



City of Ann Arbor, Michigan

Proposal A & B

Fact Sheet on the November 3, 2009 Ballot Proposal

Background: Currently, the Ann Arbor City Charter provides in Sections 7.3(d) and 7.4(a)(1) that approved changes to city code or notices of proposed zoning amendments must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city. State law defines “newspapers of general circulation” as those that have been in print for a minimum of one year with paid subscribers and a 25 percent content-to-advertising ratio. With the closing of the *Ann Arbor News*, the City is faced with finding alternative means of informing the public. The language of the City Charter did not anticipate a time when there was no daily newspaper serving our community.

Passage of Proposal A will allow for city staff to publish approved ordinances within 10 days after enactment using one of the following two methods: [Proposed changes underlined]

1. The full text in a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Ann Arbor or by posting to the City’s website or by any other means or method determined by City Council appropriate to properly inform the general public in matters of municipal concerns, or
2. In cases of ordinances over 500 hundred words in length, a digest, summary or statement of the purpose of the ordinance, approved by the Council, may be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Ann Arbor or by posting to the City’s website or by any other means or methods determined by City Council appropriate to properly inform the general public in matters of municipal concerns, including with such publication, a notice that printed copies of the full text of the ordinance are available for inspection by, and distribution to, the public, at the office of the City Clerk. If Method (2) is used, then printed copies shall promptly be so made available, as stated in such notice.

Passage of Proposal B will allow for city staff to publish notice of proposed zoning amendments using the following method: [Proposed changes underlined]

1. A zoning ordinance or an amendment or revision thereof shall be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the City or any other media otherwise permitted by law, and opportunity for a public hearing allowed thereon before final action is taken by the Council.

Appearing on the City of Ann Arbor’s November 3, 2009 ballot will be the following proposals.

PROPOSAL A

ANN ARBOR CITY CHARTER AMENDMENT

Shall Sections 7.4(a) (1) and (2) of the Ann Arbor City Charter be amended to permit the current requirement of newspaper publication of City ordinances to be satisfied also by posting to the City website, or by any media determined appropriate to inform the general public by City Council?

___ Yes ___ No

PROPOSAL B

ANN ARBOR CITY CHARTER AMENDMENT

Shall Section 7.3(d) of the Ann Arbor City Charter which currently requires the newspaper publication of a proposed zoning ordinance or amendment be amended to permit this publication requirement to be satisfied by publication in any other media otherwise permitted by law?

___ Yes ___ No



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1. Why are these charter amendments being proposed?

Currently, the Ann Arbor City Charter provides in Sections 7.3(d) and 7.4(a)(1) that approved changes to city code or notices of proposed zoning amendments must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city. State law defines “newspapers of general circulation” as those that have been in print for a minimum of one year with paid subscribers and a 25 percent content-to-advertising ratio. Due to the closing of the *Ann Arbor News*, at this time the *Washtenaw Legal News* is the only qualified newspaper of general circulation in the City of Ann Arbor. The original intent of the City Charter was to provide notice of Council actions by the most effective means available. Methods of communication and forms of media have altered materially since the adoption of these provisions and similar provisions in State law.

2. If approved, what will change?

Passage of these proposals will allow city staff to publish approved ordinances or notices by posting to the city’s website or by any other means or method determined by City Council. With the newspaper industry in a state of change, the city is trying to find and utilize other available methods to assure Ann Arbor residents are adequately informed.

3. What won’t change?

Current state law requires the publishing of notices of proposed zoning amendments in a newspaper of general circulation. These changes to the City Charter will not affect the publication of proposed zoning amendments. In addition, the city will certainly continue to provide written notice to property owners in the vicinity of the proposed rezoning.

4. If these amendments pass how will I learn about newly enacted ordinances?

Ordinances may be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Ann Arbor or by posting to the City’s website or by any other means or method determined by City Council to properly inform the public. With the newspaper industry in a state of change, the city wants to ensure that our residents are notified of zoning changes using the most effective communication means available.

5. Who do I contact if I have questions about the November 3 election?

Please contact the City Clerk’s Office (734) 794-6140 or visit www.a2gov.org/elections.