

Home Rule Study Commissioner Job Description

Study Commission members should include individuals with legal, financial, and political expertise as it relates to local government as well as common sense, practical judgment, and enthusiasm.

The commissioners must be aware their work is likely to have a long-term influence on the affairs of their community. They are charged with the task of comprehensively reviewing, studying, and analyzing the governmental structure for their own community and examining ways that it can more efficiently and effectively deliver services.

- Commissioners must be registered voters in the City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
- There will be nine commission members if the study commission is approved.

Task 1: Study

The first substantive task of the government study commission is a thorough review of the structure and operation of the existing form of government. Each commissioner must gain familiarity with the current administrative organization and methods of operation. The initial fact-finding process is important, for the commissioners should not begin their deliberations with any preconceived notions. They should neither support change for the sake of change nor oppose change simply because it is change. The commissioners must base their deliberations on the information they gather, and the initial fact-finding process is an important stage in their work. Part of the information gathering is examining alternative approaches used in other areas or new structural proposals to meet emerging needs.

Task 2: Deliberation

The Home Rule Law specifies the kinds of questions the study commissioners ought to ask as they collect information on the existing form of government. The commission is charged with comparing the municipality's government with other forms available under law. The commission has the duty to judge whether or not the municipality's government could be strengthened and made more clearly responsible or accountable to the people, or whether its operation could become more economical or efficient under a changed form of government. Definition of these terms, and thus definition of their charge, is left to the members of each commission. Local values will determine the definition of a strong, responsible, accountable, economical and efficient local government.

In meeting this responsibility, the commission must look for structural and operational weaknesses and review those areas where improvement appears desirable. In this process, the commission can look to other municipalities whose experiences may provide some useful guides. In all cases, the commission must try to determine the kind of government which will best suit the unique needs of their own community. It must balance the desirability of change against the advantages of continuity and familiarity.

Task 3: Recommendation

If by a majority vote, the Home Rule Study Commission determines that a different form of government would strengthen the City, then members would begin the process of drafting a Home Rule Charter. Ultimately, this charter is presented to the electorate as a referendum.

The first two tasks generally take 6-9 months, followed by the development of a home rule charter *if* recommended. By law, the process must be completed within 18 months. It can be completed in less time, but not more.

Key Tasks & Timeline

City Council votes on whether to place the home rule ballot measure on the ballot for the May 16, 2023, election: February 6, 2023.

Petition Circulating: February 14 – March 7, 2023

- Petitions will be available starting on February 14, 2023.
- Potential Commissioners may pick up petition forms at County Election Office, 150 N. Queen St.
- Potential Commissioners need 200 signatures of registered voters in the City of Lancaster to get on the ballot.
- Individuals can only sign petitions for 9 potential study commission members.
- The City of Lancaster will hold four neighborhood home rule presentations and petition signing events, dates to be announced. *All potential commission members are welcome.*
- Signatures must be notarized before submission. The City of Lancaster will host a notarizing event on March 5 at City Hall to assist in notarization. *All potential commission members are welcome.*

Petitions must be submitted to the County Election Office by March 7, 2023.

If Council approves the home rule ballot measure to take place on the May 16, 2023, municipal primary, the Study Commission members will be selected on the same day. City of Lancaster voters will select their preferred commission members.