Theoretical Advantages of Home Rule:
- Government is as close to the citizens as possible, and the city charter is adjusted to local conditions;
- Municipal officials have greater flexibility in responding to citizen needs for public services without waiting for state legislative authorization;
- Home rule cities have greater choice over governmental organization and more control over officials and employees;
- Home rule cities can develop more efficient administration because they are not bound by many state restrictions;
- Home rule tends to lighten the burden of the General Assembly by reducing the number of bills directly affecting cities;

Practical Advantages of Home Rule:
- Increased flexibility because each Home Rule city may determine:
  - Number of councilmen and terms of office;
  - Ward or at-large elections;
  - Number of elective and appointive officials;
  - Combination of city officials, such as combining collector, treasurer and auditor;
  - Form of government—city manager, administrator or mayor/council (duties of Mayor may be increased or decreased);
  - Duties of elective officials may be increased or decreased;
  - Powers, responsibilities and membership of various city boards, such as the park board, may be modified;
  - Increased powers because the citizens do not have to rely on the state legislature to grant them power and authority in areas such as:
    - Taxation;
    - Business license;
    - More flexibility procedures for the hiring and dismissal of personnel;
    - Adoption of regulations;
    - Provide for initiative, referendum and recall;
    - Conduct own local elections;
    - Establish conditions under which elective offices are vacated;
    - Emergency powers;
    - Flexibility in the establishment of fiscal procedures to conform to
    - Provision for capital improvement budget;
    - Conditions and terms of granting utility franchise (s);

A Home Rule city has more choice in its governmental organization and likely will develop a more efficient administration because of the absence of state restrictions or inattention to new municipal responsibilities.
MEET YOUR CANDIDATES

Dr. Herbert Lunday and his family moved to West Plains in 1993. Herb has been an administrator in the Missouri State University system for about 30 years, the last 20 of which were at the West Plains campus. He currently serves as the Dean of Student Services and oversees a variety of student services, including Grizzly Athletics departments. He is very active in community affairs, currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Greater West Plains Area Chamber of Commerce and Ozark Independent Living. He also serves on the West Plains Planning and Zoning Commission. He was previously President of the Heart of the Ozarks United Way Board of Directors and a two-time President of the West Plains Country Club. Herb and his wife, Mary Beth, have one son, Aaron, a pharmacist in Springfield. Herb holds a master’s degree and doctor’s degree from the University of Arkansas.

“West Plains is a special community. The growth and development of the city over the past 20 years is astonishing and I attribute much of that to the wonderful leaders who had the courage and vision to move the community in the right direction. West Plains needs to take the next logical step in making our own municipal decisions.”

Michael Hoff is a native of Howell County and has been a resident of West Plains for six years. He is currently employed as the Executive Vice-President and Chief Lending Officer at Community First Banking Company, based in West Plains, and sits on the bank’s Board of Directors. He has been a member of the West Plains Planning and Zoning Commission for four years, and currently serves as the Chairman of that commission. With more than 38 years of career banking experience, and numerous years of serving with the Chambers of Commerce, working with the city, county and state government officials, he is very interested in becoming a member of the Home Rule Charter Commission.

“I think that the Home Rule Charter form of government will eliminate one layer of bureaucracy from the system, and will allow West Plains to operate much more efficiently, without unnecessary delays and/or state intervention.”
Jerry Trick and his family have lived in West Plains since 1989, his wife's family has lived in this area since the 1970s. Jerry and his wife are both graduates of the College of the Ozarks and both received their masters from Missouri State University. They have two children, their oldest Charlie plays baseball at Culver Stockton College and their daughter Lorin will be graduating high school and earning her Associates Degree this May. Jerry has taught high school math for 7 years at Bakersfield and has taught full-time for Missouri State University-West Plains since 1996.

Jerry is a founding member of the Math Educators of South Central Missouri and through that organization he helps conduct various math events and contests locally each year. Jerry also helps conduct a few chess tournaments each year. He is a member of several other professional math educator organizations and attend various state, regional and national conferences each year. He has served on the West Plains Park Board and has always been interested in community and public service.

Toni (Chritton) Johnson was raised in West Plains, Kansas, Texas, Georgia, and graduated from high school in northern Virginia. However, her family tree reaches back four generations in Howell County. She graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in Journalism, and later returned to West Plains to serve as the Director of Public Relations for Air Evac Life team. The following year, she married Dennis Johnson, Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency. When Air Evac changed ownership in 2004, the Johnsons bought Grapevine Grocer. Later that year, they opened Café 37 in the West Plains Opera House, and a few months later purchased the building. Last year, they opened Ropers Saloon, also located in the Opera House. Toni is a member of the West Plains Rotary Club, and has served on the Tourism Committee and on the board of Downtown West Plains, Inc.

“First and foremost, the voting public needs to understand that forming a charter form of government will give, not only local officials, but ultimately local citizens more control over the way their city is run. Secondly, we need a dedicated and diverse group of commissioners to write this charter that will dramatically affect the future of our community. I'd be proud to be part of that group.”

Brian Mitchell is a native of West Plains and has worked for the City of West Plains since 1991. He currently serves as the Street Superintendent. Brian is a West Plains R-7 School Board member and also serves on the Heart of the Ozarks Fair Board Association.

He and his wife, Heather, have two sons, Brandon and Weston. Remaining in West Plains to raise their family was important to Brian and Heather.

“West Plains provides a sense of security to those wishing to raise a family in a good environment. West Plains has a lot to offer and will continue to grow with the guidance of our city government. Becoming a Home Rule Charter City will provide the City to operate more efficiently and make more decisions on our own.”

Jim Laughary graduated from Apache, Oklahoma High School in 1986. He attended Harding University and graduated with a Bachelor in Arts in Math Education in 1991. He taught and coached at West Plains High School for 8 years before taking the position of High School Principal at Bakersfield High School in 1999.

Following three years at Bakersfield, he returned to WPHS in 2002 as Assistant High School Principal. Jim accepted the position of Principal at WPHS in 2009, and, after three years as Principal, became the Director of South Central Career Center in July of 2012.

He graduated with a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University in 1997, and a Specialist Degree in Educational Administration from MSU in 2006. Jim is married and has 4 children.

“I believe the Charter Government initiative will be a very positive step for West Plains and I look forward to serving on this team, if chosen.”

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Mike Topliff is a long time resident of West Plains. Currently he is employed by DRS as a Network Administrator. Mike is active in the community as Vice President of the Park Board, Boy Scouts of America, and local theater. Mike is a member of Mt. Zion Lodge and the American Legion. Mike also volunteers time with the West Plains High School Band, Breakfast with Santa Claus, and the West Plains Christmas Parade.

“I feel that moving to a charter form of government will allow the citizens of West Plains to redefine our government. We will be able to restructure the elected officials and grant them powers to manage the city. This will also empower voters more control over city ordinances and their elected officials.”

Brenda Smith has lived in West Plains for 40 years and graduated from West Plains High School. She obtained her B.S. and M.S. in ED from Missouri State University-Springfield and Certificate for Career & Technical Education Director through the University of Central Missouri. Brenda is married to Kevin W. Smith. They have two daughters. Currently she serves part-time as the Adult Program Coordinator/Assistant Director for South Central Career Center in West Plains. Brenda retired in 2012 after serving the past 10 years in administration for the West Plains R-7 School District and the prior 23 years as a high school teacher. She served on the board of directors for the local United Way, South Central Workforce Investment Board, and the OzSBI (Ozarks Small Business Incubator). She has served as president for West Plains Chamber of Commerce Board, West Plains Rotary Club, Business and Professional Women, and University of MO Howell County Extension Council (2 terms).

Brenda served on the Tourist Development Advisory Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and currently serves on West Plains City Council.

“Moving to the charter form of government will provide for more local input and control by the citizens of the community to meet their needs.”

Don Eagleman was born and raised on a farm in southern Howell County. He graduated from West Plains High School and what is now the Missouri School of Science and Technology at Rolla. He worked as a computer programmer and a manager of computer programmers for Boeing and NCR, primarily in Wichita, Kansas. He moved back to Howell County when he retired in 1998 and has been a resident of West Plains since 2001. He has maintained a lifelong interest in politics and how governments work.

“Our current form of city government literally requires an act of the Missouri legislature before our City Council can make any significant changes, e.g. impose a tax on motels. A charter form of government will allow us to control our own destiny. It will give us much greater flexibility to meet our community’s needs in a timely manner in this time of economic turbulence.”

“The commission starts with a blank sheet of paper, so until it is written, the charter can’t be judged to be either good or bad. Since the charter that is produced has to be approved by the voters before it becomes effective, they will have an opportunity to determine if we have produced a good one before it is accepted.”

Reid Grigsby has worked in the family business, Norman Orr Office Supply, for the past 14 years. He graduated from West Plains High School in 1993, and continued his education at Arkansas State University, where he earned a B.S. in Psychology. His wife, Tracy, also works in the family business. His daughter, Gilly, and son, Gus, are currently students at Richards Elementary. Since moving back to West Plains 1998, he has been very active in various community activities. He has previously served as President of the West Plains Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of West Plains, and the West Plains Public Library Foundation, and has served as a board member of several community groups.

“I support Home Rule because, I believe that in order for West Plains to continue to grow in a responsible and efficient way, that local decisions should be made by local people that are familiar with our unique situations and needs.”
Sherrill Thompson is from West Plains and has seen tremendous growth and development of the city. She has a master’s degree in accounting from Missouri State University and has worked in accounting throughout her career. She has been active in Rotary, The Chamber of Commerce, and the West Plains Council on the Arts and has served on the boards of several local not-for-profit organizations.

“If West Plains residents vote to approve starting the process to draft a Charter for our city I would be honored to work with and for the citizens of West Plains by answering your questions and obtaining your input relevant to the drafting of the Charter, the legal document defining the structure and the organization of our city government. A well-drafted Charter based on citizens’ input will maximize local government control. While reducing the current level of state control over our city, we will continue to benefit from Missouri Constitutional protections such as prohibitions against tax increases without a vote of the people and deficit financing. Voter approval of the Home Rule Charter will ensure that our city is governed more locally and will provide for increased flexibility for citizens of future generations as West Plains continues to grow.”

Donnie “Scott” Bounds was born in South St. Louis and served in the U.S. Army. He has lived in the West Plains area for approximately 27 years and a resident of the City of West Plains for the last 7 years. He has one daughter that attends West Plains High School. He has worked in the auto sales industry for approximately 6 years and was a co-owner of Ozark Valley Mill Works. He attended Drury University and Missouri State University. He is a member of the NRA (CCW instructor), National Tea Party, and founder of the US Constitutional activist group We the People (defending, among others, our 2nd Amendment, the right to bear arms.)

“Though we live in the greatest state in the union, a city charter would allow more freedom and independents from the state for the citizens of West Plains. A lot of people want a large government to run their lives, I do not agree. I believe that Freedom, Independence, Infrastructure, and Prosperity all begin and grow at the local level. We all have a voice, and together, our voice can be heard.”

Dennis E. Beasley has served on citizen participation committees, Charter Commissions, and an Ombudsman Commission while with the federal government.

“Currently, the City of West Plains exists at the pleasure of the State of Missouri. Becoming a Charter City will change that. West Plains will have control over its own destiny.”

Dennis believes he has the knowledge, skills, ability, and experience the city needs in a Charter Commissioner. He and his wife, Rebecca, moved back to West Plains in 2011. In the late 1980s Dennis served as a staff announcer at a local radio station.

Barry Slayton has been a resident of West Plains, MO for the past 25 years. He has lived in south central Missouri since 1972. Slayton has been employed by West Plains Bank and Trust Company for 21 years and currently holds the position of Executive Vice President/Chief Lending Officer. In addition, he serves on the Board of Directors for the Bank.

Slayton is a Veteran and holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has served in various civic organizations and volunteered on numerous committees. He has been married to his wife, Marge, a local insurance agent for 42 years.

His desire to participate in the formation of a Home Rule Charter Commission in West Plains is rooted in the belief that residents and local city government should have the greatest power when it comes to deciding the direction of the community. He contends this change will afford more local control over local issues than our current city government structure.
Terry Sanders was born in West Plains and has lived here most of his life. Terry graduated from West Plains Public Schools and attended Southwest Missouri State University in West Plains. He has been married for 36 years and has 2 children and 5 grandchildren living in West Plains. Terry has worked at Ozark Action, Inc. for 32 years, currently serving as the Housing Division Director. He has worked with the city on various projects and currently serves on the West Plains Planning and Zoning Commission.

“I believe a Home Rule Charter is an opportunity to improve our local government today and for many years to come by transferring power from State Government to the citizens of West Plains.”

David Kirk was born and raised in West Plains. He attended West Plains schools as well as his parents, Mr. & Mrs. John T. Kirk and his son and daughter. After college graduation David came back to West Plains to live and work with his wife of 35 years. His wife, Lisa, is a RN and works with Hospice Compassion. He taught and was principal before he retired three years ago to spend time with his four grandchildren. He has worked in various civic organizations, is currently serving on the local Red Cross Board, and has seen West Plains continue to grow.

“I would like to see our city continue this process and feel the Home Rule Charter will help us. My understanding of the Charter is that it keeps the control in the hands of local city government which I feel is in good hands. I like being able to have a say on how our local laws are governed.”

Gary Duggins is a retired Facilities Manager/Project Engineer. He and his wife Janice have been married 40 years and have 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren. They are long time residents of West Plains.

Gary graduated from West Plains High School and University of Missouri Rolla with a degree in Electrical Engineering. He has a Missouri Professional Engineering License.

He has served on several community committees and boards including 15 years on the Ozarks Medical Center Board of Directors.

“I am very excited for the city to have an opportunity to evaluate the Charter form of Government. I feel that this type of Government has the potential to allow the citizens of West Plains to tailor their Government to the unique needs of the local area.”

Ray Gobel is a long time resident of West Plains and a self-made businessman. He graduated from West Plains High School before pursuing business opportunities in Louisiana, Texas, and Kansas.

Over the past 34 years, he has lived in West Plains and worked in various industries. Currently, he and his wife of 36 years, Margaret, are owner/operators of Negri Plumbing. Ray previously served on the West Plains City Council and during that time became aware of the importance of a Home Rule Charter form of government. He is a member of the Home Builders Association and the West Plains Chamber of Commerce. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his three daughters, one son, and eleven grandchildren.

“I see this as an opportunity for the city to establish more local control of city government by allowing the citizens of West Plains to make changes without the need of state legislature action. This would mean more flexibility in today's needs and the future needs of the city.”