

## *Anderson County Charter Commission*

### **Understanding the Process and Significance of Changing the Anderson County Form of Government**

#### **Process**

The Tennessee constitution and subsequent legislation lay the ground for changing the government of a county from its constitutional form to a charter form, also known as home-rule.

To make this change in Anderson County three things must happen:

A charter commission must be created. There are several ways that this can happen, and the one selected was by the petition of registered voters whose number must at least equal to 10% of the total number of votes cast in the county in the last governor's race. In Anderson County 17,760 votes were cast for governor; therefore, a minimum of 1776 signatures were required, and obtained, on the petition.

The Election of the Charter Commission Members. The election for the candidates must be held 75 days or more after the resolution becomes effective. The charter commissioners are elected from the same districts and in the same manner as the county commissioners. The cost of the election is paid out of county funds. In Anderson County, the charter commission election is concurrent with the General election on November 8 and Anderson County will incur no cost.

The elected charter commissioners will set a budget and they may incur expenses for administrative costs up to a maximum of \$50,000. These expenses will be paid by Anderson County.

Anderson County voters must approve, via a referendum, any changes recommended by the charter commission. The referendum will be done concurrently with the August 2018 election to avoid additional costs to the county. This will be a "for" or "against" vote.

#### **Significance**

Any new charter adopted will abolish and replace the current Anderson County government. This gives the Anderson County charter commissioners broad authority to reorganize and overhaul the Anderson County government, except the judiciary and school systems. Some of the statutory changes that can be made include:

- Size, method of election, qualifications for holding office, method of removal, and procedures, including term limits, of County Commissioners.
- Form of government, including separation of legislative and executive functions between the commissioners and mayor.
- Assignment of executive responsibilities to the elected mayor.

- Reorganization of administrative departments, agencies, boards, and commissions of the county government.
- Development of a civil service system including employees' retirement and pension systems.
- The duties of the constitutional officers may be transferred to another county office, as long as the duty is performed. The constitutional officers for all Tennessee counties are county executive, sheriff, trustee, register of deeds, county clerk, and assessor of property.

Since the general government of Anderson County can be opened for a complete overhaul, the charter commissioners studying any change have considerable influence on Anderson County governance for many years to come. The challenges that they face will include navigating the individual differences among members of the charter commission; becoming well versed in the Tennessee Constitution and statutory law that govern charter commissions; and weighing the pros and cons of the two Tennessee counties that currently have home rule governance.

Voters should be aware of the significant scope of responsibilities and power that this charter commission will have over the way Anderson County will be governed. As always, the League encourages all voters to study the issues and candidates, and to be informed voters.

Please see [www.lwvoakridge.org](http://www.lwvoakridge.org) for more information. This will include articles by the County Technical Assistance Service and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service.

*~Mary Ann Reeves*