

## **Charter Change Survey Overview**

### **September 3, 2020**

In support of council's consideration of possible changes to the city's charter, staff created and released an online survey on the Survey Monkey platform. The survey was promoted via the following channels:

- Paid advertising in the Inter-Mountain
- Multiple press releases, all of which were published in the Inter-Mountain and on the city website
- Two TV news stories mentioning the survey's availability
- "Sidebar alert" with link to survey on every page of the city website
- Multiple Facebook posts
- Messages sent to the city's email newsletter list
- Direct email to various city stakeholders
- Dissemination by Elkins Main Street and the Elkins-Randolph Chamber of Commerce email lists

The survey was available from August 14 through September 2. During that time, 115 people responded to the survey. The survey had 10 questions, which are summarized below (actual question wording on the survey was different than shown below; the questions are reprinted in full in the attached results). All questions were optional, meaning that respondents did not have to answer every question to submit their answers.

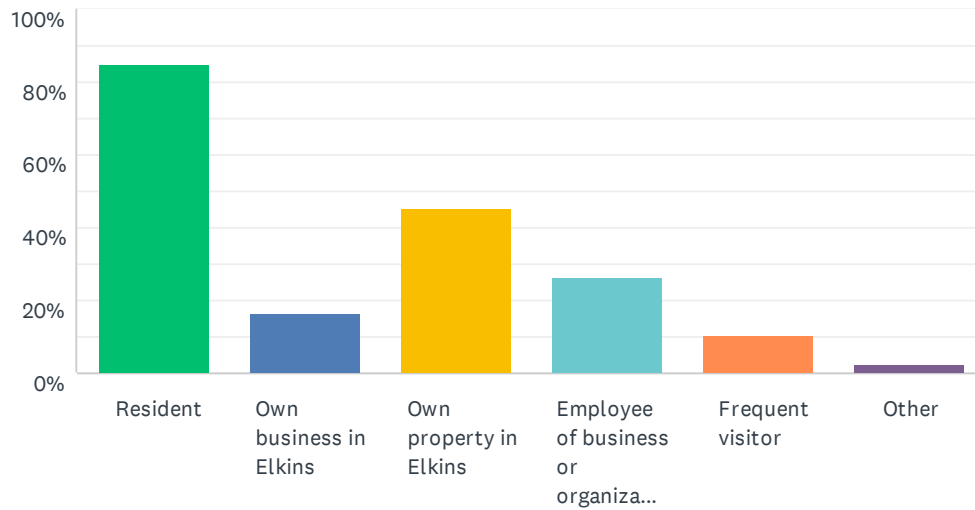
1. Are you a resident/property owner/business owner, etc.?
2. Name and address. (These answers are not included in the attached results.)
3. Which charter-change background materials have you reviewed?
4. Should the charter be changed?
5. What aspects of the charter should be changed?
6. If you oppose changing the charter, why?
7. What form of government do you prefer for Elkins?
8. Should council be resized?
9. Should council be restructured?
10. What else would you like to share about possible charter changes?

It is important to keep in mind that **the attached results cannot be described as representative of public opinion**. Unlike a poll, respondents were not randomly selected, so they cannot be said to represent a cross-section of the community. This survey would not have been available, for example, to people lacking internet access. Also, despite the efforts made to publicize the survey, it is still possible that some potential respondents may not have heard about it.

##

# Q1 Please describe your interest in the City of Elkins. Check as many boxes as apply.

Answered: 114 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Resident	85.09%	97
Own business in Elkins	16.67%	19
Own property in Elkins	45.61%	52
Employee of business or organization located in Elkins	26.32%	30
Frequent visitor	10.53%	12
Other	2.63%	3
Total Respondents: 114		

### Q3 Please indicate which of the charter-change background materials you have reviewed:

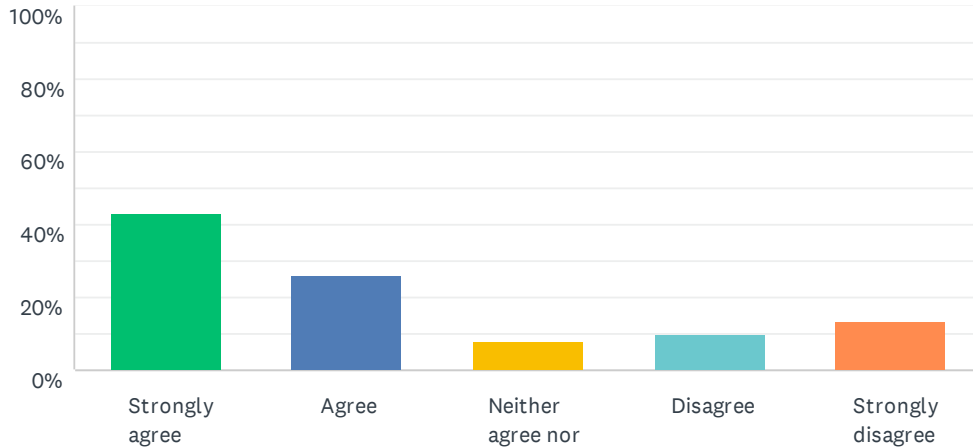
Answered: 104 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Text of the 1901 Elkins City Charter	78.85%	82
City Charter Update	86.54%	90
FAQs: Charter Update Process	75.00%	78
Elkins City Charter: Analysis and Recommendations	77.88%	81
Charter Change Articles on City Blog	57.69%	60
Total Respondents: 104		

Q4 Our charter has not been updated since 1901. Based on your background reading, rate your response to the following statement: “The Elkins City Charter should be updated.”

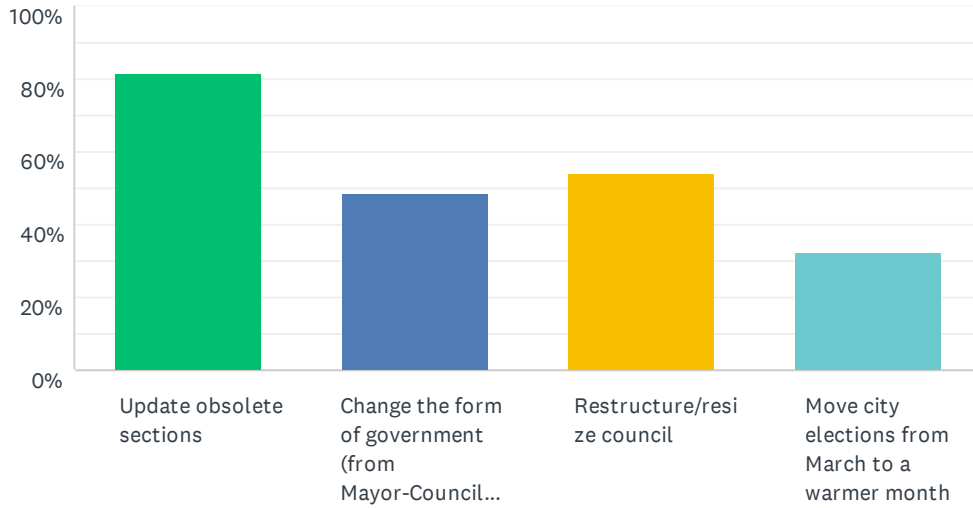
Answered: 112 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	42.86%	48
Agree	25.89%	29
Neither agree nor disagree	8.04%	9
Disagree	9.82%	11
Strongly disagree	13.39%	15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>112</b>

Q5 Council has identified the following possible topics for changes or updates in our charter. Please check the box next to each topic you want council to consider. Check as many boxes as you would like.

Answered: 107 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Update obsolete sections	81.31%	87
Change the form of government (from Mayor-Council to either Strong Mayor or manager based)	48.60%	52
Restructure/resize council	54.21%	58
Move city elections from March to a warmer month	32.71%	35
Total Respondents: 107		

Q6 If you oppose making any changes to the charter, please explain why.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 80

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#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	The current charter has worked for many years. With everything that is going on I don't think it would be a beneficial move to do anything like this right now. Keep it the same and possibly revisit once the Country settles down some.	8/29/2020 11:42 AM
2	I don't oppose changes but would like to know where the funding will be coming from for the salaries. We need to lower our number of council members and allow the Mayor to be the administrative authority. The mayor should be voted on by the people. The salary needs to be addressed and made public to the people.	8/26/2020 10:14 PM
3	changing to a strong city manager is asking for corruption. do some research on Leon Valley Texas and the issues that the change caused there.	8/25/2020 6:38 PM
4	If and only if we do change the government structures it should be put to vote by the citizens of Elkins!	8/24/2020 7:43 PM
5	We don't need to create a job that pays that much money and power that is not elected by the people	8/22/2020 7:32 AM
6	Why do you have to change things that worked for hundred years	8/21/2020 4:26 PM
7	The city of Elkins is too small to consider a City Manager style of government. I know there a similar size cities that utilize this style of government, but the city has not released any information explaining why this move is justified. The city already has an Operations Manager that oversees several of the departments. There is already a Treasurer for finances and a Clerk as the record keeper. If the city is going to eliminate these some of these positions, that means it is taking jobs away from the community. A reduction in council would mean the residents would not have as large of a say in city matters. This change is taking power away from the residents and putting it in the hands of a hired administrator.	8/21/2020 3:55 PM
8	Council selects mayor. No way mayor yet ext to 4. No way. Mgr from insiders. No way	8/21/2020 9:41 AM
9	Amend certain things, no city manager, council is the administrative authority.	8/19/2020 8:38 PM
10	No valid reason to make changes	8/19/2020 8:07 PM
11	I feel that the current city clerk has been pushing this re-chartering for her own personal gain.	8/18/2020 3:05 PM
12	Possible problem in hiring a manager not from this area (such as, Seattle or San Fran) Need to know this area first	8/18/2020 12:55 PM
13	I believe that the Strong/Mayor or City Manager form is not the way to go. We have aprox. 7000 in this area. We do not need 1 person calling all the shots. A strong council is a good idea however, I feel a council at large with fewer members would better serve the community.	8/18/2020 9:48 AM
14	We do not need a manager and a operations manager both	8/17/2020 9:06 PM
15	Charter needs updated to remove things not remaining and bring up to date.	8/17/2020 5:12 PM
16	N/A	8/17/2020 3:51 PM
17	Corruption	8/17/2020 11:53 AM
18	No need to change	8/17/2020 8:54 AM
19	It's worked fine for decades. We do not need a city manager. We have elected officials that can be held accountable for their actions or lack of ... no more layers of government is needed	8/17/2020 8:46 AM
20	I feel the city manager position would be a waste of money. Why would we need the treasurer, city clerk, or operations supervisor if we had a manager? If the charter is changed, elimination of these three jobs should happen. It would pay this person's salary.	8/17/2020 7:06 AM
21	I think the addition of a city manager would be another level of management that should make the operation manager position redundant. I am concerned about weakening citizen's voices by reducing the number of elected council persons. I also believe that a town of under 10,000 residents can't afford to pay this position \$100,000. This is more than double the average household income for West Virginia and represents the average salary for this position for larger cities, not cities with a population under 10,000 and with such a low cost of living as exists in the state. Hopefully, council will do the research on this - it would be an outrage to taxpayer and to other city employees to add a position at this salary level.	8/16/2020 4:31 PM

## Elkins Charter Change Survey

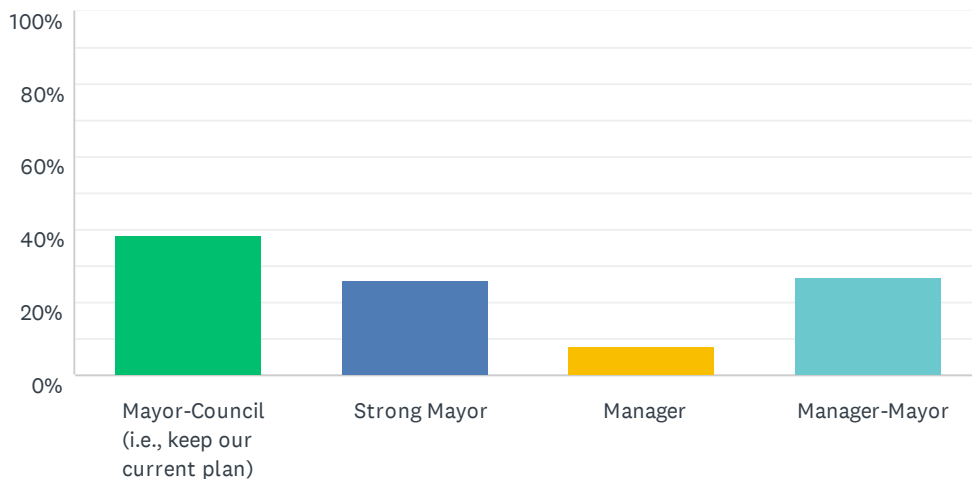
22	Our system is not broken. There is no need to change it just to create a position and spend the taxpayers money when it is not needed.	8/16/2020 1:36 PM
23	Council has too much power. And city has turned too liberal.	8/16/2020 1:23 PM
24	Only oppose, if not put to public vote	8/16/2020 12:58 PM
25	Council smaller	8/16/2020 12:21 PM
26	If you restructure city council, how many current jobs will be lost and how would the city manager and additional salaries be paid. Is there going to be a huge city tax increase?	8/16/2020 12:20 PM
27	We need the money for to many other projects, street paving, demolishing dilapidated housing, once or twice a month large item pickups, continuing yard waste pick up, the citizens of Elkins needs the City to do some things for them at no cost	8/16/2020 10:41 AM
28	I feel this gives too much authority to one position.	8/16/2020 10:27 AM
29	I would like to see us have a stronger Mayor but not a city manager!	8/16/2020 10:15 AM
30	I'm least interested in moving the date of elections. It seems like a less important issue that can be taken up at a later time. I understand that it's not cheap or easy to update the charter, so I get why you're looking at doing that now, but it's the least important issue to me.	8/16/2020 9:28 AM
31	I believe changes should be made, but that the Mayor should be elected, not appointed by the council.	8/16/2020 9:05 AM
32	We don't need a City Manager	8/16/2020 8:53 AM
33	The city does not need a city manager at 100k a year. What a waste of money. More government will not solve the problems we face.	8/16/2020 8:51 AM
34	The Elkins City Government seems to be working as is, I don't feel there is a need for such big changes.	8/15/2020 9:38 PM
35	The city of Elkins functions very well when compared to other Cities that adopted a city manager type of government. It doesn't make any sense to fix something that isn't broken. This change Would be negative to the city and would impact the morale of the city employees.	8/15/2020 11:24 AM



Q7 One of the most important things established by a municipal charter is who is responsible for day-to-day administration (for example: hiring/firing, directing and supervising staff, ensuring adherence to rules and regulations, complying with internal policies, etc.) and who exercises legislative and policy-making authority over the city (e.g., passing laws, adopting rules and regulations, devising strategy, and establishing goals).

In West Virginia, the former is referred to as a city’s “administrative authority”; the latter, the city’s “governing body.” The current Elkins charter assigns both administrative and governing authority to council and the mayor, collectively. The mayor has almost no independent authority under the current charter. Under state code, several other options are available. The main difference between these plans concerns where administrative authority is assigned: Strong Mayor Plan: The council is the governing body; the mayor is the administrative authority. Manager Plan: The council is the governing body, and a manager appointed by the council is the administrative authority. Councilors select one of their number as mayor. Manager-Mayor Plan: Identical to above except that the mayor is elected by the public into that office. Which form of city government do you think would work best for Elkins?

Answered: 111 Skipped: 4

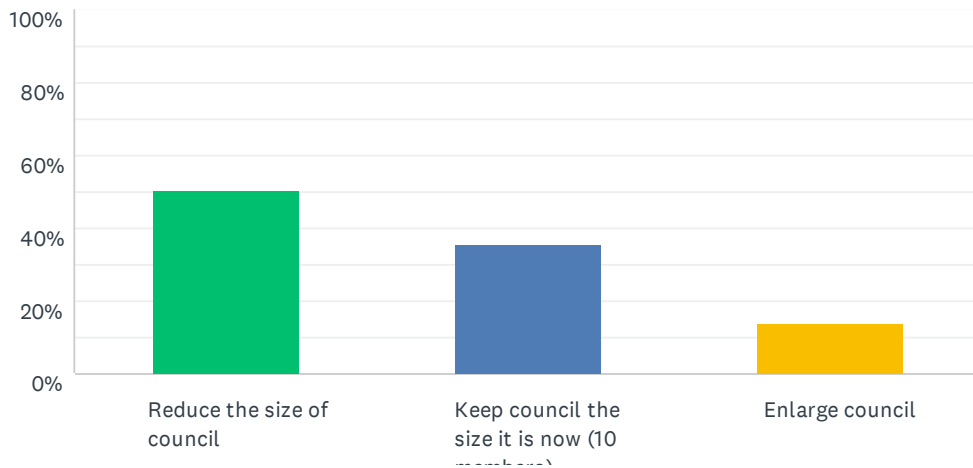


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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mayor-Council (i.e., keep our current plan)	38.74%	43
Strong Mayor	26.13%	29
Manager	8.11%	9
Manager-Mayor	27.03%	30
TOTAL		111

Q8 Under the 1901 charter, the “governing body” of Elkins is a ten-person council, with two councilors elected from each of the city’s five wards. To represent a certain ward, a candidate must live in that ward. Only people who live in that same ward may vote for that candidate. The following options are also available: At large representation and election: Councilors may live anywhere in the city and are voted for by all city voters. At large election/ward representation: Councilors must live in a certain ward but are voted for by all city voters. What is your opinion about resizing council?

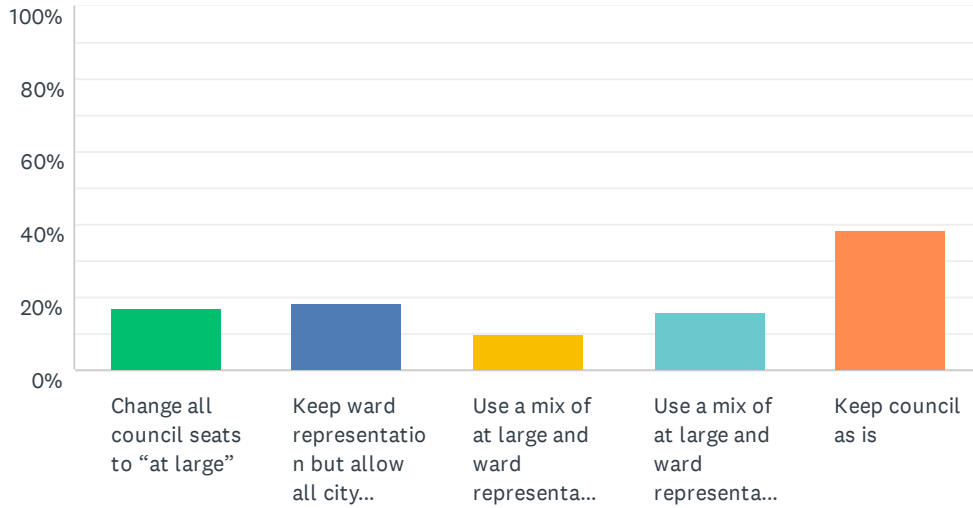
Answered: 113 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Reduce the size of council	50.44%	57
Keep council the size it is now (10 members)	35.40%	40
Enlarge council	14.16%	16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>113</b>

## Q9 What do you think about changing the structure of council (i.e., how council members are qualified to run, who they represent, and who can vote for them)?

Answered: 112 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Change all council seats to "at large"	16.96%	19
Keep ward representation but allow all city voters to vote for all council members	18.75%	21
Use a mix of at large and ward representatives voted only by ward members	9.82%	11
Use a mix of at large and ward representatives voted on by all city voters	16.07%	18
Keep council as is	38.39%	43
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>112</b>

**Q10 What else would you like to share with council to inform their deliberations on a possible charter change?**

Answered: 48 Skipped: 67

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#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Start training firefighters to do job of Code Enforcement officer. What do fire dept. employees do when they are not on a call? Eliminate the External Affairs position since there is absolutely no need for this no doubt "created" position!! And get the recycle committee to work on a mandatory recycling program for the city. TVS will raise rates as they want and the city is at their mercy!! Take your losses and SHUT DOWN the armory. Use that money to buy recycle containers!! And why does the city parking lot need paved? There is already ample paved parking for employees.	8/31/2020 9:57 AM
2	term limits to a total of 4 years for council and mayor.	8/29/2020 1:29 PM
3	Please keep the current city charter in place. The added costs of adopting a manager style type of government would not be in the best interest of the community. You already have some great administrative officers in place. Put the extra funds that would be used for this change towards strengthening what you have in place already.	8/29/2020 11:42 AM
4	Council has nothing to do with the appointing of the city manager. The council has way too much authority. We need a city manager with authority	8/28/2020 2:32 PM
5	Post Governor's 'State of Emergency' COVID Restrictions for Group Gatherings @ Venues in Elkin & surrounding areas. Thank you.	8/27/2020 8:44 AM
6	What brought about this change and why now during times when most people are not wanting to gather in large groups. It appears, that city council was trying to sneak some changes past the people. These types of situations are starting to become quite aggravating.	8/26/2020 10:14 PM
7	The checks of the current systems keeps everyone honest if you give one more power than the other you are asking for corruption	8/25/2020 6:38 PM
8	Term for mayor 4 years. Combine city election with another election to save money, have 5 ward council folks, 2-3 at large, term limits,	8/25/2020 12:01 AM
9	The cost of a city manager I believe is to much for what our city brings in. Really no justification, go strong mayor which will be the people's mayor based on there vote. This is a Democratic system keep it that way. Strong mayor can support admin responsibilities	8/24/2020 7:43 PM
10	It is time to do this. At large would help us get better candidates and would be appropriate for the size of our city	8/24/2020 3:47 PM
11	In my time in Elkins, I found that there was great value in having a mayor present at ceremonial events and to serve as the figurehead of the community. While I agree with the administrative efficiencies that a Manager system would bring, the Manager cannot also reasonably be responsible for being at various community events, for which there is value in having your government seem approachable and visible. In a Manager-Mayor system, the Manager may act as a Chief Operations Officer, but there is still value in having your constituents feel heard by electing a Mayor who can act as a Chief Executive Officer, handling big picture directives, even if their power is merely symbolic. By solely having a Manager, I fear that the Executive office, in this case deemed the "administrative authority," still holds political power even though it is not an elected position. In regards to updating obsolete sections of the charter, I would strongly encourage that the gendered pronouns throughout the charter be replaced with gender neutral pronouns, such as "they/them." While it may seem trivial to some, having gender suggestive language is very indicative of a charter written in 1901 where men were seen as the only qualified individuals for elected or hired positions. I would challenge Council to consider how much society and culture may change in the next 100+ years that this updated charter may last and how it may be interpreted by the city's next generations of young people wanting to be civically engaged.	8/24/2020 10:57 AM
12	You need a strong Mayor. You need to put some of that power back into the position. You may have people coming out of the woodwork to run that want to see the ideas that they and others have had to improve the City. With some power given to the Mayor, you force those running to put up an agenda as to what direction they would like to see the City go in. IN the past, those running for Mayor or City Council didn;t have to really state anything. They just ran. with nothing to hold their feet to the fire on. a leader who must call the shots at times, and know when he doesn't have the answer, turn to the City Council to get the answers. NO CITY MANAGER !	8/23/2020 9:19 AM
13	I believe the current unwieldy structure is inefficient, too sensitive to petty political differences	8/22/2020 8:42 PM

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and has held us back as a communiy.

14	You seem to be pushing very hard for a City Manager. Which jobs are going to be eliminated when a city manager is employed? I think this change should be put to a vote of the people. Recently the council seems to be making decisions without public input being considered. Example: city tax. When individuals asked what money was to be used for, no answer was given. That's why we have a private ballot in America. So people can express their opinions without reprisal. If you want a strong mayor change the charter	8/22/2020 10:52 AM
15	Keep public informed. Be upfront with financial decisions.	8/22/2020 8:42 AM
16	You don't change something just for change	8/21/2020 4:26 PM
17	I think that the charter should be updated to meet current laws. There is nothing being released that shows that switching the style of government would be beneficial to the the residents. Also, the costs of a city manager, not just salary, but everything that comes with it. The city has stated for years that it does not have the money to do things like a pool or a splash pad, but it can come up with the funding for the salary, equipment and support staff for a city manager?	8/21/2020 3:55 PM
18	Get rid of #37 we shouldn't punish the poor in Elkins.	8/20/2020 11:04 AM
19	We need to bring Elkins into the 21st Century with an updated charter and council	8/20/2020 1:26 AM
20	Glad Council is considering changes	8/19/2020 9:59 PM
21	Keep it the way it is.	8/19/2020 8:38 PM
22	It seems the "Home Rule" windfall provided more funds than are needed and the city and they are being squandered on unnecessary personal agenda of a few big feeling city officials. Spend your money wisely!	8/18/2020 2:17 PM
23	Increase to three per Ward to break tie without mayor vote. But, just a suggestion.	8/18/2020 12:55 PM
24	Stop treating the town like your own personal piggy bank. You all are absolutely worthless. I would be hard pressed to believe any of you actually care about this community rather than just lining your pockets or having a "Holier Than Thou" attitude. Must be fucking nice.	8/18/2020 11:34 AM
25	The stagnation of city government is unacceptable and has long plagued our city by allowing petty buerocracy to stand in the way of actually I acting effective change.	8/18/2020 11:14 AM
26	Funds?? Where would the funds for this position(s) come from?? We can't fix the operational problems we have now. So why would paying an additional person to perform a job better serve this community. Honestly, council needs to take a GOOD HARD look at who they have in charge now. Talk to you "regular" employees. Find what's wrong in the system and FIX it.	8/18/2020 9:48 AM
27	Add in that no Council member may be in a leadership position of any organization that could benefit from their position on the Council (ie fairs and festivals, etc)	8/18/2020 8:34 AM
28	I am absolutely against the institution of a city manager	8/18/2020 8:09 AM
29	Decrease council to 5 members, ward residents voted for by ward residents	8/17/2020 9:06 PM
30	Stop paying the council.	8/17/2020 3:51 PM
31	Leave well enough alone. We don't need a dictator mayor. Or a city manager who is accountable to no one.	8/17/2020 8:46 AM
32	Start replacing or repairing sidewalks so people can walk around and see our city without tripping	8/17/2020 8:21 AM
33	It is time to update the charter, however just putting a city manager in will not change a situation. I believe council at large would be a great idea. However, its time to change the folks that are already in seats. Who protects your employees? Who stands up for businesses? Who actually educates themselves about something before they act like children? I can only think of 2 people that are council now that actually help our community and city employees.	8/17/2020 7:06 AM
34	What about the Swinging Bridge?	8/16/2020 6:08 PM
35	Professional and experienced individuals a must grow Elkins	8/16/2020 5:44 PM
36	I would like to be represented by council people who live in my ward. I'd support paying council	8/16/2020 4:31 PM

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members more to attract more candidates to run for office.

37	I would like to see all Council removed starting with the older members. I would like to city the mayor fired and a new mayor in office . I ambtired of money being spent and people be giving a high pay raise for doing nothing . I Belive everyone at Elkins city hall from top to Bottem be fired all but the Police officers who do there jobs . This city has gone to hell and its the people running our towns fault.	8/16/2020 2:14 PM
38	There is nothing wrong with the current system. Why change it just to spend more money?	8/16/2020 1:36 PM
39	Become more conservative in spending and why does buckhannon get all the business. Go look at their downtown thriving and beautiful. Ours dead and ugly. They have businesses we have empty trashy buildings. They have beautiful flowers we have weeds as high as my truck and every corner. We have the streets at night taken over by punks on stolen bikes and backpacks. The city has allowed the slum lords take over. Just look how trashy the old four seasons hotel has gotten. How many 911 calls has that place gotten? This city has bigger problems than a charter.	8/16/2020 1:23 PM
40	Why not do a public vote?	8/16/2020 12:58 PM
41	What issues cannot be handled by the current form of government we currently use?	8/16/2020 12:24 PM
42	I do not want to see city taxes and expenses to increase to pay for a city manager and his/her staff. How will those expenses be paid?	8/16/2020 12:20 PM
43	Address things that the City needs, if they want to change things change the strict rules keeping businesses out of Elkins, reduce B&O taxes would be a start	8/16/2020 10:41 AM
44	The City Clerk is really pushing for this change. Why is that? I think the citizens are seeing right through her reasoning to push for this change. The city does not need a City Manager! We need a stronger Mayor! I also don't think the citizen feedback should be going directly to the City Clerk. It's well known she wants the position of City Manager. Changes need to be made to the Charter, agree, but the town of Elkins cannot afford 100,000 a year, etc. Also, the City Clerk position should be put on a ballot every two years and the citizens should have an input on who is in that position. People get too comfortable when they know the citizens can't vote them out!	8/16/2020 10:15 AM
45	My answers to questions 7 and 9 are fluid. I think you should analyze whether the current number of wards and their boundaries are still appropriate. Fewer wards might make sense and allow for more at-large council members while reducing overall council size. Also, more importantly, I'm already hearing the inevitable negative feedback about your motivations for doing this. Stories will be told one way or the other. I hope yours is the loudest.	8/16/2020 9:28 AM
46	I believe the way things are now is the way they should remain. The addition of a city manager is going to be costly, and I can't find the justification for that.	8/15/2020 9:38 PM
47	Absolute power corrupts absolutely. When you eliminate those that have input then you also risk having a bias ruling body. We do not need a city manager. There are those that are already in place that are currently managing our city. This is what I feel is a ploy by an individual or individuals to gain power for their own aspirations. Our city would be foolish to follow this directive.	8/15/2020 6:18 PM
48	Please consider what you are doing affects many people within the City. I have personally seen other cities make the mistake of tampering with a proven system and put their entire municipality in chaos. Look to the 119 years worth of wisdom left in place by previous administrations and please do not take this with a grain of salt. Thank you for all that you do!	8/15/2020 11:24 AM