

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION TOWN OF WESTON

Re: Draft Report for Consideration at Public Hearing

In accordance with the statutes the Charter Revision Commission is conducting a second Public Hearing prior to our obligation to submit a draft report to the Board of Selectmen on the 24th of April. In order to facilitate the review we have prepared this document to help you walk through the substantive changes.

At the outset we would like to remind the public that the Board of Selectmen identified the following issues for review when it [created our Commission](#) on September 24, 2025:

- a) Review and recommend enhancements to the Charter's existing provisions regarding financial transparency, budgeting, expenditures, and accounting.
- b) Evaluate the effectiveness, timelines, and public engagement of the budget process and to recommend improvements as needed.
- c) Study minority representation per state statute (CGS §9-167a) to determine any benefit of following the statutory process compared to the current allocation. Recommend language and approach implementation if a change is beneficial.
- d) Evaluate the size and length of term for [certain] elected [appointed] boards compared to surrounding municipalities to reflect population size, quorum standards and efficient decision making.
- e) Align Charter language to reflect positions that are now appointed instead of elected and account for appointed positions that are employees represented by collective bargaining agreements or not in alignment with State Statute.
- f) Identify and recommend language to address inconsistent terminology.
- g) Consider adding a requirement to review the Charter every 10 years.
- h) Amend the Charter to remove unnecessary and redundant language and other inaccuracies.

We believe that we met each of these goals in both letter and spirit as you will see from our review.

Members

Cian O'Sullieabhain, Chair – Kevin Thompson, Vice Chair – Monica Goldstein - David Muller
Thomas Seigel (Resigned, effective March 25, 2026) – Selectman Tony Pesco, Ex-officio Liaison

Karl Kilduff, Town Administrator

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Attorney Steven G. Mednick, Charter Counsel

Themes and Findings of the Commission

Throughout the process the Commission was steadfast in its adherence to the notion that the Charter should encourage and facilitate public engagement. That approach aligns with the Board of Selectmen’s mandate, particularly in Item #1, 2, 6 and 8.

The proposed revisions address the need for increased public engagement in many places. It starts with expanded definitions, moved to the beginning of the document to both improve public understanding of the document and to reduce or eliminate redundancy and ambiguity in the charter. We hope the definitions relating to the convening and conduct of meetings will be helpful to residents when attending a Town Meeting, or a Board or Commission meeting. For example, a convenor of a meeting or a member of the public has one place to go to find out what constitutes a **”Public Meeting”** and how **”Public Notice,” “Meeting Notice”** or **”Hearing Notice”** are defined (all by state law), including the following:

- where posted notice can be found (physical and electronic notice or, if required by state or federal law or Ordinance, newspaper notice);
- what is included in the agenda, including content of matters before a body
- how to participate in or contribute to **”Public Hearings”** and what rules apply to public participation;
- when a Public Hearing is required

Public engagement is also addressed in our provisions on Boards and Commissions, elected (Article 6) and appointed (Article 8) and the Budget process (Article 9). One innovation in the proposed charter is the idea of a **Public Forum**. The Public Forum is a meeting facilitated by a moderator in which the members of the public and the relevant boards or commissions engage in dialogue. There is no decision making made during such a forum; however, it gives members of the public an opportunity to drill down into the thinking and rationale of the Town’s policymakers.

Approved Actions of the Charter Revision Commission.

Preamble: The preamble is an aspirational statement that has been in the Charter for many years. We have recommended adding two broad statements about our Town and what we hope we will aspire to over the years to come. First, there is our profound hope that the Charter will build on the origins of our town in the late 18th century. We express a desire to provide “a foundation for a government that builds a durable civic culture that benefits from the active, informed and equitable engagement of all members of this community.” It is not an idle, perfunctory recitation of different attributes just to feel that we are doing the right thing; but rather, an affirmation that

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each of us brings a unique character or personality to our own lives and we should embrace that diversity in Town Hall to advance the goals of our town.

Second, the first quarter of the 21st century has posed many challenges at all levels of government. Our second revision reflects our concern and, again, our hope that we as a community will welcome different ideas, political ideologies and affiliations and capture these ideas in an environment of "...mutual respect, civility and courtesy both in the ways we govern and relationships between our citizens and officials in Town Hall."

Article I: This Article is expanded considerably to address head-on the issues of public accessibility, understanding and engagement. In our view the Charter should not be a highly legalistic document; but rather, a readable and comprehensible governing document designed to advance a healthy and robust civic culture.

The first minor change is found in **§1.1(b)** which simply restates that our powers as a Town are only those expressly granted by the State of Connecticut. It is an important grounding principle that deserves clarity.

The proposed charter expands the **definitions** section from the current fifteen in Article 11 to thirty-one in **§1.3**. Again, these definitions are designed to improve public understanding of common terms used in the Charter, as follows:

- *Annual Town Budget*
- *Annual Town Budget Meeting*
- *Board or Commission*
- Board of Selectmen
- *Charter*
- Days
- Department or Town Department
- Election
- *Elector or Resident Elector*
- Employee or Town Employee
- Family Member
- First Selectman
- *Fiscal Year*
- *General Statutes*
- *Holiday*
- Law
- Meeting
- *Officer (revised)*
- Ordinance
- Public Forum or Forum
- Public Hearing or Hearing
- *Public Notice or Notice (revised)*
- *Public Official or Official (revised)*
- *Qualified Voter*
- Quorum
- Resolution
- Special Acts or Special Laws
- State
- Town
- Town Clerk
- Town Meeting

(Note: Italicized terms are in the existing Charter)

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As you proceed through the expanded Article 1 you will notice that the Commission moved Conflict of Interest and Ethics from the back of the Charter in Article 10 to a prominent place at the beginning of the document in **§1.4**. Again, the move is purposeful and not cosmetic. We believe that a robust and clear statement of our values is best positioned at the outset of the document.

The current provision of Article 10 is a simple aspirational assertion that Public Officials and Employees should engage in “the highest ethical standards, regardless of personal considerations” with respect to the “public good and within the bounds of law” and to “avoid conflicts of interest” compliance with the Charter. The new language in **§1.4** is a merger of that general proposition with the elevation of current ordinance standards into the principal governance document of the Town...the Charter. In this respect the statement of purpose in **§1.4(a)**, which incorporates the general language of 10.1(a) and (c) is merged with the Standards of Conduct that effectively constitutionalize the general propositions of the current Ethics Ordinance. These ideas are universal and should be memorialized in our Charter so that alteration would need to be approved by the people in a charter referendum.

The Charter retains the current requirement of adopting or amending the Conflict-of-Interest Policy and Ethics Ordinance, as currently mandated by **§10.2**. Yet, the Charter sets forth a rigorous standard to ensure procedures that are sound and fair, including a specific reference to confidentiality when complaints are lodged in order to minimize the impact of frivolous ethics charges designed to attract publicity.

There are three new provisions designed to address the broad issues of protecting the public and public processes in a 21st century that poses new challenges to governance. First, **§1.5** underscores the statutory mandates for open meetings and public records. This is consistent with mandates of the Board of Selectmen with regard to “public engagement.” While the Board of Selectmen focused on the budget process, we are hopeful they will accept the adoption of open government provisions to all public meetings and proceedings. Second, there is **§1.6** that follows on the theme of open government by addressing the need to conduct “orderly and fair administrative proceedings” by assuring public decorum at Public Meetings. Finally, **§1.7** is a provision that has been adopted by many municipalities throughout the State of Connecticut. It codifies the requirement for good faith actions by all public officials.

In **§1.8** we recommend consolidation of the removal provisions that are currently in **§7.7** for elected officials and **§8.5(b)** for appointed officials. This consolidated provision expands the due process protections which are critical for the success of any removal, including hearing procedures before a hearing officer or the Board of Ethics on the underlying allegations subject to a final hearing before the Board of Selectmen.

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The consolidated provision includes the following grounds that are in the current Charter, applicable to both elected and appointed officials:

- Willful malfeasance,
- Willful neglect of duty,
- Inability to serve,
- Conviction of a felony, although we added a provision that made it clear that the felony conviction would take place "...after becoming a Public Official" in order to constitute grounds for removal.
- A violation of 9.10(f) of the Charter (which is discussed in Article 9, below)

In lieu of a violation of Article 10 or the Town’s Code of Ethics as grounds for removal we recommend removal following “a finding of a violation by the Board of Ethics” as a more precise standard. The proposed draft eliminates vagueness of “abandonment of office” as a ground for removal, in favor of a more-specific standard which is failure to attend three consecutive meetings. Failure of Board of Ethics members to participate in mandatory education programs would also be grounds for removal. Of course, the Board of Selectmen may add additional grounds by unanimous vote, which may not be used against an Official during the term of office when such grounds are adopted.

The final change in Article 1 is **§1.9** which would move the Town from the current standard of “no more than a bare majority” of any elected or appointed Board or Commission in current §6.4 and §8.4 to the state standard established in C.G.S. 9-167a, as follows:

Column I	Column II
Total Membership	Maximum from one Party
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	4
7	5
8	5
9	6
More than 9	Two-thirds of total membership

Article 2: No material changes:

Article 3:

- Capitalization of defined terms.

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- **Section 3.4(g)** – repeal of restoration provision for election of Town Clerk and Tax Collector.
- **Section 3.5(a)** elimination of requirement for machine ballot voting at town Meetings.

Article 4:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 4.2** minor conformity revisions of the general powers, duties and responsibilities of the Board of Selectmen.

Article 5:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 5.1(a)** minor conformity revisions of the role of the First Selectman.

Article 6:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 6.2(a)** remove reference to Town Clerk as an election official.
- **Section 6.2(b)** (a) eliminates reference to the prior Charter Revision whereby the term of the Board of Finance was reduced from 6 to 4 years; and (b) reduces the size of the Board of Police Commissioners from 7 to 5 members, including a transition provision to implement the modification.
- **Section 6.4(a)** eliminates the current standard for minority party representation to correspond to the change in §1.9 of the Charter.
- **Section 6.4(c)** establishes the methodology of ballot placement to facilitate the provisions pertaining to minority party representation.
- **Section 6.6(c)** repeals the petition process to return the Town Clerk to status as an elected official

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Article 7:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 7.3** clarifies the ex officio status of the Board of Admission of Electors as an exception to the rules pertaining to minority party representation.
- **Section 7.6** establishes criteria for the selection of candidates elected independent of a political party following a vacancy.
- **Section 7.7** regarding removal of elected officials is repealed and replaced by §1.8.

Article 8:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 8.1(b)** is a new provision memorializing the Elector requirement for Board and Commissioner membership with the exception of student members who must be residents of the Town.
- **Section 8.1(c)** encourages appointing authorities to appoint Board and Commission members with the requisite “knowledge, expertise, experience and diversity” in conformity with the aspirational language of the Preamble.
- **Section 8.2(a)** changes the title of “Building Inspector” to “Building Official and adds the “Town Clerk” as an appointed official.
- **Section 8.2(b)** add three alternates to the Commission on the Arts, including a transition provision.
- **Section 8.4** eliminates the current standard for minority party representation to correspond to the change in §1.9 of the Charter.
- **Section 8.5(b)** repeals the removal provision in lieu of the consolidated provision in §1.8.
- **Section 8.6(a)(1)** clarifies that the Town may retain a law firm to provide legal services of the town with the designation of a firm member to hold the title “Town Attorney.”
- **Section 8.6(d)(1)** repeals the process for restoring the Tax Collector as an elected official.

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- **Section 8.6(e)** creates the Board of Ethics derived from the current ordinances. The revisions underscore the importance of an independent Board with staggered terms to ensure continuity. Other revisions include:
 - Mandatory training requirements to instill an embrace of the rule of law. Members who fail to maintain their mandatory training are subject to removal from the Board.
 - Authority for the Town to adopt an ordinance conferring subpoena authority on the Board of Ethics.
 - The Charter limits the use of the subpoena. Such authority is granted, only following (a) a consultation with the Town Attorney or independent counsel in the event of a conflict and (b) an affirmative vote of four of the five members of the Board.
 - Subpoena provisions include ‘pauses’, seeking to ensure subpoenas are not used for targeted political use.
 - The Board also has the authority to dismiss complaints if a complainant breaches the confidentiality of the process, required by state law, prior to a finding of “probable cause.”
 - Composition of the Board of Ethics cannot have more than 2 members from the same political party.

Article 9:

- Capitalization of defined terms.
- **Section 9.1(c)** codifies a Public Forum process for the proposed Board of Education budget on or before February 3rd of each year prior to approval of a proposed budget request. The Charter requires the Board of Education to (1) post on its website the proposed budget request and (2) repost the latest version of the quarterly report of current and projected expenditures and revenues as required by Law.
- **Section 9.2(d)** is a restatement and reordering of the second paragraph. There is no change.
- **Section 9.4(a)** requires the Board of Finance to conduct a Public Forum as the first meeting in the Public Hearing process.

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- **Section 9.4(b)** requires the First Selectman to present the recommendations of the Board of Selectmen as set forth in the proposed Annual Town Budget and the individual appropriations comprising the Budget for the ensuing Fiscal Year. The First Selectmen shall make available such Public Officials as may be required by the Board of Finance to facilitate public dialogue during the Forum. At any Public Forum, the Chair of the Board of Finance shall appoint a member of the Panel of Moderators to preside and facilitate the dialogue between the public and Public Officials.
- **Section 9.5** replaces the current deliberation and voting process at the Annual Town Budget Meeting with a Public Forum to discuss the proposed budget prior to transmittal to the Referendum. The revised charter increases accountability during the process and requires public officials to defend their actions throughout the budget process up to and including the Public Forum, prior to the Referendum, where the authority shifts to the voting public.
- **Section 9.9(a)** increases the amount the Board of Selectmen can use to add appropriations from the current \$5K/\$50K limits to \$10K/\$100K.
- **Section 9.10(c)-(g)** clarifies processes pertaining to inter- and intra-departmental transfers, year-end transfers, contingency transfers and public emergency transfers. We have added specific provisions pertaining to transfers between departments as well as contingency and emergency transfers where the Charter was previously silent. These provisions increase accountability in real time during the fiscal year to address needs where they may exist. The other changes in the section are restatement of current provisions with no substantive changes.

Article 10X: Repeals the “Ethical Standards” provision which is now found in Article 1 and Article 8.

Article 11 is repealed as the definitions are moved into Article 1.

Article 12 adds a requirement for a periodic review of the Charter not later than ten years from October 1, 2025.