

**Westwood Charter Review Committee**  
**Proposed Revisions Executive Summary**

**September 9, 2024**

The current Charter Review Committee was appointed by the Select Board during Spring '22. Following almost thirty (30) open meetings, and after receipt of input from numerous currently elected officials, current staff and appointed officials, formerly elected officials, and the general public, the Charter Review Committee prepared proposed revisions to the Charter. Our recommendations include substantive revisions to the Charter that affect the form of government. Additionally, we have recommended many minor technical revisions to make the Charter clearer and/or to facilitate better function of government. Finally, we recommend several housekeeping revisions to the Charter, such as revisions to address typos, renumbering, correction of internal citations, simplifying language, and the like.

**Chapter 2. Elections and Town Meeting**

- A. Specifically reference the Annual Town Election, rather than refer to the election as a session of the Annual Town Meeting (Technical);
- B. Allow the Select Board, in consultation with the Town Clerk, to delay the date of the Annual Town Election and related deadlines in the event that it coincides with a state or federal election or a declaration of a state of emergency is made due to threats to the public health and safety (Technical);
- C. Clarify that elected officials take office after the final session of the Annual Town Meeting or such later time as they are sworn (Housekeeping);
- D. Clarify the timing for filing of a pre-petition in advance of Town Meeting (Technical);
- E. Clarify the titles of the Spring and Fall Annual Town Meetings (Housekeeping);
- F. Add a new section clarifying that the Select Board may call a special town meeting at its discretion (Technical);
- G. Update reference to the "minutes" of town meetings from the antiquated "journal of the proceedings" (Housekeeping);
- H. Clarify timing by which Finance and Warrant Commission must hold hearing prior to annual and special meetings (Technical);
- I. Providing that the current quorum, (which is established by By-law and currently set at 175), must be present for the start of a Town Meeting, but no other quorum requirement shall be applicable (Substantive).

**Chapter 3. Select Board**

- A. Clarify that the Select Board appoints special counsels (Technical).

**Chapter 4. Elected Town Boards and Officers**

- A. Consolidate in Section 1 provisions applicable to all elected boards concerning 3-year terms and authority granted to each board by law, delete such provisions from the corresponding sections, and render consistent all remaining text (Technical);
- B. Move section on associate members to Planning Board section (Housekeeping)

**Chapter 5. Appointed Town Boards**

- A. Consolidate in Section 1 provisions applicable under this chapter to all appointed boards concerning appointment by the Select Board for 3-year terms, authority granted to each by law, delete such provisions from the corresponding sections, included section on associate members, and render consistent all remaining text (Technical).

**Chapter 6. Town Administrator**

- A. Clarify that Select Board may delegate authority to Town Administrator to execute contracts under a dollar amount established annually by the Select Board (Technical);

- B. Clarify that Temporary Town Administrator has authority to approve warrants for payment in the event of a vacancy in the office of the Town Administrator (Technical);
- C. Clarify process for appointment of Acting and Temporary Town Administrator positions (Technical);
- D. Clarify that while no permanent appointments, designations or hires are to be made during the time an Acting or Temporary Town Administrator is in office, the Select Board may, if it deems it in the best interests of the Town, authorize the same, or make such appointment, designation or hire (Substantive).

#### Chapter 7. Boards and Commissions Appointed by the Moderator

- A. Consolidate in Section 1 provisions applicable under this chapter to all appointed boards, appointment by the Moderator for 3-year terms and that such appointees shall serve without compensation (Technical);
- B. Establish that a quorum of boards appointed by the Moderator will be a majority of those members then in office (Technical);
- C. Clarify that while all efforts shall be made by the Moderator to appoint the full compliment of 15 members of the Finance and Warrant Commission, in the event that the timing of a vacancy and/or unavailability of qualified candidates prevents the same, a vacancy may remain unfilled (Substantive);
- D. Clarify that members of the Finance and Warrant Commission may serve on other boards and committees in an ex officio non-voting capacity only (Substantive);
- E. Clarify that the Personnel Board shall be a Personnel Advisory Board to provide the Town Administrator with advice concerning the classification and compensation plan (Substantive);
- F. Clarify that the Moderator may appoint to the Permanent Building Commission a representative of the multiple member body that will benefit from or who sponsors a particular project and, further, that if it is a school project, a member of the school committee, or its designee, shall be so appointed (Technical);
- G. Clarify that the Permanent Building Commission will have jurisdiction over projects of \$1,000,000 or more (Substantive);
- H. Clarify that the Permanent Building Commission may refuse jurisdiction of projects when it determines the Town does not need assistance based upon the size, scope or cost of such project (Substantive)

#### Chapter 9. Financial Procedures

- A. Clarify that the Finance and Warrant Commission meeting on the budget is a public hearing (Technical).

#### Chapter 10. Town By-laws

- A. Make language concerning quantum of vote for approval of zoning bylaws consistent with state law establishing a majority vote in certain circumstances relative to affordable housing as of right and similar matters (Technical)

#### Chapter 12. Charter Revision

- A. Simplify to state that the Charter is subject to amendment or revision in the manner available under the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth (Technical);
- B. Clarify that the committee providing periodic review of charter and/or bylaws serves without compensation and that a quorum is based upon those members of the committee then in office (Technical).