Agenda **Regular Meeting of the Charter Review Commission**
June 30, 2026 at 5:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall
200 Lincoln Avenue

Procedures for Charter Review Commission Meeting

Viewing: *If the relevant technology is available to record the meeting in City Hall*, members of the public may stream the meeting live on the City of Santa Fe's YouTube channel. The YouTube live stream can be accessed from most smartphones, tablets, or computers.

The video recording*, if created,* of this and all past meetings of the Governing Body will also remain available for viewing at any time on the City's YouTube channel. Staff is available to help members of the public access pre-recorded Governing Body meetings online at any time during normal business hours. Please call 955-6521 for assistance.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
   a. Request for Approval of the May 28, 2026 Charter Review Commission Meeting Minutes. (Xavier Vigil, Assistant City Clerk; xivigil@santafenm.gov)
5. Presentations
6. Public Comment
7. Discussion and Possible Action Items
   a. Governance Subcommittee (Commissioner Pam Ray)
   b. Strategic Planning and Budget Subcommittee (Commissioner Brandon Vella)
   c. Outreach Subcommittee (Commissioner Maria Perez)
8. Matters from Staff
9. Matters from the Committee
10. Matters from the Chair

11. Next Meeting: July 16, 2026, Santa Fe Community Convention Center

12. Adjourn

Persons with disabilities in need of accommodations, contact the City Clerk's office at 955-6521, five (5) working days prior to meeting date.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
MAY 28, 2026, 5:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 200 LINCOLN AVENUE
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Charter Review Commission was called to order on May 28, 2026, at 5:12 pm, by Lilliemae Ortiz, Chair, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 200 Lincoln Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT
Commissioner Brandon Vella
Commissioner Maria Perez
Commissioner Kendal Chavez
Commissioner Pamela Ray, virtually
Commissioner Renee Villarreal
Commissioner John Paul Granillo
Commissioner Roberta Duran
Commissioner Rod Gould
Commissioner Lilliemae Ortiz

MEMBERS ABSENT
Commissioner Rod Gould, excused

OTHERS PRESENT
Xavier Vigil, Assistant City Clerk
Jerica Simmons, Project Administrator

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION A motion was made by Commissioner Villarreal, seconded by Commissioner Vella, to approve the agenda as presented.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 30, 2026, CHARTER

REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Ortiz noted that on page 4, she recommended two subcommittees, not three. She recommended Research and Outreach.

Chair Ortiz said on page 4, item C it should say "now", on page 5, first paragraph it should say "to" and that her first name is all one word.

MOTION A motion was made by Councilor Villarreal, seconded by Councilor Granillo, to approve the minutes as amended.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

5. PRESENTATIONS

A. CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION SUBJECT MATTER SCOPE

Chair Ortiz stated that Mr. Martinez, City Attorney, provided us with a memo as to the subject matter topics.

Mr. Martinez said it is generally the position of the City Attorney that the Resolution identifies that the primary focus of the Charter Commission's duties are the topics assigned by the Governing Body as stated in the Resolution. It also states that additional topics raised by the public can be considered. The focus and scope are meant to be the six topics identified by the Governing Body in the Resolution.

Chair Ortiz thanked Mr. Martinez and said this gives us a clearer path forward. The Resolution also states that no less than two staff - one for research and one for drafting - will be identified for the Commission by the City Manager.

Mr. Martinez said the direction is clear. He will meet with the City Manager to identify those staff members and will get back to the Commission.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

A. CHARTER REVIEW PROCESS

Chair Ortiz stated that in the meeting materials, you will find a framework she developed for discussion today that includes tentative time lines to help staff to begin to work on dates for the public meetings. Chair Ortiz summarized each section of the framework.

There was discussion around the flexibility of the dates and draft framework, prioritization of topics, doing a series of presentations with community organizations, going to organizations and groups to obtain input, clarification with the City Attorney as to the ability of the Commission to do additional outreach, additional meeting availability, opportunities for the public to send in topics through the website and examples from other cities.

Chair Ortiz said we have seven meeting dates tentatively scheduled. All will begin at 6:00 pm. She would like to know which Commissioners will not be able to attend each meeting.

The Commissioners responded as follows:

July 15th, Commissioners Chavez and Perez will not be able to attend
July 23rd, Commissioners Ray and Vella will not be able to attend
August 6th, Commissioner Chavez will not be able to attend
August 17th, Commissioner Perez will not be able to attend
August 20th, Commissioner Chavez will not be able to attend
October 1st, Commissioner Villarreal will not be able to attend
October 15th, Commissioner Villarreal will not be able to attend

Chair Ortiz stated that this seems workable as there will be attendance from the Commission at all of the meetings. She would like to take action on this with the inclusion that additional meetings may be added.

MOTION A motion was made by Commissioner Perez, seconded by Commissioner Vella, to approve the framework and meeting schedule with the inclusion that additional meetings may be added.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

B. CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION CADENCE FORMAT FOR PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS

Ms. Simmons said in your packet is the proposal of staff for public input meetings at a minimum. They will be two hour meetings. We are still working on sites for some of the Districts.

Ms. Simmons spoke in general about the accessibility of the locations proposed, including the Convention Center, the Southside Library, the Chavez Center and the theater at Midtown. She addressed the possibility of having hybrid meetings as well.

There was discussion around the possibility of sites at the public schools and the administrative offices of the public schools, community centers, senior centers and Vital Spaces.

Chair Ortiz said she thought having a hybrid meeting in each District would be a good goal to work on.

There was discussion around the possibility of daytime and weekend public input meetings, partnerships with organizations, and venue rental rates.

Chair Ortiz said all of this hinges on the determination from the City Attorney as to what is within our purview.

C. PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN FOR 2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Ms. Simmons said this campaign will go through the City of Santa Fe Communication Department. We can do a survey and need scripts approved by the Commission as to what you would like communicated to the public in the form of bullet points, education, videos with the language representative of the Commission and for social media. The Communication Department will build a plan for that. They need to know the information to put out to the public from the Commission. They will also be working with the Legislative team.

Mr. Vigil said we are working on the website and will have it up and going soon for the Commission.

Ms. Simmons asked for flexibility in the start time of the meetings and the dates to help her in locating sites for the public input sessions.

Chair Ortiz noted that the dates have been discussed and voted on. We would like to move forward with the structure discussed as much as possible.

After discussion, Chair Ortiz said some flexibility can be used as to possible daytime and/or weekend meetings. Changes will need to be presented to the Commission for consideration.

D. 2026 CHARTER COMMISSION ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

Commissioner Perez presented a draft form to be used to submit topics from the public and to prioritize topics.

There was discussion around making the form more user friendly, clarity about the intended use of the form, making the form bi-lingual, staff reformatting the form, re-formatting the form for public use, using the document as a screening tool and having a separate form on the website for public input.

It was decided that two forms are needed. Staff will work with the Commission to finalize the forms and add the public input form to the website.

E. FORMATION OF SUBCOMMITTEES

Chair Ortiz said we need to look at what subcommittees we need and the tasks of each subcommittee.

There was discussion around what subcommittees are needed and what they will be charged with, and the quorum limitations.

It was decided that the following subcommittees would be formed and the charge of each subcommittee as follows:

1.	Governance Subcommittee :	Separation of Powers Role of the Mayor Appointments and Oversight
2.	Planning Subcommittee:	Budget Authority Strategic Planning Elections and Vacancies
3.	Communications Subcommittee:	Publicity Design of Public Input Meetings Evaluation

Chair Ortiz said the Subcommittees will meet between the meetings of the Commission and the lead for each Subcommittee will present an update to the full Commission at the regular meetings.

The following Commissioners volunteered to serve on the Subcommittees as follows:

1.	Governance:	Villarreal Perez Ray Gould (added in his absence)
3.	Planning	Vella Duran Chavez Ortiz
4.	Communications	Vella Perez

Granillo
Villarreal

Chair Ortiz asked each group to meet briefly after the meeting to determine the lead Commissioner for each group.

Mr. Vigil said he will send a list of the Commission members and their contact information to each Commissioner.

F. REVIEW OF 2023 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Chair Ortiz stated in the meeting packet is a matrix of what the previous Commission did. Three of the matters they considered are on our Resolution. You may want to review the information.

7. MATTERS FROM STAFF

None.

8. MATTERS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Commissioners Villarreal and Perez thanked Chair Ortiz for her work to get the Commission to this point and staff for their work.

9. MATTERS FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Ortiz said she appreciates the expertise on this Commission and the willingness to share.

10. NEXT MEETING: JUNE 25, 2026

11. ADJOURN

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm.

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Lilliemae Ortiz, Chair

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Elizabeth Martin, Stenographer

2026 Charter Review Commission

Report of the Governance Committee

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

I. Governance Committee meetings

A. Two meetings were held since last full Commission meeting: Saturday, June 6 and Friday, June 19.

B. Tasks were assigned to look into 1) separation of powers ; 2) the role of the mayor; and 3) shared involvement of the council and the mayor hiring and firing of administrative staff and degree of shared oversight of administrative staff. The members of the committee are: Renee Villareal; Maria Perez; Rod Gould; Pam Ray.

C. Research was to focus on the question:
"How should power be distributed between and shared by the mayor and the council to incentivize efficiency in the way the City as a whole responds to the needs of and provides services to the community."

D. The current status is:
1. The mayor has a vote only in cases of a council tie;
2. The mayor has the authority to hire and fire the city manager, city clerk and city attorney with confirmation by the city council, the council can suspend or dismiss a city manager, city clerk or city attorney; and
3. The mayor has responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the city, and assuring that the laws of the city are implemented and adhered to.

E. The National Civic League's Model City Charter, 9th edition, proposes that the best practice is to have a council-city manager form of city government. More than 3,500 cities in the US have this form of government, and it is considered to be the most popular form of city government. Commissioner Gould provided the following comments in his May 28th letter to the Commission:
"In council-manager forms of government, the mayor and council set the direction for the city and adopt budgets, ordinances and resolutions and hire the city manager, the city attorney and the city clerk. The city manager manages the administration of the city, carrying out the will of the majority of the council with effectiveness, efficiency and equity. The city manager serves at the pleasure of the mayor and city council and can be dismissed at any time for any reason by a vote of the majority."

Commissioner Gould adds that in this form of government, the city manager is a professional manager with experience managing public institutions such as a city, a skill that neither mayors nor councilors have to bring with them into their offices. The administration of the city's business is therefore removed from politics of the city.

F. A subcommittee scheduled and held a conversation with two Las Cruces city council members, as Las Cruces has a council-city manager form of government. The councilors expressed some challenges with their form of government, especially around the issues of who is allowed to introduce legislation (not the council members) and frustration with restrictions on councilors having conversations with colleagues outside of a formal public council meeting. But regarding the council-manager form of government, these councilors felt it worked well in their jurisdiction. That is because the city manager is a professional manager who is able to implement the governing body's priorities and tend to the culture and efficiencies of the city's departments and staff.

G. The benefits of this form of government would be:
    1. Reduced disruption of the administrative leadership of the city when a new mayor is elected. The city manager would continue to exert administrative authority during transition periods. Department heads would be employed by the city manager and remain in their positions during a political transition.
    2. Administration is removed, in theory, from the influence of politics and is performed by a knowledgeable professional.
    3. A professional city manager should provide more efficient management of city administrative duties.
    4. The entire council will be involved in the selection of the most qualified city manager candidate and will therefore feel they are responsible for the success of the chosen candidate.
    5. The city manager would report to the entire city council, which can then proceed with making policy for the city based on the information they receive from the reports of the city manager.
    6. The city manager would serve at the pleasure of the city council and could be terminated if not providing the quality of management required by the council. Possible removal would be by a simple majority vote of the city council.

H. The meeting on June 19th consisted of reports from committee members regarding contacts they had agreed to make.
    1. Commissioners Villareal and Perez spoke to City Councilors in Las Cruces to find out how their Council-Mayor-City Manager system works and how satisfactory it is.
    2. There seemed to be strong support for the council – City Manager government because it provided professional management, protected and sustained staff expertise and did provide insulation from political volatility. They noted an example of the success of the Council - City Manager form of administration from the view point of these Council members, was a recent opportunity for the

council to raise an issue that the mayor was avoiding placing on the agenda of the Council and to pass it successfully.

3. The concerns raised were:
    a. the city manager was not accountable to all city councilors;
    b. success of the administration was dependent on the quality of the city manager;
    c. the city manager was not elected by the voters yet exercises significant authority; and
    d. accountability is through action of the city council, which hires and fires the city manager thus leaving limited checks and balances on activities of the city manager or control of the manager's authority and power.

I. The committee also sought opinions that were in support of the strong executive mayor form of governance. Information from the US Conference of Mayors, the Nation League of Cities and Common Cause did not specifically endorse the strong executive mayor but they did provide some insight into why communities prefer that form of governance.

J. Commissioner Gould summarized the research he had found that discussed a strong mayor form of government. He searched the websites of the National Civic League and the US Conference of Mayors. He was unable to find a study that compared the strong executive mayor form of governance with the council – city manager form of governance and gave a definitive assessment of which form might be better. However, there were some pros and cons to a strong mayor form of governance:
    1. Pro - A strong executive mayor is thought to be more accountable to the voters, since the mayor is elected and may be subject to recall. The mayor would focus on the day-to-day operation of the city government as a whole and because a mayor is elected at at large, the mayor is not concerned with the demands of a single district constituency but responds to the needs of the entire city;
    2. Pro - The department heads and the city manager, clerk and attorney are generally at-will employees of the city and the mayor can hire and fire them. The mayor determines the qualifications that best fit the needs and budget of the city;
    3. Pro - Mayors are thought to be more in touch with the interests and concerns of all of the city's voters regarding local issues.
    4. Con – Politics can drive many decisions of a mayor because he must run for reelection.
    5. There could be a loss of institutional knowledge and project momentum when the mayor changes.

K. Other research efforts are ongoing. Discussions with former Mayor Coss and the New Mexico Municipal League are planned.

L. Use of consensus for decision making was discussed.

Budget & Planning Subcommittee
Update to Commissioners
Current State Research

Budget and Planning Subcommittee Summary

The subcommittee focused on three interconnected areas within the City Charter: strategic planning, the budget process, and council vacancies. Across all topics, members emphasized the need for clearer alignment between long-term priorities, decision-making authority, and public accountability. At this stage, we have focused on developing a clear picture of the current state and will pivot to researching paths forward in our next subcommittee meetings.

1. Strategic Planning

The subcommittee reached consensus that the City of Santa Fe would benefit from adopting a formal strategic planning process.

- The current approach relies heavily on the annual budget as the City's primary expression of priorities.
- The subcommittee recommends shifting to a model where a **3–5 year strategic plan establishes goals first**, with annual budgets aligned to those goals.
- There is interest in researching **peer cities with similar size, demographics, and cultural context** to identify best practices.

This represents a potential structural shift in how the City defines and executes priorities, rather than a procedural adjustment. We've agreed that capacity may well be a core obstacle to implementing a new, heavy lift for city and government participants.

2. Budget Process

The subcommittee agreed that the current budget process functions as the City's de facto strategic framework.

- Funding decisions currently serve as the primary mechanism for setting priorities.
- The subcommittee did not yet evaluate the detailed mechanics of the existing process.

There is strong alignment in continuing to implement **performance-based budgeting**, including:

- Public-facing performance metrics tied to spending
- Clearer accountability for outcomes tied to budget allocations

It was also noted that the upcoming fiscal year (July '26-June '27) will feature new budget motions which may allow the commission to focus on recommendations related specifically to the implementation of a strategic plan, though this is still to be determined.

Members noted that **strategic planning and budgeting are tightly interdependent**, and that overlap with the Governance Subcommittee's work is expected, particularly where authority and accountability structures are involved.

3. Elections and Council Vacancies

The subcommittee divided this topic into distinct scenarios and made the following determinations:

- **Councilor Running for Mayor**
  The subcommittee agreed to follow prior CRC precedent and **not pursue changes** requiring councilors to resign when running for mayor.

- **Councilor Elected as Mayor (Recent Case Example)**
  The Charter currently allows the Mayor to appoint a replacement, but the process lacks specificity.
- Several alternative approaches were discussed:
  - Retain mayoral appointment authority but define a clearer process
  - Shift to council approval or selection
  - Appoint the most recent runner-up from the district election
  - Hold a special election
- This raises a **separation of powers question**, specifically in that the Mayor will have influence over the council. We agreed that coordination with the Governance Subcommittee is necessary.
- **Other Vacancy Scenarios**
  The subcommittee acknowledged that vacancies may arise under different circumstances but did not reach conclusions on:
  - Whether all vacancy types should be handled uniformly
  - How to address cases without a recent election
  - How to manage potentially long interim appointments (e.g., more than two years)

Outreach Subcommittee
Update to Commissioners
Timeline and Milestones (to date)

Summary

Partner Outreach

- Target partners have been identified
- Partnership tiers and messaging have been set
- Commissioners have begun reaching out to potential partner orgs

Public Outreach

- Website still pending update
- July 2nd is first comms date
- Each comms package will include call(s) to action, education nugget, and upcoming public input meetings
- Touchpoints will be Wednesdays, weekly

Input Session Design

- A design proposal is in work and a draft should be included in this packet.

Update

Structure

The CRC Outreach Subcommittee has organized 3 workstreams:
- Partnerships
- Public Outreach (marketing and community input form)
- Public Input Meeting Design

Partnerships

Subcommittee members compiled a list of community organizations and businesses whose advocacy and networks would support turnout to our public meetings. We have almost 30 organizations identified and will be reaching out to request their support which has been proposed as 3 tiers:
- <u>Basic Partner</u>
    - Send emails to your member or partner list with information about upcoming community listening sessions.
- <u>Supporting Partner</u>
    - The above, PLUS Host Commissioners for a learning session about the city and its Charter at one of your member meetings.
- <u>Building Partner</u>
    - The above, PLUS Encourage and support 2-4 members of your organization to attend at least 2 community outreach meetings in their district July thru October

These partnerships should at least provide extra reach for our messaging, and at most provide interested and informed participants to the public input meetings.

Public Outreach

There are a few dimensions to this workstream, namely

- CRC webpage as a source of truth
- Public input form that will live on the website
- Copy and media to be used in marketing communications

The webpage should be pointed to at every opportunity as it will have our names, the resolution (what's in scope) and additional evergreen information for folks to reference.

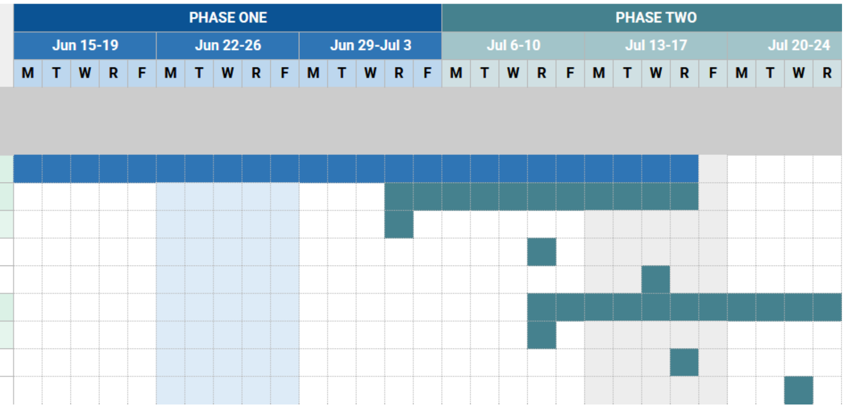
The public input form will live on this page. We have some open questions for commissioners regarding

- Anonymity - should we allow anonymous submissions at the risk of allowing individuals to disproportionately represent their perspectives?
- Data - who on the commission should have access to the submissions (e.g., subcommittee or whole commission)?

Finally, the copy and media will be used on a weekly basis along with reminders of upcoming input sessions. This calendar and content is in work. The first communication will go out July 2nd - 2 weeks before the first session.

Below is an example of how communications will align with input meetings:

WBS NUMBER	TASK TITLE	TASK OWNER	START DATE	DUE DATE	DURATION	PCT OF TASK COMPLETE
1	**General Engagement**					
2	**Public Input Sessions**					
2	Session Design	Perez	6/8/26	7/16/26	38	22%
2.1	Session 1 (D1)		7/2/26	7/16/26	14	22%
2.1.1	Session 1 (D1) - First Comm	Vella	7/1/26	7/2/26	1	16%
2.1.2	Session 1 (D1) - Second Comm	Vella	7/8/26	7/9/26	1	0%
2.1.3	Session 1 (D1) - Third Comm	Vella	7/14/26	7/15/26	1	0%
2.2	Session 2 (D?)		7/2/26	7/16/26	14	22%
2.2.1	Session 2 (D?) - First Comm	Vella	7/1/26	7/2/26	1	16%
2.2.2	Session 2 (D?) - Second Comm	Vella	7/8/26	7/9/26	1	0%
2.2.3	Session 2 (D?) - Third Comm	Vella	7/14/26	7/15/26	1	0%



Public Input Meeting Design

A draft of the proposed design is in work. Overarching goals are to include an education component and an interactive component.

City of Santa Fe Charter Review Commission
Outreach Subcommittee
Proposed Community Input Plan
6/25/2026

The Commission's Outreach Subcommittee proposes that the two rounds of community listening sessions that the Commission is doing between July and November of 2026 be organized along two main themes:

1st Round of Listening Sessions (120 mins)

THEME: Your Experience With the City's Government.

Goal 1: To provide information (via a slide presentation) to the residents about what our city government does, as per the Charter.
Goal 2: To get feedback from the participants regarding their experience with the City's government (via small group discussions, large group discussions, and the utilization of popular education tools).

Example questions:

1. What has been your experience with our City government, including departments and
offices, and has the City been responsive to your needs?
2. What makes you and your community feel helped or heard by our City government?
3. What are some things about this City and community that make Santa Fe feel like a good place to live?
4. What are some things about this City and community that get in the way of us becoming a good place to live?

2nd Round of Listening Sessions (120 mins)

THEME: How should our government work?

Goal 1: To provide information (via a slide presentation) to the residents about how our City government is organized, as per the Charter. To include basic information regarding the issues the commission is looking at: separation of powers, budget, strategic plan.
Goal 2: To get feedback from the participants regarding their thoughts about the issues the commission is looking at (via small group discussions, large group discussions, and the utilization of popular education tools).

Example questions:

1. Is it important that power is distributed as equally as possible among elected leaders or is it better that a single leader have more power?
2. Who would you prefer to hold accountable for making sure the City's priorities and policies are being carried out: the Mayor, the Council, a City Manager?
3. What are important key components in any organization to ensure efficiency and transparency?
4. Is it important for our city to have a Strategic Plan?

Dear Community Partner,

We are reaching out to you as members of the City Charter Review Commission.
The City's Charter is like the City constitution; it defines how our city government works and serves the residents. We have been brought to work together for the next year, focusing on the following key questions: :

- ★ How should power be shared between the mayor and the councilors?
- ★ Who should have hiring and firing power over the City Attorney, City Manager, and City Clerk?
- ★ Should councilors be required to vacate their council seat in order to run for mayor?
- ★ Who should be in charge of preparing the city's budget, and what should that process be?
- ★ Should the city have a Strategic Plan?

We take this responsibility seriously and are committed to engaging the residents of Santa Fe as we consider these questions. We understand that these topics require some collective learning and dialogue, and as such, we are offering different levels of partnership, some of which offer the opportunity to engage in a deeper way.

- ☐ **Building Partner:**
    - Host Commissioners for a learning session about the City and its Charter at one of your member meetings.
    - Encourage and support 2-4 members of your organization to attend at least 2 community outreach meetings in their district July thru October
    - Send emails to your member or partner list with information about upcoming community listening sessions.

- ☐ **Supporting Partner:**
    - Host Commissioners for a learning session about the city and its Charter at one of your member meetings.
    - Send emails to your member or partner list with information about upcoming community listening sessions.

- ☐ **Basic Partner:**
    - Send emails to your member or partner list with information about upcoming community listening sessions.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,
The 2026-27 Santa Fe City Charter Review Commission