



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® MINNEAPOLIS, INC.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in all levels of government. In the forefront of voter education and civic participation since women won the right to vote, LWV Minneapolis is now an organization of people dedicated to promoting civic participation at its best.

In 2005, LWV Minneapolis studied city government. We looked into the specific issues of the independent boards in 2006. Our 2005 study says, in part: “We discovered in our preparation of this study some criteria that seem to be generally equated with good government. These are accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and accessibility. Other factors such as flexibility, cost effectiveness, diversity, and sustainability were also mentioned. The goal is to balance the criteria in a way that allows for solid decision making and effective governance.”

After these thorough studies we polled our members on several issues raised in those studies.

## BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION

The membership overwhelmingly supports eliminating the Board of Estimate and Taxation and supports the mayor and the city council jointly setting the mill levy.

## MAYOR/COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The membership also supports using the current structure of city government with some key changes. We think that city staff should report to one authority so there are clear lines of responsibility. Membership was split on whether that should be a mayor with more authority or a city manager. We do not support the current system in which department heads answer to 14 bosses, the mayor and 13 council members. It frustrates the key values of accountability and transparency in government operations.

While we have not specifically studied the proposal for a city administrator as outlined in the charter proposal, the need for a structure that better incorporates accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, and accessibility in making solid decisions and creating effective governance still holds. To the extent that the proposed charter change establishing a city administrator preserves involvement of the mayor and council in making appointments while clarifying lines of accountability, there seems to be merit in further consideration of this structural change to Minneapolis governance.

## MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

Our 2006 study of the city’s independent boards said, in part, “Minneapolis has some of the finest parks and libraries in the nation. But current governing structures are often described as cumbersome and counterproductive. In these days of ever-dwindling tax resources, the issue of the structure of governance of both systems raises important questions for their vitality, efficiency and effectiveness.”

From 1974 until the conclusion of the 2006 study LWV supported an independent park board. Following the 2006 study, LWV now has no position on the issue. This is a change in our long-standing position supporting an independent park board. Although a majority of members did not support any one approach to parks governance, the wide range of opinions suggests both that there may be problems in the current structure and that there is the need for further deliberation on this issue.

The League of Women Voters welcomes open public discussion of these important issues at this critical time in our city’s history.