This is the section of the Model City Charter (eighth edition) that describes PR.

Best,

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Page 40, eighth edition

Section 6.01. City Elections.

(a)   Regular Elections. The regular city election shall be held [at the time established by state law] on the first   [day of week], in   [fall or spring month of odd- or even- numbered year], and every 2 years thereafter.

(b)   Registered Voter Defined. All citizens legally registered under the constitution and laws of the state of   to vote in the city shall be registered voters of the city within the meaning of this charter.

(c)   Conduct of Elections. The provisions of the general election laws of the state of shall apply to elections held under this charter. All elections provided for by the charter shall be conducted by the election authorities established by law. Candidates shall run for office without party designation. For the conduct of city elections, for the prevention of fraud in such elections and for the recount of ballots in cases of doubt or fraud, the city council shall adopt ordinances consistent with law and this charter, and the election authorities may adopt further regulations consistent with law and this charter and the ordinances of the council. Such ordinances and regulations pertaining to elections shall be publicized in the manner of city ordinances generally.

(d)   Proportional Representation. The council may be elected by proportional representation by the method of the single transferable vote.

(e)   Beginning of term. The terms of council members shall begin the   day of   after their election.

Commentary.

(a-c) Although most states regulate local elections entirely or to a very substantial extent by state statutes, a local charter may provide certain variations. For example, home rule charters may provide for nonpartisan local elections as provided in this section. Traditionally, the Model has advocated separating municipal elections from state and national elections to allow a clear focus on local issues. State election laws and city

charters frequently schedule municipal elections in the fall of odd-numbered years or in the spring of the year. However, recent evidence suggests that turnout is higher during state and national elections. Some now advocate moving local elections to coincide with state and national elections to increase participation in local races. The Committee that developed this Model recognized the trade-off involved with each choice and decided not to express a preference. If permissible under the state election laws, such timing should be specified in the charter.

(d) As in the sixth and seventh editions, the eighth edition includes proportional representation (PR) via the single transferable vote method as an alternative means for electing the council. Until 1964 (when the sixth edition of the Model City Charter was published), the Model recommended the Hare system (also known as preference voting, choice voting, and the single transferable vote system) of PR as the preferred method of electing city councils. It had been used in 22 American cities but by the early 1960s had been discarded in all but Cambridge, Massachusetts, where it is still used to elect the city council and school committee. The Republic of Ireland also uses it to elect members of the House of Parliament. Unquestionably, PR provides the greatest equity in representing all sectors of the community. However, the relative complexity of PR when using antiquated voting procedures and the long and expensive process of counting ballots by hand concerned some voters where it was used and prevented it from becoming a widespread reform measure. There is renewed interest in PR because of its potential to assure representation of minority populations and because technological developments now allow a computerized voting and counting system, thus eliminating the major objection to PR.

The single transferable vote method allows voters to rank candidates in a multi-member district by preference. The method depends on creation of a winning threshold—a share of votes that each council member must receive to be elected. Election officials determine the threshold after all votes are counted, using a formula to determine the fewest number of votes that only the winning number of candidates can receive. In Cambridge, for example, officials divide the total number of valid ballots cast by the number of positions to be elected plus one. Under this approach, in an election for nine council seats where voters cast 15,000 valid ballots, the winning threshold is 1,501, or 15,000 divided by ten, plus one. Ten candidates theoretically could receive 1,500 votes, but only nine can obtain 1,501. Once a particular candidate receives the designated threshold of first choices, ballot counters redistribute any surplus votes for that candidate to another candidate based upon the voter's preferential ranking. Cambridge redistributes some ballots at full value, but modern technology now allows a more precise redistribution of the calculated share of every ballot at an equally reduced value.

After all surplus votes are redistributed, the weakest candidate is eliminated, and ballots from that candidate are counted for the next choice candidate on those voters' ballots. This process of redistributing votes from winning candidates and weak candidates continues until the necessary number of candidates have reached the threshold, or only nine candidates remain. In Cambridge, this has consistently led to ninety percent of voters helping to elect a candidate, more than sixty-five percent of voters having their first choice candidate win, and more than ninety-five percent of voters seeing one of their top three choices win.