



# **Wrentham Charter Review Public Forum**

## ***Charter Review Update and Proposed Amendments***

**4 October 2023**

# Charter Review Committee (CRC)

- 10 Year Review Requirement
  - Per Acts of 2014, Chapter 116, Wrentham Home Rule Charter
- Members of the CRC
  - Mr. Kevin Sweet, Town Administrator
  - Ms. Cindy Thompson, Town Clerk
  - Mr. Jim Anderson, Select Board
  - Mr. Mike King, Finance Director
  - Mr. Jerry McGovern, Citizen-at-Large

# Agenda

1. Background on the Acts of 2014, Chapter 116
2. Focus and Approach of the Review
3. Proposed Amendments
4. Public Feedback
5. Next Steps

# Acts of 2014

- Town Government Study Committee (TGSC) to Charter
- Focus on greater professionalism; matching authorities to responsibilities
- Provide improved efficiencies and responsiveness to citizens
- Greater management of our assets and infrastructure
- ***On a day-to-day basis...Town Administrator: Authorities to match Responsibilities***

# Focus and Approach for Charter Review

- Continue to expand the professionalism, while improving citizen engagement
- What was left undone from 2014?
- What are the impacts and trends since 2014?
- Three Tracks:
  - Processes and Procedures
  - Authorities and Responsibilities
  - Structure and Organization

# Proposal Categories

- Proposals related to:
  - Elected Boards and Officials
  - Organization/Structure, and Processes/Procedures
  - Additional changes related to edits, revised verbiage, and clarifications

# Proposals Related to Organization et al

- Town Manager – Title Change; Revises Appointing Authorities
- Length of Term for Moderator - from 1 year to 3 years
- Police and Fire Departments – removes civil service requirements
- Title Changes
  - Director of Public Works – vice Superintendent
  - Director of Planning and Economic Development – vice Town Planner
- Organizational Re-alignment; Process Changes

*Related to  
Financial Management*

# Proposals Related to Organization et al

*Related to  
Financial Management*

- Move the Assessor Office under the Finance Director; three divisions:

- Treasurer-Collector
- Accounting
- Assessing

*MA Dept of Local Services  
recommends a Consolidated  
Finance Dept as a Best Practice*

- Rationale: Provides greater coordination, collaboration, and cohesiveness for effective financial planning and management.

- Revise the Budget Development Process

- Revise the Capital Improvement Plan Process



# Proposals Related to Elected Boards

- Change the following from Elected to Appointed:
  - Board of Assessors
  - Board of Health
  - Board of Library Trustees
  - Constables
- Two primary drivers ...

## Driver #1: The Trend

- Over last six years 16 of 31 races had no candidates and required write-In votes.
- Over last three years, its 10/16.
- 12 races were “won” with less votes than names required for nomination papers.
- Only 2 races were contested.

Year	Ballots Cast	Board	Openings	Candidates	Write Ins	# Names	# for Winner
2018	751	BOA	1	0	52	26	8
		BOH	1	1			
		Library	2	2			
		Constable					
		Planning	3	2	42		10
2019	323	BOA	1	0	8	8	*
		BOH	1	1			
		Library	2	2			
		Constable	3	2	16	5	11
		Planning	3	2	0	0	*
2020	813	BOA	1 (2 yr)	0	68	19	16
		BOA	1 (3 yr)	1			
		BOH	1	1			
		Library	2	2			
		Constable					
		Planning	2	2			
2021	1,015	BOA	1	0	113	38	27
		BOH	1	0	76	35	10
		Library	2	1	41	24	12
		Constable					
		Planning	3	1	215	28	94/73
2022	1,409	BOA	1 (1 yr)	0	118	33	17
		BOA	1 (3 yr)	0	88	31	13
		BOH	1	1			
		Library	1 (1 yr)	0	127	24	72
		Library	2 (3 yr)	2			
		Constable	3	3			
		Planning	2	3			
2023	984	BOA	1	0	84	29	15
		BOH	1	2			
		Library	2	2			
		Constable	1	0	148	30	101
		Planning	2	1	235	23	208

# Proposals Related to Elected Boards

- **Driver #2: Impacts and Working Solutions**
  1. Increase in size of town and accompanying budgets, increased complexity and associated competencies/qualifications, knowledge, experience with decreasing interest to run for office
  2. Unchallenged elections and write-in candidates means less scrutiny, and potentially greater risk
  3. Current circumstances and mechanism for filling vacancies has become common; Appointments have shown to allow for self-recruitment, and attain highly qualified volunteers, provide more scrutiny
  4. Independence and professionalism of ZBA and CONCOM provide examples of how this is successful
- *The overall intent is to find the right balance between Tradition and what's Best for Town Operations*

# Proposals Related to Elected Boards

What It Doesn't Do	What It Does
Does not change any authorities or responsibilities	Provides better scrutiny of qualifications and experience
Does not add new oversight or limit independence	Enables boards to seek candidates that match needs
	Eliminates fears/concerns of running for election or length of commitment
	Provides simpler path for those that have already been engaged
	Provides quicker vacancy fills
	Eliminates reliance on write-in votes
	Eliminates lame-duck members

**Appointing Authority:** *Select Board, with input from incumbent and current appointed board members*

**Transition Plan:** *Current members stay elected until end of current term*

# Proposals Related to Elected Officials

- Change Town Clerk from Elected to Appointed
- Rationale
  - Upon a turnover, the Town requires knowledge and expertise to meet ever increasing complexity and mandates
  - It's no longer a "clerk's" job; its really a "Director of Elections and Public Records"
  - Appointment provides a wider access to experience
  - Appointment reduces risk and learning curve
- Appointing Authority – Town Manager
- Transition Path – current Clerk stays elected until end of current term.

# One More Proposal Related to Elected Officials

- Change the Constables from Elected to Appointed

# Finding the Balance

Appointments	
<i>Current Situation</i>	<i>Impacts</i>
Growing trend of reliance on write-in votes	Examination/Scrutiny of applicants
Increased complexity for effectiveness and compliance	Knowledge and Experience
	Recruitment

Elections	
<i>Current Situation</i>	<i>Impacts</i>
Growing trend of reliance on write-in votes	Risk – Ineffectiveness of operations
Increased complexity for effectiveness and compliance	Risk - Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

# Common Across the Commonwealth

- 130 Town Clerks in MA are appointed
- Seeing a similar trend with Boards of all types
- Every new charter or amended charter (enacted in last six years) we've reviewed is making these positions appointed.





# Discussion and Feedback

# Summary

- Most significant proposed amendments relate to changes for elected boards and officials
- Change from elected to appointed is intended to balance Tradition with current and forthcoming needs for effective Town operations.
- Proposals are not a reflection on past or current performance, and are not solely driven by election data. The are to ***address current trends and increasing complexities going forward, and to safeguard effective and compliant government.***

# Next Steps

- 12 Oct – Final Draft Of Charter with Proposed Amendments posted for Public Review; will have two sets of documents:
    - Full Track Changes (Deletions and Additions)
    - Accepted Track Changes (Clean copy that is to be voted on)
  
  - 26 Oct – Roundtable Presentation on Wrentham Wrentham Cable Access
  
  - 13 Nov – Town Meeting Vote
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- Spring (?) 2024 Approval by Legislature
  - January 1, 2025 - Enactment

# Likely TM Warrant Articles

1. Town Clerk
2. Board of Assessors
3. Board of Health
4. Library Board of Trustees
5. Constables
6. Planning Board
7. Content Changes (Related to Organization and Procedures)
8. Editorial Corrections
9. Typographical/grammatical Corrections
10. Petition to Legislature

# Feedback

➤ **Email:**

[bos@wrentham.com](mailto:bos@wrentham.com); Subj: Charter Review Feedback

➤ **Postal:**

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Attn: Charter Review Feedback  
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Wrentham, MA02093