



CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

AGENDA MEMORANDUM

One-Reading for the City Council Meeting of August 11, 2026

DATE: July 30, 2026
TO: Mayor & Council
FROM: Rebecca Huerta, City Secretary
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One-Reading ordinance ordering a special election for proposed citizen-initiated charter amendment – “Fair Water Amendment”

CAPTION:

One-Reading Ordinance ordering a special election to be held on November 3, 2026, in the City of Corpus Christi on providing for consideration of amendments to the Charter of the City of Corpus Christi proposed by petitioners; providing for procedures for holding such election; providing for notice of election and publication thereof; providing for establishment of branch early polling places; designating polling place locations; authorizing a joint election with Nueces County; and enacting provisions incident and relating to the subject and purpose of this ordinance.

SUMMARY:

On June 15, 2026, a citizen-initiated petition was filed with the City Secretary’s Office to propose a charter amendment regarding industrial water drought surcharge and curtailment, known as the Fair Water Amendment. The City Secretary’s Office verified the petition. By ordinance, the City Secretary certifies that it meets the minimum number of signatures required under state law to require the Council to submit the charter amendment to the voters at the November 2026 election.

BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS:

Under Texas Local Government Code § 9.004, the governing body must place a proposed charter amendment on the ballot if a petition signed by at least five percent of the city’s registered voters, or 20,000, whichever is smaller, is submitted. On June 15, a petition for a citizen-initiated charter amendment regarding industrial water drought surcharge and curtailment, known as the Fair Water Amendment, was filed with the City Secretary’s Office. On that date, there were 182,171 registered voters in the city. Five percent of 182,171 is 9,109. Consequently, at least 9,109 valid signatures are required to compel the Council to place the citizen-initiated charter amendment on the ballot.

The petition contained 12,788 signatures (excluding those marked out by the petitioners) on 7,648 pages. Texas Election Code, Sec. 277.003, allows statistical sampling of at least 25% of the signatures submitted on the petition. Statistical sampling is the selection of a subset of individuals from a population to estimate characteristics of the whole population. The subset, called a statistical sample (or sample for short), is intended to reflect the whole population, and statisticians aim to collect samples that are representative of the population. Statistical sampling saves time and money by verifying a manageable subset rather than the entire population.

The City Secretary contracted with Dr. Tom Sager, a UT Austin professor and statistician, to advise on sampling techniques. He provided a statistical sample of 3,197 signatures for verification, representing 25% of the total signatures submitted. The City Secretary's Office staff verified the signatures in the sample and reported the results to Dr. Sager. On July 20, the City Secretary received a statistician's report showing that the petition meets the minimum requirement of 9,109 valid signatures to be placed on the November 3, 2026 ballot.

Additionally, the petitioners included proposed ballot language with the petition. In 2025, Senate Bill 506 (89th Leg., RS) added Section 273.101 to the Election Code, creating a new procedure that allows a registered voter eligible to vote in the election, or an authorized representative of a home-rule city, to initiate a review of ballot proposition language proposing a city charter amendment. The Texas Secretary of State (TxSOS) reviews the proposition language to determine whether it is "misleading, inaccurate, or prejudicial" (Sec. 273.101(b)). The deadline to request the review is not later than the 7th day after the date on which the home-rule city orders the ballot proposition (Sec. 273.101(a)). However, the TxSOS advised cities that ballot language could be submitted before the election is ordered. The advantage of obtaining Secretary of State approval is that it protects home-rule cities from the risk of having to pay fees and costs if they later lose a lawsuit over the "clarity, definiteness, and facial neutrality" of a ballot proposition. A city secretary is among the authorized city representatives who may submit ballot language, and this was done on June 17. The TxSOS approved the petitioners' proposed ballot language on June 22. The approved ballot language was incorporated into the ordinance.

The statutory last day to order a special election on a measure (charter amendment) is Monday, August 17.

FISCAL IMPACT: Based on the most recent final actuals for the 2024 general and special elections and the 2024 runoff election, staff has budgeted a conservative \$476,000 combined for the general, special, and runoff elections, if necessary, and associated election expenses. Expenses will be paid in FY 2027.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Ordinance