



## Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

### MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council  
FROM: Mayor Miro Weinberger  
DATE: August 6, 2020  
RE: Veto of Charter Change re: Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

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Pursuant to Article 18 – Section 46 of the Burlington City Charter, which authorizes the mayor to veto any resolution of the City Council, I am returning the Resolution “Vetoing July 13 Resolution: Placing Question on Ballot re: Charter Change re: Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for Mayor, City Councilors, and School Commissioners,” passed at the Council’s July 13 meeting, to you unsigned and providing you my written objections to it.

I do not take this action lightly. This is the first time in more than eight years as mayor that I am vetoing a City Council action. I am issuing this veto today because the Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) resolution is problematic in multiple respects. I object to the timing, avoidable expense, and substance of the resolution. I expand on each of these concerns below.

**A November RCV charter change vote would also consume considerable municipal resources that have already been committed to other urgent concerns.** On June 30, at its meeting immediately before July 13, the City Council passed a historically constrained budget that assumed no fall local election and had, as a guiding principle, that the City would take on no new initiatives outside of three critical areas: the pandemic response, racial justice, and the climate emergency. Adding a fall election violates this principle and would consume considerable resources, specifically, an approximately \$45,000 budget amendment given the extensive additional resources required to safely conduct an election during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**There is no reason to incur the significant additional expense and staff burden of a special November local election because there is already a budgeted local election planned for March that would achieve the exact same implementation schedule of this charter change if it is approved.** Whether the public vote is in November or March of next year, if approved by the voters, the legislature, and the Governor, the proposed charter change would first alter mayoral elections in 2024. The earliest that school board and city council elections would be conducted under the new system would be 2022. It is wasteful to conduct a special election when there is already a local election planned that would achieve the exact same substantive outcomes.

**An RCV Charter Change this November will divide and distract us at a time when it is critical that the community stay focused on and united in our pandemic response, the multiple other Council-declared emergencies, and arguably the most important federal election in the country’s history.** RCV is a polarizing and divisive issue in this community that has been contested hotly twice previously in this community in the last 15 years. If the item is placed on the November ballot there will again be an extensive, passionate debate about the merits of RCV. Those debates will consume community attention and resources at a moment in which those finite resources are urgently needed elsewhere.