

Proposed Charter Revision Summary

The Board of Selectman would be the primary policy body for the town and will guide long range planning in consultation with other town boards. The Town Administrator will be responsible for the implementation of such policies and for the efficient operation of the town government.

1. Citizens have the right through their elected officials to determine the goals and policies which will guide the Town Administrator in managing municipal matters.
2. Without the burden of administrative concerns, the Board of Selectmen can focus on critically important tasks such as determining policy and long-range goals, appointing volunteers to committees within 90 days, and increasing communications with other boards.
3. Weekly meetings provide insufficient time to run day-to-day operations.
4. Clearly delineated responsibilities would increase both efficiency and accountability.
5. Certain jobs are best handled by professionals trained in municipal administration in order to minimize the possibility of lawsuits. Not all volunteers have the time or training to keep up with the increasingly complex laws and regulations
6. This proposed Charter Revision would encourage the town to fully utilize the education and experience that a professional Town Administrator provides and thus provide value for the salary paid.

The Board of Selectmen will increase from three to five members.

1. Provides a greater diversity of viewpoints which is very important for a Board focused on policy.
2. Allows for subcommittees to do research and expedite preparation for meetings. Under the Open Meeting Law this is not possible with only 3 members on the Board of Selectmen.
3. A larger board would retain institutional memory while simultaneously, citizens with new ideas could join the board
4. This structure would be more attractive to potential candidates. There are more open seats at election time, there is an ability to divide up the workload, and policy work would be more appealing to potential candidates than routine administrative matters.
5. Towns that have five-member boards report more in depth discussion of issues. More members bring more perspectives and new members bring new ideas.

Hiring practices are professionalized, standardized and include important checks and balances.

1. The Town Administrator will manage the hiring process. Designating a Town Administrator who has received professional training in employment practices will minimize the likelihood of lawsuits.
2. Elected and Appointed Boards will be involved throughout the process and must approve the selection of a department head. Appointed and elected volunteer boards are responsible for setting policy, they work with their department heads and understand the needs of their department. This process provides for both citizen and professional input and provides an important check and balance.
3. The Board of Selectmen will have no direct role in the hiring of a department head for an elected board. Having the Town Administrator's role clearly stated in the charter enables the professional to do his job without outside interference and thus respects the statutory rights of other elected boards.
4. Department heads will consult with their Board prior to hiring employees in their department. The Town Administrator must approve. While the input of elected officials is respected, this will increase accountability by making it clear that employees in a department report to their department head rather than a board that is not involved in day-to-day operations.
5. Certain positions remain appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The check and balance are elections by the citizens. They continue to appoint volunteer boards. As elected officials, they will know many citizens and their qualifications better than one person serving as Town Administrator.

The Town Administrator will be supervising the general operations of town government but the elected boards rights and responsibilities are respected.

1. Responsibility for operational oversight of town departments is given to the Town Administrator. Creating an organizational structure consistent through all town departments clarifies accountability, increases efficiency and encourages departments to work cooperatively.
2. Elected and appointed boards have rights and responsibilities under Massachusetts General Laws. The revised Charter protects these boards from inappropriate interference by a Town Administrator in their specific areas of responsibility with the clause, "unless otherwise provided under MGL or town by-laws" in sections C 1 and 2 under Administrative responsibilities of the Town Administrator.
3. By allowing town by-laws to clarify the role of the Town Administrator in supervising town departments, should an elected board believe that the Town Administrator is encroaching upon their statutory responsibilities, they can propose a by-law change at town meeting. No change in the charter would be needed.

The Advisory Board will be appointed by a nominating committee consisting of one member of the Board of Selectmen, one member of the Advisory Board and the Town Moderator who will serve as Chair. In addition, the proposed Charter Revision clarifies the duties of the advisory board by encouraging consideration of the impact of articles on future budgets and revenue.

1. The Advisory Board reports to town meeting, the legislative body of the town and therefore should not be appointed by the executive branch. Very few Boards of Selectmen in the Commonwealth appoint Advisory Board members.
2. A committee made up of 3 members from boards with a total membership of 15 citizens could recommend a wide range of candidates.
3. The Moderator would be Chair and could make sure no one board dominates the process. This provides a check and balance.
4. A committee with representatives from both the Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Board would fully understand the specific needs of the Advisory Board at any given time.
5. This format is presently used successfully in other communities.

Highway Surveyor's position would change from elected to appointed.

1. This is a skilled, full time, paid position and, as such, should be appointed, as are other Norwell department heads.
2. This job involves heavy equipment and the person managing this department needs specific skills to minimize the likelihood of injury, property damage and lawsuits.
3. Elections limit the choice to only Norwell citizens willing to run for the job.
4. Unlike appointments, an elected job has no specific requirements thus potentially resulting in the election of an unqualified person.
5. Appointments protect a competent employee from losing his job to a less qualified but popular candidate.
6. Very few towns elect Highway Surveyors anymore for the reasons above. This elected position is left over from simpler, less litigious times when towns were significantly smaller with fewer risks.

NOTE: While Norwell has been fortunate to have had capable elected Highway Surveyors, we are recommending this change to protect Norwell from potentially serious problems in the future.

