

Received 10/27/26
11:52 AM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham
Special Board of Selectmen
Friday, July 24, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
3rd floor, Town Hall, and Remote via Zoom
Charter Revision Workshop

Meeting Recording
Passcode: 7++9IH7Z

1. Call to Order

First Selectman Rea called the Special Board of Selectman meeting on Friday, July 24, 2026, to order at 1:06 p.m. Also present: Selectman Chadd and Selectman Hennick.

Others Present: Al DiVincentis (Charter Revision Commission), Rich Roberts (Town Attorney)

2. Discussion and possible recommendation of changes to the Charter Revision Commission on the draft proposed amendments to the Town Charter

First Selectman Rea explained the board met on Wednesday to discuss the draft proposed amendments and feedback from the Public Hearing. Charter Revision Commission members attended the meeting to explain their reasoning behind many of the proposed amendments.

Today, the Board of Selectmen will discuss and vote on any recommended changes of the draft proposed amendments. These recommendations will go back to the Charter Revision Commission.

First Selectman Rea felt the board should start with the more controversial amendments and then go section by section.

Section 8.2 Fire Protection Services

The board discussed at length the Durham Volunteer Fire Company Inc.

Selectman Chadd spoke with Fire Chief Wall who mentioned the Durham Volunteer Fire Company Inc. has always been in the charter and acts as a separate entity. Suggesting removing the “inc.” to allow the Company to act within the Charter rather than its own entity.

Al DiVincentis mentioned the Town can send the Charter Revision Commission a recommendation about removing the “inc.” and it is up to the Commission to accept or reject. He suggested the Town and Durham Fire Company Inc. should speak to legal counsel as he is only aware of Durham Volunteer Fire Company Inc. from the 2006 Charter and Secretary of State. He feels that a contract would benefit both the Town and the Fire Company; offering more clarity and protection for not just firefighting activities, but items such as insurance, funding and care and custody of equipment.

Rich Roberts offered insight explaining the need to do two different things: figure out what the language in the charter should be and figure out what contractual or other legal arrangements should be.

First Selectman Rea will schedule a meeting with Rich Roberts the Fire Chief Wall to discuss.

Section 9.1 Town Administrator

First Selectman Rea discussed the recommendation of removing this section of the revision due to public pushback and the need to take a more in-depth look outside of the time restraints of the Charter.

Selectman Chadd and Hennick suggested putting a non-binding question on the ballot and removing it from the Revision to see if the Town is ready for this change. First Selectman Rea felt it could cause confusion, and mentioned if it was on the ballot, outreach would be needed to spread awareness on the issue.

Selectman Hennick concluded and summarized that they owe it to the Town to take it out as they have been vocal about their concerns, but also wants to put the question, "Do you believe the town of Durham should have a town administrator?" to see if the vast population agrees. Whether a question on the ballot or a mailing, they will have a better understanding due to the larger sample size of responses compared to those who spoke at the public hearings.

Selectmen agree to recommend the removal of this section while discussing that it is intertwined with many sections in the Charter (i.e. number of Selectmen) indicating that multiple sections should be reevaluated if removed.

Selectman Hennick spoke with Rich Roberts about the logistics of separating more contentious issues as separate ballot questions. Rich advised the Selectmen to consider wording the questions in such a way to accomplish the desired outcomes. When asked about non-binding questions, Rich felt that although it can happen, the presumption is against non-binding questions. With this specific non-binding question, First Selectmen Rea felt that it could be addressed after the process was over.

Section 4.1 Board of Selectmen

First Selectman Rea understands the modification in the number of Selectmen stating that extra Selectmen would allow business to pursue in the event of a lawsuit involving Selectmen. Although it is rare, it can happen.

Selectman Chadd recommends reverting the language back to have 1 First and 2 Selectmen (3 total). First Selectman Rea and Selectman Hennick agree to recommend taking this language out and gathering more data with a possible non-binding separate ballot question.

Section 6.1 Durham Conservation Commission

First Selectman Rea discussed some of the challenges with some of the properties, including the White property. He said that some of the Commissioners are actively against this; some saying they would quit their roles.

Selectman Chadd understands where the Commissioners' views come from; stating they use the State Statutes for the Conservation Commission. He agrees it should be kept as proposed. Selectman Hennick echoed that this would bring control back to the Town of Durham as sole authority over the properties; stating the Commission can still do the good work they have been doing, while keeping control in the Towns' hands for years to come.

Al DiVincentis mentioned that when dealing with the certain entities in Durham that have statutory powers, such as The Library Trustees and Conservation Commission, the Charter Revision Commission wanted to treat each entity the same.

All Selectmen in agreement with keeping this language in the proposed Charter.

Section 2.1 General Town Elections

First Selectmen Rea discussed the pros and cons about elected versus appointed officials. For appointed, there is more professionalism and qualification and eliminates the possibility of an unqualified elect. For elected, it can feel like a stripping of power; taking the ability from the townspeople to elect their officials. If left in the Charter Revision, First Selectman Rea would like it to be a separate question due to the Town having strong opinions on this topic.

The selectmen agree to recommend leaving this in, along with the Number of Selectmen, with the possibility of separating 2.1 and 4.1 into ballot questions apart from the question of adopting the Charter.

PREAMBLE

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN HENICK, TO APPROVE THE PREAMBLE WITH THE SUGGESTION TO ADD DEFINITIONS. VOTE: ALL AYE

Chapter 1: Incorporation and General Powers

No recommendations.

Chapter 2: Officers and Elections

First Selectman Rea recommends cleaning up the treasurer section and the removal of investment language pertaining to Finance Director.

Chapter 3: Town Meeting

Section 3.4 Special Appropriations

First Selectman Rea recommends the clarification of fund transferring; so that the Finance Director can move funds to yield higher interest rates for Town without needing approval for this day-to-day operation.

Section 3.9 Actions Requiring Referendum

Selectmen recommend adding the word "net" to Town budget.

Chapter 4: Board of Selectmen

Selectmen recommend taking out language about additional selectmen; leaving it at 3 (1 First, 2 Selectmen).

Chapter 5: Finance and Taxation

First Selectman Rea recommends that added definitions in the PREAMBLE will clarify certain language in this chapter. Also recommends clearing up the language for Treasurer in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Boards, Commissions, Committees, Agencies and Other Positions

The selectmen discussed with AI the language pertaining to appointing the Town Clerk and Tax Collector. It was confirmed by AI that unless otherwise noted, if the Town Administrator is taken out of the Charter, the hiring authority goes back to the First Selectman.

Chapter 7: Miscellaneous Provisions

No recommendations.

Chapter 8: Public Safety

Other than the above-mentioned language under Section 8.2, no further recommendations.

Chapter 9: Town Administrator

Board of Selectmen recommends removing Chapter 9 from Charter Revision.

Chapter 10: Transition Provisions

If Chapter 9 is removed, there will not be a need for Chapter 10 resulting in its' removal as well per Board of Selectmen recommendation.

MOTION BY FIRST SELECTMAN REA, SECONDED BY SELECTMAN CHADD, TO SEND THE PROPOSED CHARTER REVISION PACKAGE BACK TO THE COMMISSION WITH THE FOLLOWING CHANGES: REMOVING THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR AND THE TWO EXTRA SELECTMEN, TO CLEAN UP THE TREASURER, TO AMEND THE PROVISIONS REGARDING THE FIRE COMPANY PER THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND TO ADD A DEFINITIONS SECTION. VOTE: ALL AYE

3. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Beaudoin, Recording Secretary