9 – 9 with Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, Linda Bond Edwards, Anita Favors, Darryl Jones, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Shamarial Roberson, William Smith and Barry Wilcox in opposition. Committee Members Joey Davis, Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray were not present.*

Chair Lindley thanked Committee Members for their time, thoughtful participation, and respectful discussion of complex issues. She noted that their work helped the community better

understand how local decisions are made and expressed appreciation for everyone's effort. She shared that she had been invited to speak to the League of Women Voters in March to provide an overview of the Committee's work. She also thanked County staff for their support and dedication throughout the process.

Darryl Jones asked whether the two recommended changes to the Preamble of the Leon County Charter, related to esteemed humanity and affirming access to health care, would be presented separately to the Board of County Commissioners.

Mrs. Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives, clarified that proposed amendments would be presented separately.

Linda Bond Edwards made a special announcement congratulating the County Attorney for recently receiving the Martha Barnett Outstanding Attorney Award from the Tallahassee Women Lawyers. She thanked County Attorney O'Steen for her professionalism and for patiently addressing the Committee's many questions during the meeting.

Sean Pittman congratulated the County Attorney on receiving the Martha Barnett Outstanding Attorney Award, noting that it is a significant honor given Martha Barnett's reputation. He also thanked Chair Lindley for her leadership in guiding the Committee through the process and expressed appreciation to the staff, particularly Mrs. Hatch, for their dedication and hard work.

County Administrator Long thanked the Committee Members and Chair Lindley on behalf of County staff for their work and participation. He also noted that the Board of County Commissioners will formally recognize the Committee in the future and that staff will notify members when that occurs.

**Adjournment:**

Chair Lindley adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Mary Ann Lindley, Chair  
Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee

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Beryl Wood, Clerk to the Board for  
Gwen Marshall Knight, Clerk of Court

**LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW  
COMMITTEE**

**RECEIPT AND FILE OF WRITTEN PUBLIC  
COMMENTS**

*(To be electronically distributed Wednesday before the meeting)*

**From:** Darchelle Pickett <pickettdarchelle@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 26, 2026 10:05 PM

**To:** Charter Review Process <CCRC@leoncountyfl.gov>

**Subject:** Accountability Amendment - May 28, 2026

Greetings, Commissioners.

My name is Darchelle Pickett, and I am a Florida resident in District 2 of Leon County, with Christian Caban as our County Commissioner.

Public policy decisions have long-term effects. When those effects persist across generations, governance should respond in a long-term way.

Urban renewal projects displaced communities, such as Smokey Hollow, without equivalent long-term reinvestment.

The results of that disruption have economic and social effects that remain visible in present-day community conditions.

Any future ordinance or implementation process under this framework would still be required to comply with all applicable state and federal law.

This geographically-based, data-informed framework is focused on community conditions and policy impacts—not identity-based preferences.

This amendment creates authority, not mandates. It strengthens long-term governance without creating legal or fiscal risk. I urge you to advance it.

As a resident in District 2, I ask the Committee to approve the proposed charter amendment for recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. Thank you for your dedication to the people of Leon County.

Sincerely,

D. C. Pickett,

FL College Student, U.S. Military Veteran, & Commissioned Notary Public of Florida.

**From:** Trishay Young <trishayyoung@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 26, 2026 8:54 PM

**To:** Charter Review Process <CCRC@leoncountyfl.gov>

**Subject:** Support for the Restoration of Communities from Historic Harm Amendment (RCA)

Greetings!

My name is Trishay Young, I live in the Callen Neighborhood zip code 32310 of Leon County.

Thank you for your time today for this important work!

Transparent assessment and recurring review processes strengthen public trust in government. This framework creates a lawful structure for informed decision-making.

Historic housing and lending practices limited wealth-building opportunities in certain Leon County neighborhoods. Today, those same areas continue to experience lower homeownership rates and greater housing instability.

This framework is also about improving future decision-making by encouraging governments to consider potential long-term community impacts before major actions are taken.

Charter language protects responsibilities across administrations. I encourage you to advance the Amendment.

Thank you again!

Peace,

Mrs. Young

"Look at Life through an Eagle's Eyes"

**LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW  
COMMITTEE**

**NOTES FOR AGENDA ITEM #1**

# Citizen Charter Review Committee

## Agenda Item #1

May 28, 2026

**To:** 2025-2026 Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee

**From:** Vincent S. Long, County Administrator



**Title:** Consideration of Advancing a Proposed Charter Amendment Addressing Historic Harmful Public Policy Decisions

<b>Review and Approval:</b>	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
<b>Department / Division Review:</b>	Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator
<b>Lead Staff / Project Team:</b>	Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives Cameron Williams, Management Analyst

### Summary:

As requested by the Board of County Commissioners at its May 12, 2026 meeting, this item seeks the Citizen Charter Review Committee's consideration of whether to advance a Charter Amendment addressing historic harmful public policy decisions based on geographical areas in the community rather than race, gender, ethnicity, or any other protected class, that is compliant with state and federal laws, and in a manner that does not jeopardize state or federal funding.

### Staff Recommendation:

Committee direction.

## Report and Discussion

### **Background:**

As requested by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) at its May 12, 2026 meeting, this item seeks the Citizen Charter Review Committee's (Committee) consideration of whether to advance a Charter Amendment addressing historic harmful public policy decisions based on geographical areas in the community rather than race, gender, ethnicity, or any other protected class; compliant with state and federal laws; and in a manner that does not jeopardize state or federal funding.

On January 22, 2026, the Committee received an analysis of the County's ongoing efforts to reduce poverty and inequity in the community. The item included an analysis of Dr. Bruce Strouble's proposal to amend the County Charter by creating a new section that would require the County to establish programs and funding targeted to communities that have experienced historic racial discrimination. As presented in that item, adopting a Charter Amendment to establish programs and funding based on historic racial disenfranchisement could create legal challenges and jeopardize federal and state funding due to recent and ongoing state and federal actions to prohibit diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related activities. Despite these considerations, the Committee requested a proposed Charter Amendment and corresponding ballot language to be prepared for consideration requiring the County to assess and address persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions.

On February 19, 2026, the Committee received the proposed Charter Amendment and ballot language. Due to recent and ongoing state and federal actions to prohibit diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related activities as well as the County's ongoing efforts to address poverty and inequities in the community within the Board's existing authority, the Committee did not advance the proposed Charter Amendment. Throughout the process, the Committee expressed strong support for the County's ongoing efforts to address poverty and inequities in historically underserved areas and support vulnerable populations in the community.

Subsequently, at its March 20, 2026 meeting, the Board requested an item on the proposed Charter Amendment considered, but ultimately not recommended, by the Committee related to persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions based on certain occurrences including slavery and segregation. It is important to note that on that same day, the Florida Legislature also approved SB 1134 which prohibits local governments from adopting and implementing DEI-related activities such as those proposed in the Charter Amendment considered by the Committee. Additionally, on March 26, 2026, President Trump issued another executive order, Executive Order (2026 EO), that requires all recipients of federal funding to agree that they will not engage in racially discriminatory DEI activities.

The requested item on the proposed Charter Amendment not recommended by the Committee was presented to the Board at its April 10, 2026 meeting. The item provided a comprehensive analysis on the proposed Charter Amendment as well as the recent state and federal actions that prohibit local governments from adopting and implementing DEI-related activities such as those proposed in the Charter Amendment. Recognizing these considerations, the Board requested a revised framework to address historic harmful public policy decisions that could be provided to the Citizen

Title: Consideration of Advancing a Proposed Charter Amendment Addressing Historic Harmful Public Policy Decisions

May 28, 2026

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Charter Review Committee for further consideration as a Charter Amendment that examines the following:

- Public policy decisions enacted by the Board;
- Focuses on geographic areas and does not consider race, gender, ethnicity or any other protected class (i.e., sexual orientation, etc.);
- Complies with state and federal laws; and
- Does not jeopardize state and federal funding requirements.

At its May 12, 2026 meeting, the proposed framework was presented to the Board which included important context regarding the County's comprehensive and ongoing efforts in alignment with the criteria above by addressing the needs in geographic areas through investment and engagement in underserved areas and vulnerable populations. As detailed in that item, these existing efforts align with best practices, are consistent with state and federal laws, and do not jeopardize state and federal funding awarded to the County. Notwithstanding the County's existing ongoing efforts, as requested by the Board, the item presented an option for consideration to revise the Charter Preamble to affirm Leon County's commitment to addressing the needs of underserved areas and vulnerable populations in our community. At that time, the Board voted to reconvene the Committee for its consideration of whether a Charter Amendment should be advanced addressing historic harmful public policy decisions based on geographical areas in the community rather than race, gender, ethnicity, or any other protected class, that is compliant with state and federal laws, and in a manner that does not jeopardize state or federal funding.

**Analysis:**

Leon County comprehensively addresses the long-standing and evolving needs of historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations (i.e., homeless, low-income, etc.) through countless policies, innovative programs, ongoing partnerships, and active engagement – all of which are data-driven, strategically implemented, and consistent with best practices. With this approach and focus, the County regularly addresses the highest and most challenging needs that historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations often experience.

Based on empirical data such as U.S. Census and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the common challenges of historically underserved areas include economic inequities that are often highlighted by persistent and disproportionate high poverty and unemployment rates; the lack of public infrastructure that prevents access to basic and essential services; the degradation of natural and environmental resources that adversely affect health and welfare; and limited access to social services that are critical to enhancing quality of life.

As presented to the Board at its May 12, 2026 meeting, the following analysis details the numerous policies, programs, partnerships, and investments the County is actively implementing in historically underserved areas to:

- Reduce Economic Inequities;
- Expand Infrastructure for Access to Basic and Essential Services;
- Protect the Environment for Health, Safety, and Welfare; and
- Deliver Critical Social Services to Enhance Quality of Life.

Consistent with the Board's direction, these efforts align with best practices that address historic harmful policy decisions, comply with state and federal laws, and do not jeopardize state and federal funding. Additionally, these efforts have been implemented within the Board's existing authority and without any change to the County Charter.

### *Reduce Economic Inequities*

The County has actively spearheaded efforts to reduce economic inequities and private sector disinvestment in historically underserved areas. Aligned with best practices, the County utilizes empirical data developed by the U.S. Census and Florida Office of Economic & Demographic Research to identify neighborhoods and communities with persistent and disproportionate levels of high poverty and unemployment rates. Subsequently, programs, partnerships, initiatives, and investments are adopted and implemented in collaboration and coordination with residents and stakeholders to increase economic prosperity and private sector investment. Although not exhaustive, significant examples of the County efforts include:

- Establishment of the Downtown and Greater Frenchtown-Southside Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs) in partnership with the City of Tallahassee (City) to increase economic growth in areas that for years experienced slum, blight, and private sector disinvestment. Through the CRAs, the County has invested more than \$56 million in property tax revenue that has improved public infrastructures (roads, sidewalks, stormwater, etc.); constructed new affordable housing including Goodbread Hills, Columbia Gardens, and Magnolia Oaks; and invested in local businesses to spur private sector investment in housing, retail, and restaurants.
- Adoption of the Southside Action Plan (SAP) within the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan to promote balanced and equitable growth in southern Leon County neighborhoods, including Bond, Providence, and South City. This has resulted in more than \$1.13 billion in public and private investment within the SAP boundaries including more than \$125 million in direct County funding.
- Development of Sense of Place Plans that intentionally engage residents to strengthen the unique identity of local neighborhoods and rural communities while enhancing public investment. Sense of Place plans developed by the County include:
  - *Miccosukee Community Sense of Place* – led to \$5.9 million in County and federal investment for the redevelopment of the Old Concord School into the new Miccosukee Community Center.
  - *Lake Jackson Town Center Huntington Sense of Place* – transformed a traditional shopping center into a cohesive public gathering spot that resulted in the expansion of the Lake Jackson Branch Library, a new community center, and enhanced retail space for greater private sector investment.
  - *Woodville Community Sense of Place* – adopted as a County Strategic Initiative by the Board, this plan focuses on activating and enhancing the rural town center through placemaking and infrastructure investment. It prioritizes the revitalization of Woodville and Robinson Road Parks alongside the development of a new trail hub on the St. Marks Trail, all supported by landscaping and gateway signage to

strengthen community identity. These aesthetic improvements are paired with critical infrastructure projects, including streetscaping, expanded pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, roadway safety enhancements, and the ongoing septic-to-sewer conversion program. Ultimately, the plan drives economic vitality by promoting trail-oriented development and updating zoning to foster compatible, small-scale business opportunities.

- Adoption of land use and zoning tools under the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan — including the Land Use and Mobility Element adopted in December 2025 — to protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible development and guide growth in a manner that preserves neighborhood character. These tools include low-density residential zoning classifications that prevent the conversion of single-family neighborhoods to high-density multifamily or large-format retail, and the Neighborhood Boundary land use category developed in partnership with the Bond Neighborhood to allow small-scale mixed uses — such as corner stores, daycares, and small cafes — while prohibiting strip malls, apartments, and big box retail that would alter the neighborhood's scale and character.
- Administration of the Small Business Enterprise (SBE) program through the Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) to provide business support to qualifying small businesses based on size and revenue, ensuring local enterprises in underserved areas can compete for and benefit from public investment opportunities.
- Partnership with the Small Business Development Center at FAMU to provide technical assistance to new and existing small business owners at every phase of the business lifecycle, preparing them to take advantage of economic opportunities generated by new public and private development in their communities.
- Implementation of robust public engagement on all public projects — including stakeholder meetings, online and in-person surveys, and public open houses — to ensure residents in historically underserved areas are informed of and have meaningful input into investments being made in their communities. For private development proposals, public engagement includes direct mailed notifications, legal advertisements, on-site signage, citizen committee review, and public hearings, ensuring that residents have a voice in the development occurring in their neighborhoods.
- Availability of urban area opportunity incentives to attract jobs and private investment to the urban core, directly benefiting residents of historically underserved neighborhoods.

#### *Expand Infrastructure for Access to Basic and Essential Services*

The County has been steadfast in its commitment to infrastructure improvements in historically underserved areas that expand access to basic and essential services. These improvements include paved roads, sidewalks, and traffic lights that connect underserved neighborhoods to the broader community. Through a combination of data evaluation, extensive planning, active community engagement, and strategic investments, the County's efforts have included:

- The establishment of the *Livable Infrastructure for Everyone (L.I.F.E.) funding* through the one-cent infrastructure surtax — a dedicated mechanism designed to direct resources toward communities that have long been overlooked. Through this initiative, Leon County has been able to translate policy commitments into tangible, on-the-ground improvements, including:
  - *Rural Road Safety Stabilization Program* – addressing road conditions in rural corridors to improve safety and accessibility for all residents.
  - *Rural Broadband* – expanding high-speed internet access to underserved rural communities, bridging the digital divide and connecting residents to economic and educational opportunities.
  - *Fire Hydrants* – extending fire suppression infrastructure into rural areas that previously lacked adequate protection, improving public safety for residents historically outside the reach of essential services.
  - *Intersection Street Lighting* – illuminating key intersections in underserved areas to enhance safety for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.
  - *School Bus Lighting* – improving visibility and safety at school bus stops, protecting children in rural communities who were previously without adequate lighting infrastructure.
- Dedication of \$319 million through the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency (Blueprint) on infrastructure investments in high poverty neighborhoods that equates to approximately 62% of Blueprint funding including:
  - More than \$1.5 million for the development of the South City Transit Center and improvements in the South City neighborhood.
  - Approximately \$9 million in Blueprint funding for the Orange-Meridian Placemaking project for construction of a new park and investment in the South City Transit Center.
  - Planned construction of Segment 4 of the Capital Cascades Trail in the amount of \$20 million for stormwater improvements, multi-use trail, and community gathering spaces connecting the Bond, Callen, Liberty Park, Lee Manor, and Providence neighborhoods.
  - Construction of the Magnolia Drive Trail, including underground electric utilities adjacent to the South City neighborhood in the amount of \$23.6 million.
- Adoption of the Family Heir Policy to support intergenerational land use and help families in underserved areas retain and utilize property that might otherwise remain undevelopable under standard regulations.
- Investment in multimodal transportation infrastructure, including new sidewalks and trail connections to the St. Marks Trail, to expand access to affordable non-motorized transportation — including walking, bicycling, and micro-mobility — for residents in historically underserved areas, reducing transportation costs and improving connectivity to employment, services, and recreation.

- Adoption of two Neighborhood First Plans — for the Greater Bond Neighborhood and the Providence Neighborhood — containing infrastructure investment components that expand mobility options, improve public spaces, and strengthen connectivity within and between neighborhoods in historically underserved areas of the incorporated community.

*Protect the Environment for Health, Safety, and Welfare*

For much of the twentieth century, a combination of public policies and private sector activities prioritized development and economic growth that adversely impacted the environment. This included the direct discharge of effluent and untreated wastewater into surface waters, development within designated flood hazard areas, and the systematic filling of floodplains and wetlands. According to the Environmental Law Institute, a research-based organization in Washington, D.C. that focuses on environmental policies, local governments address public policies and private activities that have adversely impacted the environment in their communities through integrated strategies of regular testing and observation, remedial projects, and community engagement. Through rigorous evaluation and monitoring of scientific data, the County has incorporated similar strategies with the adoption policies, plans, and programs aimed at reversing decades of environmental degradation while improving health, safety, and welfare in historically underserved areas. These efforts have resulted in the following:

- Adoption of the Leon County Environmental Management Act (EMA) to establish rigorous local standards for the protection of property and the natural environment that takes into consideration the unique ecology of natural resources within geographic areas. In underserved areas, the County's EMA standards is mitigating flooding, protecting waterbodies, and reducing pollution.
- Adoption of the Primary Spring Zone Protection to safeguard groundwater quality within neighborhoods in Southern Leon County where the Florida Aquifer is most vulnerable while to protecting the water quality and biological health of Wakulla Springs.
- Establishment of Woodville Septic to Sewer Program to convert septic tanks to central sewer system, eliminating decades of groundwater and surface water contamination. The program provides homeowners in the Woodville area up to \$12,000 in grant funding. Thus far, the County has invested \$63 million and expanded sewer services to 709 properties.
- Adoption of the Lake Munson Action Plan to restore Lake Munson to address the legacy of pollution and nutrient loading that degraded the lake over generations with algal blooms, fish kills, and invasive plant growth. The plan includes:
  - Advancement of the \$1.6 million Munson Slough Embankment Repair Project to stabilize eroded banks, reestablish native vegetation, and reduce sediment transport into Lake Munson;
  - An initial drawdown to facilitate sediment drying and nutrient reduction;
  - Periodic routine drawdowns to sustain long-term water quality improvements;
  - Post-Drawdown Water Quality Study from May 2024 through April 2026, including monthly water quality and flow data collection at four monitoring locations;
  - Enhanced water quality monitoring;

- Aerial topographic surveys of the lake bottom; and
- Expanded invasive exotic vegetation and algal bloom management programs.
- Investment in the Lake Henrietta stormwater management facility project to address decades of polluted stormwater runoff that has contributed to the degradation of Lake Munson. This Lake Henrietta Project includes:
  - Construction of Lake Henrietta as a regional stormwater management facility to intercept polluted stormwater runoff upstream of Lake Munson, capturing sediment, floating debris, and nutrient-rich material before it can enter the lake.
  - Investment of over \$1 million in the Lake Henrietta facility, which has captured over 53,000 cubic yards of sediment and debris from flowing downstream into Lake Munson since construction in the early 2000s.
  - Receipt of a \$2 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant for the Lake Henrietta Sediment Removal Project to remove the accumulated sediment the facility was designed to capture, restoring the facility's stormwater treatment capacity and reducing nutrient loading into Lake Munson, with design anticipated in Summer 2026 and construction to follow in 2027.
  - Development of the Anita Davis Preserve at Lake Henrietta, which serves the surrounding community as a public park featuring a walking trail and outdoor recreational amenities, providing dual environmental and quality-of-life benefits to residents in the area.

### *Deliver Critical Social Services to Enhance Quality of Life*

In order to deliver critical social services, the County has adopted and implemented numerous programs consistent with best practices that are data driven, strategically implemented, and community-focused to improve the quality of life for the residents in historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations. The County's recent and ongoing efforts include:

- Hosted the 32304 Summit in March 2026 to highlight the efforts of the County and community partners to reduce poverty in 32304 neighborhoods including Frenchtown and Griffin Heights which has resulted in an 8% decrease in the 32304 poverty rate since 2019 (more than the 2% Countywide reduction during the same period).
- Establishment of the Community Human Services Partnership (CHSP) Promise Zone in partnership with the City which invests \$1.1 million each funding cycle to provide direct services such as food, legal aid, and healthcare to high poverty neighborhoods.
- Hosted nine (9) *Breaking Bread* Dinner series in the neighborhoods with the highest food insecurity rates to identify barriers to food access with more than 200 participants.
- Establishment of the Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Committee (Trusted People Committee) comprised of leaders of the neighborhoods with high food insecurity rates that meet bi-monthly to work with the County and partners to engage and connect residents to available resources in the community.

- Installation of temperature-controlled food lockers available 24/7 in Frenchtown, South City, and Providence neighborhoods that have distributed over 17,000 meals to more than 3,200 residents.
- Strengthened partnership this year (2026) with Farm Share to increase fresh produce distribution capacity in neighborhoods with the highest food insecurity rates which will serve over 1,000 households annually.
- Partnership with the City to implement the City's Neighborhood First Plans to improve the quality of life and spur economic growth in high poverty neighborhoods which has resulted in more than \$1.1 million in County funding for the construction of 16 homes in Bond, Griffin Heights, and Providence.
- Implementation of the Home Rehabilitation and Replacement Program to perform emergency home repairs, rehabilitate projects, and/or replace the homes of low-income families in rural and underserved regions of the County.
- Partnership with the City and Tallahassee Housing Authority to create and provide seed funding for the establishment of the South City Foundation to revitalize the neighborhood through engagement, economic development, healthcare, and affordable housing.
- Establishment of the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Program in partnership with Tallahassee State College and Leon County Schools to create a career path at the Leon County Emergency Medical Services for students at Godby High School which is the primary high school for the 32304-zip code and neighborhoods with the highest poverty rate in the County.

In addition to neighborhood specific programs, initiatives, and investments, the County's communitywide efforts to deliver resources to the most vulnerable populations include:

- Investment of \$1.4 million annually to prevent and reduce homelessness in the community through dedicated funding to the five (5) emergency homeless shelters, street outreach initiatives, and Leon County Sheriff HOST deputies.
- Investment of more than \$1.75 million annually through the Healthcare Services Program (i.e., CareNet) to provide primary care, dental care, mental health services, assistance with prescription medications, and specialty care to low-income, uninsured residents.
- More than \$500,000 annually in County funding to support food pantries, mobile food distributions, senior nutrition services, and child meal programs.
- Distribution of over 4,000 summer meals through the Summer BreakSpot program at the Leon County Main Library and branch locations for kids during summer 2025.
- Expanded partnership with 2-1-1 Big Bend to invest more than \$100,000 annually in the 2-1-1 Lyft program that provides County residents free transportation to medical appointments, grocery stores, and employment interviews.
- Investment of \$5.8 million in direct funding and more than \$198 million in bonding for affordable housing rental projects that have or will build more than 1,200 units within the next 12 to 18 months for low-income households.

- Investment of \$500,000 annually in affordable rental development for very-low and extremely-low income households.
- Secured \$100 million in bonds through the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County (HFA) for the development of future affordable rental housing projects for low-income renters.
- Adoption of the local option property tax exemption to incentivize market rate rental development projects to dedicate units for low-income households at affordable rates.
- Establishment of the Tallahassee-Leon County Community Land Trust (CLT) in partnership with the City and Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium to construct new homes for low-income households that will remain affordable in perpetuity. The County donates properties to the CLT to construct new homes (eight homes completed thus far).
- Partnership with Legal Services of North Florida to provide legal assistance to help low-income families clear title and resolve heirs' property issues.
- Partnership with FAMU Federal Credit Union to establish the SmartSteps Microloan Program to provide financial capital to historically marginalized entrepreneurs to build their businesses. The County allocated \$2.5 million, and to-date SmartSteps has distributed over \$1 million in microloans to 51 small local businesses.
- Partnership with the Capital City Chamber of Commerce (Capital City Chamber) to support the Bank On Tallahassee Initiative which improves access to banks and credit unions for low-income households and helps reduce barriers for households with previous credit issues.

As extensively detailed, the County is actively addressing historic harmful public policy decisions in geographic areas utilizing best practices to adopt policies, implement programs, strengthen partnerships, enhance community engagement, and make significant investment in historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations. The County's efforts are reducing economic inequities; providing public infrastructures essential to health, safety, and welfare; protecting the environment; and delivering critical social services to enhance the quality of life of historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations.

Consistent with the Board's direction, the County's approach addresses historic harmful public policy decisions in geographic areas, complies with state and federal laws and does not jeopardize any state and federal funding requirements. These targeted efforts align with best practices that address historic harmful policy decisions, comply with state and federal laws, and do not jeopardize state and federal funding. Furthermore, these efforts are strategically planned, annually funded by the Board, and carried out on a day-to-day basis by staff, community partners, and key stakeholders. Most importantly, the County's efforts have been successfully implemented within the Board's existing authority and without the need for an amendment to the County Charter.

#### Further Consideration by the Citizen Charter Review Committee

As previously reported to the Committee, there are no county charters in Florida that include language related to disparities from historic public policies. County charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government.

Operational detail or program-specific policy, such as the establishment of programs or targeted resource allocation, is more appropriately implemented through the Board's strategic planning process, budgetary priorities, or policy and ordinance adoption. In fact, the Board currently has the statutory authority and has been active in addressing the long-standing and evolving needs of historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations through policies, programs, and investments – all of which have been done without amending the County Charter.

In light of the Board's existing authority and ongoing actions, a Charter Amendment is not necessary and could be limiting. Specifically, creation of policy and programmatic mandates in the Charter would reduce the County's flexibility to respond to evolving community needs, funding opportunities, and legal requirements, and may not be consistent with the County's data-driven approach to addressing the most pressing issues and investing in time-sensitive needs in the community.

*Potential Amendment to Revise the Preamble of the County Charter*

Should the Committee wish to consider a proposed Charter Amendment, an option for consideration is to amend the Preamble of the County Charter to affirm County's commitment to addressing the needs of historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations in our community. As noted previously, this option was presented to the Board at its May 12th meeting, which the Board did not advance and instead voted to reconvene the Committee to consider whether a Charter Amendment on this issue should be advanced.

As previously reported to the Committee, the Preamble sets forth broad community values which emphasize the importance of home rule, local decision making, and the role of residents in shaping their local government. As an introduction to what the Charter seeks to achieve, the Preamble does not delineate specific structures, authorities, policies, or provision of services for County government. Rather, it is intentionally broad to allow the County to adapt and respond to emerging challenges as determined by the elected County Commission.

The Committee previously recommended to the Board a proposed amendment revising the Charter Preamble to reflect the esteemed humanity of all residents of Leon County. Similarly, the Committee may wish to consider revisions to the Preamble that would reflect the County's long and ongoing efforts to invest and engage in historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations.

As shown in Table #1, the proposed language (underlined) could be incorporated to affirm the County's commitment to addressing the needs of underserved areas and vulnerable populations in our community. The proposed amendment, as drafted below, would not conflict with existing state and federal law.

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Table #1. Proposed Amendment to the Charter Preamble  
(Proposed language underlined)

<p>PREAMBLE</p> <p>We, the citizens of Leon County, Florida, united in the belief that governmental decisions affecting local interests should be made locally, rather than by the State, and that County government should be reflective of the people of the County and should serve them in achieving a more responsive and efficient form of government and in order to empower the people of this County to make changes in their own government, do ordain and establish this Home Rule Charter for Leon County, Florida. <u>We further affirm Leon County’s commitment to addressing the needs of historically underserved areas and vulnerable populations in our community.</u></p>
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In addition, potential ballot language has been prepared for the proposed Charter Amendment as reflected in Table #2 below. The proposed ballot title and ballot language reflected in Table #2 would meet the statutorily required word count limit. The ballot title is limited to 15 words, and the ballot language is limited to 75 words.

Table #2. Proposed Ballot Title and Ballot Language

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Proposed Ballot Title</b></p>
<p>Affirmation of County’s Commitment to Historically Underserved Areas as proposed by Citizen Charter Review Committee</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Proposed Ballot Language</b></p>
<p>Shall the Preamble of the Leon County Home Rule Charter be amended to affirm Leon County’s commitment to addressing the needs of historically underserved geographic areas and vulnerable populations in our community, while preserving the Charter’s existing framework for local self-governance, community values, and citizen empowerment?</p>

The Committee also has the opportunity to propose its own charter amendment as an alternative or any additional direction specific to this issue. Should the Committee not wish to further consider or advance this issue, it may also table the issue at this time.

*Next Steps*

As directed by the Board, this item provides the Committee with information and analysis for consideration in evaluating whether to advance a Charter Amendment addressing historic harmful public policy decisions based on geographical areas in the community rather than race, gender, ethnicity, or any other protected class, that is compliant with state and federal laws, and in a manner that does not jeopardize state or federal funding.

A simple majority is needed to advance a Charter Amendment to the Committee’s three required public hearings to take public input and formally consider the proposed Amendment. The public hearings have been tentatively scheduled to take place June 30, July 16, and July 30, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The Committee may consider and approve further revisions to the proposed Amendment during any of its public hearings. Any proposed Charter Amendments, as recommended by the

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Committee during its public hearings, will be presented for final consideration by the Board at its public hearing on August 17, 2026.

**Options:**

1. Accept this report and take no further action.
2. Advance a proposed Charter Amendment addressing historic harmful public policy decisions for consideration at the Committee's first of three public hearings on June 30, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

**Recommendation:**

Committee direction.