

# Charter changes deserve support

With each ballot box marked, voters in municipal, county, state and national elections send someone into office to advocate for and protect us all.

Whether choosing a new city council member or returning a representative to the Capitol, bestowing trust upon another person is a part of what makes our brand of government tick.

With this trust, our elected leaders take on the true responsibility of operating in the most open, accessible means possible.

In the end, the concept is quite simple: Government works for all of us and it is our right to know what work is being done.

In the City of Louisville, a group of citizens advocating for open government practices recently took the first step toward further increasing our faith and trust in community leaders.

Through proposed amendments to the city's Home Rule Charter, these citizens are seeking to ensure that an atmosphere of open, accessible government continues in the city.

Their proposals merit further review and support by voters later this year.

The first proposed amendment to the city's guiding document seeks to require all government decisions be made during formal meetings, as op-

posed to during study sessions.

With this caveat, residents can ensure city leaders are conducting business where it should be conducted: in public and not in a less visible setting.

Although study sessions and pre-meeting gatherings often allow officials the opportunity to vet ideas or suggestions, it is best for elected officials to share their logic and votes before residents in formal meetings.

The second proposal forbids public bodies from engaging in "substantive" discussion of items not listed on meeting agendas.

Again, this suggestion is a step toward good government.

Citizens should be notified well in advance of any thoughtful discussions of issues that likely will affect them. Items added to the agenda at the last minute or brought up casually during meetings prevents the public at large from full participation.

Another proposal requires that all meetings take place in public buildings.

Although it may be tempting for officials to gather at informal settings, like a personal residence, officials must remember their role is to serve the public and to do so they must do that, well, publicly.

Not only are more citizens likely to be involved in discussions and decisions made during meetings at public buildings, but such a requirement also quells concerns about accessibility for all citizens.

A fourth proposal requires that all agenda-related materials, such as graphs, maps, and legal descriptions, be made available to the public.

This suggestion can be reached easily with city leaders posting a full agenda in a three-ring binder and offering it for review prior, during and after any municipal meeting.

Finally, the last proposal requires a cut in price to public records access fees and copying rights.

Providing access to documents and records — documents that belong to the people — is the price of good government.

It is important that people of all economic levels have access to paperwork that could affect them.

As November and another round of balloting comes into focus, Louisville residents should be proud to see such proposals laid out for their consideration and approval.