



# AGENDA REPORT



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TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
FROM: Councilmember Charlene Wang  
DATE: June 11, 2026

SUBJECT: Amendment to Proposed Ballot Measure To Reform Oakland's City Charter

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## **Proposed Amendment:**

The City Council may vet, through an informational item at an open session meeting, the appointment of any new head of any department or other administrative agency with primary responsibility for: housing production, regulation, and preservation; human and social services; planning, zoning, land use, and building permitting; fire response and emergency medical response; and public parkland and recreational facilities.

The Council shall, by ordinance, establish the procedures for the vetting process, which may occur promptly before or promptly after appointment, at the Council's discretion. Informational items under this subsection (c) are mechanisms to promote transparency and public participation and do not empower the Council to unreasonably delay or prevent appointments.

In the case of a pre-appointment informational item, the Council shall hear the item within 30 calendar days after the appointing authority's request for the Council to schedule the item in accordance with applicable Council Rules of Procedure. If the Council fails to hear the informational item within the prescribed time, then the person may be appointed without a pre-appointment vetting.

## **Function and Rationale:**

This amendment establishes a structured, predictable channel for Council engagement with executive appointments to many of the departments whose work directly shapes residents' daily lives: housing, human services, planning and permitting, fire and emergency medical response, and parks and recreation. Under Oakland's current charter, department directors are selected and installed without any formal point of contact with the legislative branch, even though the Council sets the budgets, enacts the ordinances, and answers to the constituents these departments serve. The amendment closes that gap by authorizing the Council to vet new department heads through an informational item at an open session meeting, ensuring that the officials charged with implementing Council policy begin their tenure with a public introduction to the body and to the residents of Oakland.

This process strengthens accountability and transparency. A formal informational item, with authority to establish vetting procedures, gives Councilmembers the opportunity to understand an incoming director's qualifications, priorities, and approach to the department's statutory responsibilities, and it gives the public the same opportunity. It also establishes a baseline relationship between the director and the Council at the outset, which supports more productive engagement over the course of the director's tenure. Departments perform better when their leadership is known to, and communicates regularly with, the legislative body that funds and helps guide their work.

The amendment is deliberately structured to prevent the vetting process from becoming a tool of delay or obstruction. The charter language states expressly that informational items under this subsection do not empower the Council to unreasonably delay or prevent appointments. The procedures themselves are left to ordinance, allowing the Council to refine the mechanics over time, but the charter fixes the essential safeguard: where a pre-appointment item is requested, the Council must hear it within 30 calendar days of the appointing authority's scheduling request, and if the Council fails to do so, the appointment may proceed without pre-appointment vetting.

Taken together, these provisions regularize what is today an ad hoc and inconsistent practice. By formalizing engagement with the full council body, rather than informal, individual outreach, the amendment strengthens Council's oversight capacity, gives the public a meaningful window into executive leadership transitions, and does both without diminishing the appointing authority's prerogatives or introducing any mechanism by which an appointment could be blocked.

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