

**The Charter Revision Handbook was developed from an MML seminar.  
The presentations have been transcribed as Chapters 2-10.**

Daniel C. Matson, Moderator

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I want to welcome you to what we believe is a Michigan first - a workshop for charter commissioners--a novel event in our state. The origin of this workshop stems from the joint effort of the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys and the staff of the Michigan Municipal League. The Municipal Attorneys Association is a chartered section of the League.

There are a number of Michigan communities which are now in the process of revising their charters. By assisting such communities in sharing information about the nature and creation of their fundamental governing documents, the sponsoring organizations are also attempting to fulfill their own purposes.

This workshop is a perception of the future of our communities as viewed through municipal charters. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Michigan has had the experience of two Constitutions and the Home Rule Cities Act. This legal framework presents dramatic opportunities for municipalities to thrive through self-government, principally by the device of the home rule charter.

We ask you to continually reflect upon how your work as charter commissioners will enhance government in your community in the next century. In your deliberations, please consider what may be essential to good government that may not yet be implemented in your municipality. There will be need for improvement in certain areas which may not have been previously addressed in your existing charters; such as planning for change, continuing education of officials and staff, ethics, out-of-court conflict resolution methods, intergovernmental relations, cultural enhancement, including promotion of the arts, keeping the public informed, and future charter revisions. How creative will you be in this process? What else may your community not presently address that you envision as a present or future need? Should certain of the mentioned items be mandated in the municipal charter? Should they be referred to in a preface or preamble to your charter? Should their benefits be reserved for more casual treatment by future officials?

Your commitment as charter commissioners is evidenced by your sacrifice of much time and sharing of talent, both of which will produce benefits for untold numbers of citizens within your communities. You are not alone in this process.

The participants in this workshop represent much experience. Your presenters today include learned university professors, charter consultants, experienced charter commissioners, municipal attorneys, specialists from the Attorney General's office, Michigan Municipal League support staff, and the substantial resources of the League. The materials that you will receive constitute a unique workbook containing the statutory framework for charters, treatises of Michigan home rule government, on various implementing procedures, and a checklist of what must appear in municipal charters. In addition, a charter data base is being developed by the Michigan Municipal League. All of this effort is for your benefit as you engage in the charter adventure.