

Cara J. Blount

Age: 60

Education: University of Detroit, 1974, B.A.; Wayne State University, 1999, M.S.

Felony Convictions: None

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What do you consider to be your relevant experience that qualifies you to be a Charter Commissioner?

I was a law enforcement officer for more than 28 years and rose through the ranks to deputy chief thus I understand the importance of clear, concise policy language. Working for a para-military organization that operated on structure and form, I know how important the structure of an organization is to its success or failure. I learned the advantages of teamwork, as both a leader and a team member and I learned the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies and developing relationships with community members throughout the city and surrounding area. I have chaired boards tasked with formulating policy and I am an educator with a Bachelors and a Masters degree. I am the president of the Board of Directors of a non-profit agency and the president of our neighborhood homeowners' association.

How do you feel about Detroit's current "strong mayor" system of government?

I believe our strong mayor system of government generally works well. While recent events have shown that voters must be more deliberative in our selection of our elected leaders, in a large city like Detroit, the strong mayor form will more easily facilitate policy formation and implementation and provide strong political and administrative leadership for the city. Unfortunately, Detroit politics has deteriorated to the point that the system of checks and balances has all but disappeared.

How do you think we should change the City Charter to improve the Ethics and Accountability of our elected and appointed city officials?

Changing the charter will not 'improve' the ethics of an individual who is unethical or borders on unethical. Our first responsibility is to elect officials that demonstrate and have a record of ethical behavior. That requires that the electorate investigate the candidates, ask pertinent questions requiring thoughtful answers from the candidates and hold elected officials to an unwavering standard of ethics, honesty and integrity.

We can however, form an Ethics provision that provides appropriate penalties, up to removal from office, when an investigation of an elected or appointed official demonstrates improper behavior, i.e., criminal conduct, a conflict of interest, corrupt behavior, or a violation of clear cut standards.

Do you favor electing City Council by districts? If NO - Why? If YES -What kind of district structure do you foresee?

I favor a 7 member council with five (5) districts and two at-large seats with council members empowered with enough authority to be effective in their role as the arbiter of the checks and balances. The current system of at-large voting has proven to be inadequate to meet the needs of all our citizens. Council members have become unresponsive to the people they are elected to serve, accountability is lacking and representation is deficient. District elections will help ensure that council is representative of the electorate and provide a more participatory form of government. This system will require modifications in the charter that will change the balance of power between the council and the mayor. Electing council by districts and giving council more power will give the people more control over the election process, provide better representation for ALL Detroiters, and provide an effective way to hold our city leaders accountable.

What should be the guiding principles under which Charter Commission should identify, deliberate, and address issues?

The guiding impetus of charter revision is the people. With input from them, our goal should be to draft a charter that is clear and concise yet holds elected and appointed officials to standards that are ethical, honest and promote accountability. Using input from citizens, the commission can create a document that can be a guide for our city and our leadership. In the end, Detroit citizens will ultimately decide what the Detroit Charter looks like, thus, citizen input should guide the review and revision process. This will require town hall meetings, specific subject-matter meetings, and information gathering in many other forms.