

CITY OF PRINCETON, TEXAS – HOME RULE CHARTER FAQ JAN 2022

Question: What is a Home Rule Charter?

Answer: The home rule charter will be the “constitution” of Princeton if adopted by the voters. The charter will be drafted by an independent group of fifteen Princeton residents. The charter goes into effect only after a majority of Princeton citizens have approved it in an election, scheduled for November 8th, 2022. Texas cities become eligible to adopt home rule charters if they have 5,000 or more inhabitants. As of 2010, roughly 94% of eligible cities in Texas adopted home rule charters.

Question: Who will decide what language will be in the draft charter presented to the voters in Nov. 2022?

Answer: A special-purpose body called the “home rule charter commission”, or HRCC, which is comprised of 15 members (and alternates) who are residents of the City of Princeton and selected by the City Council. The HRCC has held multiple public meetings to deliberate charter provisions, beginning in February 2022, and shall vote among their number to determine the final language which would ultimately be presented to the voters in November 2022.

Question: In a nutshell, what are the inherent powers of home rule cities?

Answer: In a nutshell the powers are: Municipal Organization; Initiative, Referendum, and Recall; Charter Amendments; Limitation on Home Rule Powers.

Question: Who is behind the effort to get a Home Rule Charter approved?

Answer: Princeton citizens. Home Rule is the right of citizens at the grassroots level to manage their own affairs with minimum interference from the State. Home Rule assumes that community challenges should be solved at the lowest possible level, closest to the people. Without a charter, general law municipalities (such as Princeton today) are subject to much more control from the Texas Legislature, and which frequently inhibits the City’s ability to customize its policies to better match preferences of local residents and the unique qualities of the City.

Question: Will my property taxes increase if a Home Rule Charter is approved?

Answer: No. Home Rule charters do not change the current laws and requirements regarding the ability and authority of the City regarding taxes. The city council currently has the authority and responsibility to set the property tax rate each year in accordance with state law. The Collin County Appraisal District sets property values each year. The adoption of a Charter does not change the current process for setting tax rates or appraising property.

Question: How will approving a Home Rule Charter affect me?

Answer: Approving a Charter will allow the citizens to govern themselves by establishing rights, responsibilities, and privileges for all Princeton residents, so long as content in the Charter is not superseded by State or Federal laws. Charters allow for citizens to:

- Determine the number of council members to represent the citizens.
 - Determine how long terms of office are for the Mayor and Council Members.
 - Determine how the Mayor and Council Members are elected.
 - Determine how long the Mayor and Council Members stay in office, and how many times the Mayor and Council Members can run for office.
 - Determine which form of government will be utilized. It can only be changed by citizens voting to amend the charter.
 - Determine if citizens should have the right to request a binding initiative on the ballot; an initiative allows the citizenry to propose new laws or change the charter through a general election ballot measure.
 - Determine if citizens should have the right to recall the Mayor or Council Member.
 - Determine if citizens should have the right to call for a referendum, which is the method by which a measure adopted by the City Council may be submitted to the electorate for a vote.
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Question: What will home rule chartering provide for residents of Princeton in terms of services? Answer:

No matter whether Princeton is a General Law city or Home Rule city, the City has wide authority to provide services directly to citizens. Cities provide police, public works, parks, recreation, health, and other services. Some services are franchised to private companies to provide services in the city, such as waste management. Home rule cities typically have broader local control to protect the health, safety and welfare of their citizens.

Question: Who can vote on the proposed Home Rule Charter?

Answer: Per State Law, only registered voters of the City of Princeton may vote on the home rule charter.

Question: How do I find out if I am in the City or the ETJ?

Answer: If you have a question as to whether your property is within the City or ETJ, you may visit the maps on the City’s web site or contact the City at 972-736-2416. You may also visit the maps page at:

<https://princetontx.gov/about-princeton/maps-of-princeton/> .

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Question: I've heard that Home Rule will give the citizens of Princeton more authority. How is that?

Answer: A Home Rule Charter can provide for Recall, Initiative, and Referendum rights for the City's voters if the commission recommends such provisions in its draft, but those components are not a mandatory part of a home rule charter. Recall, Initiative, and Referendum are not legally permitted in General Law cities.

- Recall allows citizens to vote to remove a city council member (including the mayor) from elected office, if the member knowingly violates a provision of the charter, engages in official misconduct, or demonstrates incompetence.
- Initiative is the process that allows citizens, through a petition, to initiate legislation (through ordinances).
- Referendum is the process that allows citizens, through a petition and election, to overturn ordinances passed by the city council.

Question: Will a Charter affect the annexation authority of Princeton?

Answer: After the changes made by the Texas Legislature in 2017, there is no longer any significant difference between the annexation authority of general law cities and home rule cities. Because a home rule charter cannot endow the governing body of the City of Princeton with powers which conflict with state law, the drafting and adoption of a home rule charter will not automatically increase the annexation authority of the municipality.

Question: I own property within the city limits of Princeton, but live elsewhere. Can I vote on the Charter?

Answer: No, per State Law, you must be a resident of the City and a registered voter in order to vote on the Charter.

Question: Will the City Council determine the language included in the Princeton Charter?

Answer: No. The City Council's only role has simply been to appoint the Voting Members and Alternates of the Charter Commission, who have been working independently draft the Charter, with the assistance of City staff. Once the Charter Commission completes its work, it will submit the proposed draft language to Princeton citizens for approval at the general election in November 2022. The City Council cannot edit the proposed charter or amend it in the future in any way. The Charter will be on the election ballot as written and approved by the Home Rule Charter Commission.

Question: What is the ETJ and how does it affect me?

Answer: The "ETJ" stands for Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, and is the area within one mile of the City Limits of Princeton. The City enforces its Subdivision Ordinance and Sign Regulations within the ETJ. This is the same whether you are a home rule city or a general law city.

Question: How will people living in the ETJ be affected if Home Rule is approved for the City of Princeton?

Answer: With the removal of involuntary annexation powers previously available to home rule municipalities, a change to home rule government will have the same general effects on residents within either the city limits or ETJ. The City Council will have authority to enact future ordinances relating to addition of territory to the city limits in accordance with state law in largely similar manner to its powers to add territory as a general law municipality. The boundaries of the City will not change solely due to the adoption of a home rule charter.

Question: Will the status of my agriculture tax exemption change with the passage of the Home Rule Charter?

Answer: No. Home Rule will not affect that status.

Question: Is the City Council able to make changes to the Charter in the future?

Answer: No, any changes to the Charter must be approved by an election of the voters.
