CHANDLER
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Community of Innovation



Initiative Process & Information

City Clerk's Office

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Letter from the City Clerk

This guide provides information on the initiative process. While every effort is made to provide a comprehensive overview of the process and each step, this packet is provided with the understanding that the City Clerk's Office cannot render legal or financial advice. Individuals interested in pursuing an initiative are encouraged to refer to the Arizona State Constitution, the Arizona Revised Statues, Arizona Elections Procedures Manual, the Chandler City Charter, and Chandler City Code for legal requirements pertaining to initiatives. It is the individual's responsibilities to ensure compliance with current legal requirements.

Please note that the Chandler City Clerk serves as the filing officer for all local election forms. All forms must be filed with the Chandler City Clerk's Office within the deadlines noted in the statutes.

If you have questions regarding the initiative procedural process, please feel free to contact the City Clerk's Office at 480-782-2182; or email jennifer.rincon@chandleraz.gov.

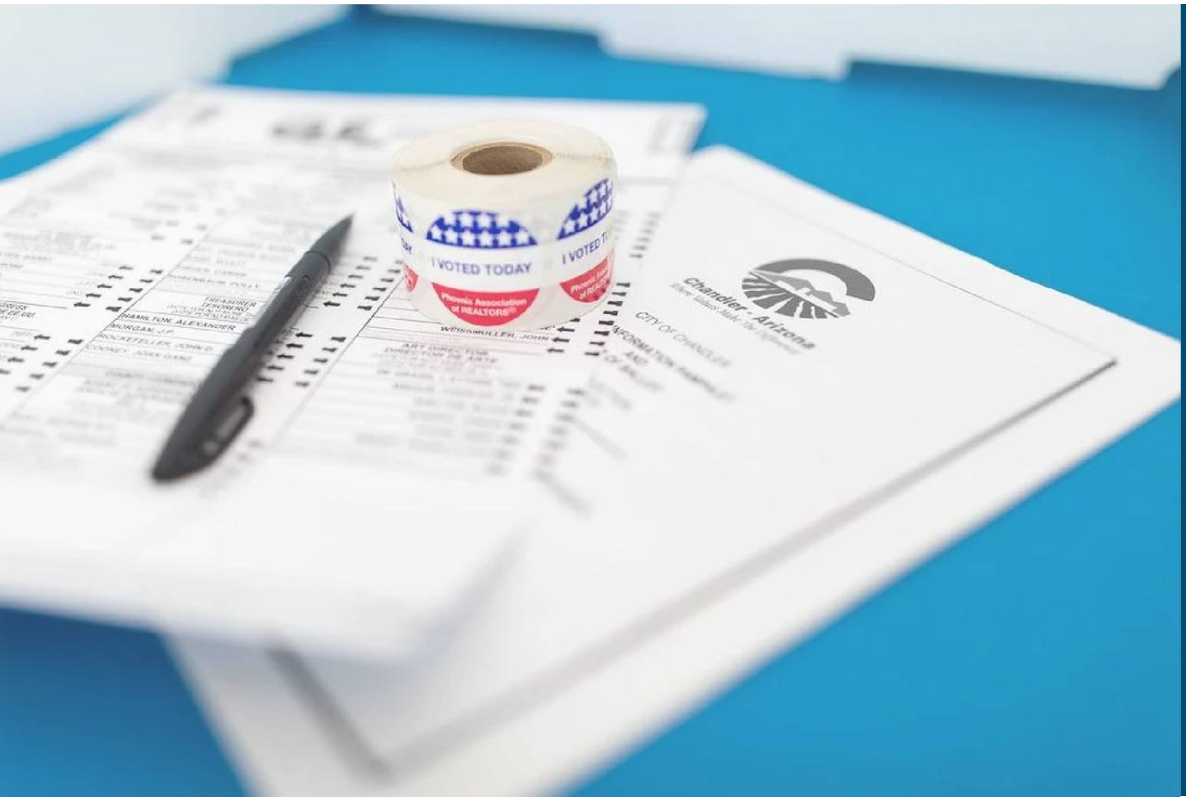
Sincerely,

Jennifer Rincon, MMC, CPM, CRM
City Clerk
City of Chandler
480-782-2182
jennifer.rincon@chandleraz.gov

Overview of the Initiative Process

An initiative is the process used by voters to propose a new law or amend an existing law and place the issue on the ballot for a public vote. The local law proposed must be a legislative act and not an administrative act, and must deal with a single subject. The initiative process is governed by the Arizona Constitution, Arizona Revised Statutes, and the City of Chandler Charter and Municipal Code. The Secretary of State also has the Initiative and Referendum Guide. The initiative process requires voters to gather enough signatures from qualified electors of the city to place the item being initiated on the ballot. For initiatives for cities, the courts require substantial compliance.

Excerpts of the Charter and Municipal Code are provided on the next page. The full text can be accessed at chandleraz.gov/cityclerk.



Chandler City Charter and Municipal Code

CHARTER ARTICLE VIII. - INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RECALL

Section 8.01. - General authority.

There is hereby reserved to the electors of the city the powers of the initiative, the referendum and the recall of elective officers. The provisions of the constitution and laws of this state, as the same now exist or hereafter may be amended, governing the initiative and referendum and the recall of elective officers, shall apply to the use thereof in the city so far as such provisions are not in conflict with the provisions of the charter.

Section 8.02. - Commencement of proceedings, petitioners' committee, affidavit.

Any five qualified voters may commence initiative or referendum proceedings by filing with the City Clerk an affidavit stating they will constitute the petitioners' committee and be responsible for circulating the petition and filing it in proper form, stating their names and addresses and specifying the address to which all notices to the committee are to be sent, and setting out in full the proposed initiative ordinance or citing the ordinance sought to be reconsidered. Promptly after the affidavit of the petitioners' committee is filed, the City Clerk shall issue the appropriate petition blanks to the petitioners' committee.

CODE CHAPTER 4 - ELECTIONS

4-3. – Number of signatures required on initiative petitions.

The provisions of the constitution and general laws of the State, as the same now exist or hereafter be amended, governing the initiative shall apply in the City; however, the total number of registered voters qualified to vote at the last preceding general municipal election shall be the basis on which the number of electors of the City required to file an initiative petition shall be computed.

4-4. - Initiative and referendum elections.

The City Council may by majority vote call a special election to vote on any matter referred for a vote of the citizens of Chandler in accordance with the laws of the State of Arizona and the City of Chandler Charter. If a special election is not called by the City Council, the referred matter if properly qualified shall be submitted to the voters at the next ensuing municipal election.

Signature Requirements

The electors within any city or town may initiate a local law or ordinance by securing the signatures of 15% of the qualified electors of the city for an Initiative Petition (Ariz. Const. Art. 4 Pt. 1 § 1(8)). The Arizona Supreme Court has ruled that the basis for calculation of signatures for a local initiative may be specified by local ordinance or charter provision. Chandler's Charter states that signatures are calculated by the total number of registered voters qualified to vote at the last preceding general municipal election.

Effective as of the July 21, 2026 Primary Election

161,573 Total Register Voters x 15% =

24,235 Minimum number of signatures for an Initiative Petition

Filing Deadline

The petition must be filed not less than four months preceding the date of the election at which the measures proposed are to be voted upon. The City Clerk cannot accept an Initiative Petition issued for circulation more than 24 months before the general election at which the measure is to be included on the ballot.

Steps to File an Initiative

The following is a brief overview of the process for an initiative to be placed on the ballot. More detailed information is referenced by page number.

1. FORM A COMMITTEE
Five qualified voters must first form a political committee by submitting a State of Arizona Committee Statement of Organization. This will constitute the petitioner's committee (page 7).

2. FILE AN AFFIDAVIT
The petitioner's committee must file an affidavit with the City Clerk stating they will constitute the petitioner's committee, be responsible for circulating the petition, and will file it in its proper form (page 7).

3. APPLY FOR A SERIAL NUMBER
The petitioner's committee will file an Application for Serial Number with the City Clerk. The City Clerk will issue a serial number and the signature requirements. The City Clerk will also advise about the deadline to submit petitions (page 7).

4. CHECK YOUR CIRCULATORS
Ensure any paid or out-of-state circulators have registered with the Secretary of State's Office prior to collecting signatures. The requirements for circulator registration can be found on the circulator page of the Secretary of State's website and in the Petition Circulation Training Guide (page 9).

5. CIRCULATE PETITION
Circulate petition and obtain signatures from eligible electors. Best practices are available in the Petition Circulation Training Guide on the Secretary of State's website (page 9).

6. SUBMIT YOUR PETITION
Submit circulated petition sheets to the City Clerk's Office by the deadline. Additional instructions and organizational tips on how to file petition sheets are on page 10.

7. VERIFICATION, CERTIFICATION, QUALIFICATION
The City Clerk's Office and the Maricopa County Recorder will process the petitions and determine whether enough signatures have been gathered to place the measure on the ballot (page 11 &12).

Note: Initiatives are subject to court challenge. A challenge to the legal sufficiency of a ballot measure must be submitted 20 days after a measure is filed in an odd numbered year or 10 days after a measure is filed in an even numbered year. A.R.S. § 19-161(A).

1. Form a Committee

Five qualified voters must first form a political committee by submitting a State of Arizona Committee Statement of Organization to the City Clerk.

2. File an Affidavit

The Chandler City Charter requires the five-member petitioner's committee file an affidavit with the City Clerk stating they will constitute the petitioner's committee, be responsible for circulating the petition, and will file it in its proper form. It must also contain the names and addresses of all five petitioners and specify the address to which all notices to the committee are to be sent.

3a. Apply for a Serial Number

Once the petitioners have filed the Statement of Organization and the Affidavit, they will apply for an initiative serial number that is required to be on both sides of the referendum petition. The Application for a Serial Number must contain the following:

1. Name or, if an organization, its name and the names and titles of its officers.

2. Address.

3. Intention to circulate and file a petition.

4. A description of no more than 200 words of the principal provisions of the measure.

5. Text of the initiative or referred measure in no less than 8-point type. Maps, charts, and graphs are exempt from this type size requirement.

6. The Application for a Serial Number must be accompanied by a Statement of Organization of the political committee, and the City Clerk is prohibited from accepting an application that is not accompanied by the Statement of Organization, unless the petitioners filed a Statement of Organization prior to submitting their application. According to the Arizona Supreme Court, state law only authorizes the City Clerk to reject the Application for a Serial Number if the applicant did not submit the Statement of Organization.

3b. Receipt of an Initiative Petition Application

Upon receipt of the Initiative Petition Application, the City Clerk will:

1. Assign a number to the petition that must appear in the lower right-hand corner on each side of each initiative petition signature sheet.
2. Issue that number to the applicant.
3. Provide the number of signatures required: 15% of the total number of registered voters qualified to vote at the last preceding general municipal election.
4. The City Clerk will provide by electronic means the text of Title 19 of the Arizona Revised Statutes (governing initiative and referendum) and any relevant rules adopted by the Secretary of State (i.e., providing digital copies and/or hyperlinks to the State Elections Procedure Manual, Secretary of State Petition Circulator Training Guide, Secretary of State Initiative & Referendum Guide, and other relevant information on the Secretary of State's website).



4. Check Your Circulators

All paid circulators and nonresident circulators must register with the Secretary of State. Any signature without a checked box that indicates whether circulator is paid or a volunteer is void and cannot be counted. State law bars the circulation of initiative petitions by a county recorder or justice of the peace. Any petitions circulated by such a person are void.

5. Circulate Petition

Every qualified elector signing an Initiative Petition must sign in the presence of the person who is circulating the petition and who is to execute the circulator affidavit on the reverse side of the signature sheet.

Please consult legal counsel on all current laws regarding petition signature collection. The following are a few excerpts from the guidelines provided by the Secretary of State's Initiative and Referendum Guide. The entire guide will be provided electronically and is also available on the Secretary of State website.

- The front of every petition sheet must be complete prior to circulating, including the initiative serial number and 200-word description.
- A full copy of the title and text of the measure must remain affixed to the signature sheet at all times during circulation. Please use the area on the petition labeled "Staple Here" to affix the staple.
- A petition sheet may be signed only by a registered voter who is a qualified elector under Arizona law. Every elector who signs the petition sheet must do so in the presence of the circulator. A qualified elector may only sign a specific initiative once.
- Circulators should instruct petition signers to write in the center of (and within) the information capture boxes to ensure that signature and identifying information are easily discernible during review. Signers should avoid letting information bleed over to adjacent rows and should sign with black or dark blue ink.
- Every circulator must complete the affidavit on the back of the petition sheet in the presence of a notary and have the affidavit notarized before submission.

Signature Withdrawal

Individuals who signed a Initiative Petition may withdraw their signatures not later than 5:00 p.m. on the date the Initiative Petition is submitted to the City Clerk. Individuals may withdraw their signatures by signing an Affidavit of Signature Withdrawal from Initiative Petition and filing it with the City Clerk. Also, individuals may withdraw their signatures by mailing a signed, notarized statement of intent to withdraw to the City Clerk. Withdrawn signatures and crossed-out signatures may not be counted in determining the legal sufficiency of the petition.

6. Submit Your Petition

When circulation is complete and the committee believes they have reached, or will soon reach, the statutory number of signatures required to qualify, the committee should schedule an intake appointment with the City Clerk.

Appointments should be scheduled a minimum of two weeks in advance of your desired date and must be made for a business day. At the filing appointment, an intake receipt will be given to the committee indicating the approximate number of signatures and boxes of petition sheets submitted.

All signatures must be filed at the time of the filing appointment; no supplemental filings are allowed. The committee may not turn in supplemental petition sheets after the City Clerk has issued an intake receipt to the committee.

1. Initial Receipt - When the person or group circulating the petition returns the petition sheets, the City Clerk will issue an Initial Receipt This receipt will be an estimate of the number of sheets and signatures filed and does not indicate that the measure has qualified for the ballot. After the Initial Receipt is issued, no additional petition sheets may be filed. Once the petition is filed it cannot be withdrawn as a whole nor can individual signatures be withdrawn.

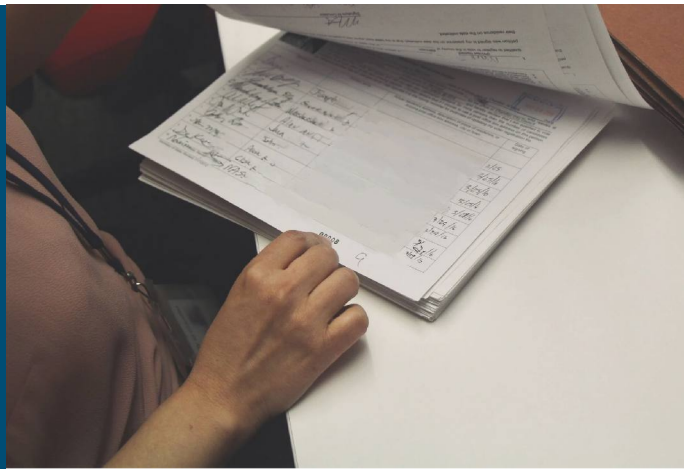
2. Submittal and Grouping of Petition Sheets - The committee that is the proponent of the petition and that files the petition must organize the signature sheets and group them by circulator. The serial number also needs to appear on the lower right corner of both sides of the petition signature sheets. The committee is solely responsible for compliance. The City Clerk may return as unfiled any signature sheets not so organized or grouped (A.R.S. § 19-121(C)).

Double check your petition sheets!

- Group by circulator (if there are multiple)

- Group by 10, suggested but not required

- Check for serial number on lower right corner of BOTH sides of the petition signature sheets.



7a. Verification

Within 20 days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, after the filing of an Initiative Petition and issuance of the Initial Receipt, the City Clerk will review each sheet for completeness and compliance. The City Clerk must count the number of signatures for verification and notify the committee of this total number eligible for verification.

If the total number of signatures for verification equals or exceeds the minimum required, the City Clerk, during the same 20-day period, must select, at random, 5% of the total signatures for verification by the County Recorder. The random sample of signatures to be verified will be drawn in such a manner that every signature eligible for verification has an equal chance of being included in the sample. The random sample produced will identify each signature selected by petition page and line number. The signatures selected will be marked in a clear manner.

7b. Certification

After the selection of the random sample and the marking of the signatures selected on the original petition sheets, the City Clerk will transmit a copy of the front of each signature sheet on which a signature included in the random sample appears. The City Clerk must clearly identify those signatures marked for verification and must transmit the copy by personal delivery, certified mail or electronic mail or other electronic transfer method to the County Recorder.

Within 15 days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, after receiving the copies of the signature sheets from the City Clerk, the County Recorder must determine which signatures of individuals whose names were transmitted must be disqualified.

Within the same time period, the County Recorder must certify to the City Clerk the following: the name of any individual whose signature was included in the random sample and disqualified by the County Recorder together with the petition sheet page and line number of the disqualified signature and the total number of signatures selected for the random sample and transmitted to the County Recorder for verification and the total number of random sample signatures disqualified.

At the time of this certification, the County Recorder will return the documents to the City Clerk. The form for the certification will be prescribed by the Secretary of State. The City Clerk will retain an electronic copy of all signature sheets. After the time period for legal challenges has elapsed, the original sheets must be made available to the applicant but may be disposed of after a reasonable period of time.

7c. Qualification of Certified Signatures

Within 72 hours, excluding Saturday, Sunday, or legal holidays, after receiving the certification and signature sheets from the County Recorder, the City Clerk will determine the total number of valid signatures by subtracting from the total eligible signatures in the following order:

1. All signatures removed
2. All signatures that were found ineligible by the County Recorder and that were not subtracted from above.
3. After determining the percentage of all signatures found to be invalid in the random sample, subtract a like percentage from those signatures remaining after the above subtractions.

Signature Challenges

If an elector wishes to challenge the number of signatures certified by the County Recorder, the elector must commence an action in superior court within 5 calendar days of when the County Recorder notifies the City Clerk of the number of certified signatures received. The superior court decision may be appealed to the Arizona Supreme Court.

Failure to Qualify

If the number of valid signatures, as projected from the random sample, is less than the minimum required, or if the actual number of signatures on the remaining sheets after any subtraction from the random sample is completed or after certification fails to equal or exceed the minimum number required, then the City Clerk returns the original signature sheets to the persons or committee that submitted them after the conclusion of any litigation regarding the measure or until the time for any such litigation has expired. In addition, a certified statement should be presented to the person or committee with the information provided in statute. Also, a copy of the certification of the County Recorder must accompany the signature sheets returned to the person or committee that submitted them.

Referral to City Council and Next Steps

If the number of signatures on the remaining petition sheets, after the subtraction process, equals or exceeds 100% of the minimum number of signatures, then the City Clerk must issue a receipt to the committee or person who submitted the petition. The rest of the signatures need not be verified. This receipt will be in the form outlined in statute. The City Clerk will notify the Mayor that there are adequate signatures to place the initiated measure on the ballot. The Initiative Petition will then be referred to the City Council for action.

If the City Clerk accepts the Initiative Petition filing and determines that the Initiative Petition qualifies for placement on the ballot, one of the following actions may occur:

1. The City Council may enact the Initiative Petition as an ordinance and refer the ordinance to a referendum vote.
2. The City Council may enact the Initiative Petition without referring it to a referendum vote. In that case, the ordinance is subject to a Referendum Petition.
3. The City Council may decline to enact the Initiative Petition. In that event, the Chandler Municipal Code states the following:

4-4. – Initiative and referendum elections.
The City Council may by majority vote call a special election to vote on any matter referred for a vote of the citizens of Chandler in accordance with the laws of the State of Arizona and the City of Chandler Charter. If a special election is not called by the City Council, the referred matter if properly qualified shall be submitted to the voters at the next ensuing municipal election.

Notes



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