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3:48 PM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham

Charter Revision Commission

Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 1, Community Center, and Remote via Zoom

Organizational Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording

Passcode: vE7Q?Z8n

1. Call to order

First Selectman Brendan Rea called the Charter Revision Commission organizational meeting of Tuesday, August 26, 2025, to order at 6:32 p.m.

Members present: Laura Francis, John Bugai, Christian Godbout, Martin Anderson, Al DiVincentis, Matthew LaFayette and Eileen Buckheit (Zoom).

Other/Staff: Town Attorney Rich Roberts, Jaclyn Lehet (Zoom).

2. Introduction of Members

Members briefly introduced themselves at the beginning of the meeting.

7:20 p.m. - members revisited this agenda item to provide more background information.

Eileen Buckheit has lived in Durham since 2002 with her family. She previously served on the Board of Education and the Infrastructure Committee and currently serves on the Board of Finance. Eileen works for the City of East Hartford as the Economic Development Director; her entire career has been municipal.

Matt LaFayette has lived in Durham since 2019 with his family, he has two young children who will be entering the school system soon. He is a Principal Budget Specialist at the Office of Policy and Management (the Governors budget). Prior, he worked as a budget analysis. He added that his wife is a Social Worker, with a practice in Middlefield, both are user of town resources.

Al DiVincentis has lived in Durham since 1996 with his family. He is a lawyer with Halloran and Sage, largely in procurement. His wife works for CVS Health, and his two adult children live in Washington D.C and work in politics.

Martin Anderson has lived in Durham since 1996, with his wife and their blended family. He has served on several town committees including, Personnel/Compensation Committee, Board of Finance and Complete Streets. He is the chair of the Durham Middlefield Youth and Family Services Board and on the Board of Directors for Root Center for Advanced Recovery. Before retirement, Martin had a lengthy career in school and government and concluded as the Deputy Commission under Governor Rell for Department of Administrative Services.

Christian Godbout lived in Durham about 20 years ago and recently moved back 4 years

ago. His daughter is in college and son is a senior in High School. He works as a Global Account Director for British Telecom. He expressed his excitement to serve on this committee.

First Selectman Rea thanked all the committee members for volunteering to undertake this charge. He was raised in Durham and all three of his children went through the district. Prior to this position, he was a Resident State Trooper, retiring from Middlefield. He explained the Charter has not been revised in almost 20 years and is glad this committee was formed.

Rich Roberts is the town attorney. He has been practicing law for almost 40 years, 30 of which have been in municipal law. He has assisted with a dozen towns on different charter revisions. He has served on various boards and commissions in Wethersfield.

John Bugai has lived in Durham his entire life, his family owned a large dairy farm on Powder Hill Road. His daughter graduated from Coginchaug in 2010 and become a nurse. He joined the Coginchaug Soccer Club and has been a volunteer for over 20 years. He added this is his first dive into government and is eager to help.

Laura Francis has lived in Durham since 1991. In 1992 she started working in Durham Town Hall as the Assistant Town Clerk, then the Town Clerk for 10 years and eventually was elected First Selectman in 2007. She retired from the town in 2022 after 30 years of service. She is now the Executive Director of the South Central Regional Council of Governments. She served on the previous Charter Revision Commission in 2006 and although she tried for many years to appoint a new commission, it was never successful. Her husband has served on town boards and the American Legion, her daughter has a Social Work Practice out of Wallingford and son is an entrepreneur and Chief Operating Officer at Torrison Stone and Garden. She also has grandchildren in the school district.

3. Election of Officers

First Selectman Rea asked if there were any members interested in chairing the commission. Martin Anderson and Laura Francis expressed interest in serving as co-chairs.

A. DiVincentis expressed the need to have someone who has worked and is familiar with the Charter.

E. Buckheit asked how co-chairing this commission would work, i.e., who will run each meeting and wondered if there was a specific reason why there would be co-chairs instead of a Chair and Vice Chair.

L. Francis responded that she felt one Democrat chair and one Republican chair show non-partisanship of the commission which she felt strongly about. She has worked closely with M. Anderson over the years and felt confident they would be able to delegate responsibilities. She suggested a chair be declared at the start of each meeting for clarity.

MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY CHRISTIAN GODBOUT, TO APPOINT LAURA FRANCIS AND MARTIN ANDERSON AS CO-CHAIRS OF THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION. VOTE: ALL AYE

The commission discussed Recording Secretary duties. Jaclyn Lehet (Executive Assistant to the First Selectman) will assist the commission with minutes/agendas/documents until her maternity leave in late fall. First Selectman Rea noted there is no current budget for the

commission, including Recording Secretary funds, due to the commission being formed after the budget season. He will be requesting funds from the Board of Finance at their September meeting. L. Francis believed due to the important work being done by the commission and need for detail, the Recording Secretary should be in-person or on Zoom. Not working off a recording.

E. Buckheit stated the commission should elect a secretary. Adding that this member should be organized and would be responsible for keeping records of the meeting, accessing documents and/or referring to votes/decisions made during the meeting etc. A. DiVincintis offered to take the position but requested a laptop and email be provided. First Selectman Rea confirmed the town can provide that.

The town will eventually be moving to Teams, which will help the commission stay organized and access documents easier. J. Lehet will work with IT staff on getting the commission access to Teams sooner.

**MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE, SECONDED BY JOHN BUGAI, TO APPOINT AL DIVINCENTIS AS THE SECRETARY OF THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION.
VOTE: ALL AYE**

4. Review of Charge and Timeline – Town Counsel

Town Attorney Rich Roberts was present to discuss the charge and timeline of the commission. The commission can't get into any substantive business until after the initial Public Hearing is held and he recommended setting that date as soon as possible.

The commission should consider the charge provided by the Board of Selectmen, which includes some specific items they have asked the members to investigate. It is important to note that the commission is not limited to what is included in the charge, they can review all parts of the Charter.

An example timeline was provided from the Town of Wethersfield. Target dates at the end (including the November 2026 general election) should be kept in mind and the commission should work backwards. The Board of Selectmen has requested a draft report with the commissions proposed changes no later than June 1, 2026. Although it sounds like a huge amount of time, R. Roberts recommended the commission meet at least twice a month. Depending on how aggressive the commission wants to be in reviewing the charter, they can consider creating sub-committees to investigate and bring back information to the whole group.

Department heads and Boards/Commissions should be invited to hear feedback regarding their sections of the charter. The commission should ask what creates difficulties, are there any limitations for the staff or members who use the charter daily, or how sections could be improved.

Town Counsel will do an initial review of sections that are no longer consistent with current law. This will be provided after the initial Public Hearing.

5. Schedule Discussion

a. Set date for an initial Public Hearing

Commission members discussed a date for the initial Public Hearing. The Board of Selectmen do not have an established practice of noticing a hearing 30 days in

advance, typically they like to give two weeks' notice, but there is no statutory requirement/guideline. The commission noted the importance of giving a fair amount of time for the public to be made aware of the hearing.

J. Lehet confirmed the legal notice could be posted and advertised on all town platforms as early as tomorrow and published in the Middletown Press as early as Thursday (2 days).

M. LaFayette asked how the hearing will be conducted, will the members be expected to answer questions from the public or is it a listening session. E. Buckheit felt the hearing should open with an explanation of the charge and brief introductions. This is an opportunity for the commission to solicit public comments on how the charter could be improved. L. Francis added that the public may have comments on how the charter shouldn't be changed.

The commission will publish an email address, so the public has the option to provide written submissions. Any submissions can be read at the hearing.

MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE, TO HOLD AN INITIAL PUBLIC HEARING ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M., IN THE GYMNASIUM AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER AND REMOTE VIA ZOOM. VOTE: ALL AYE

b. Set Meeting Schedule

The commission discussed holding regular meetings twice a month on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays starting in the month of October. Meetings will be held at the Community Center at 7:00 p.m. There will be special meetings and Public Hearings added throughout the year.

Members had a brief discussion on meeting conduct/Freedom of Information Act. It was suggested that Tom Hennick come to give an overview of these items at a future meeting.

MOTION BY CHRISTIAN GODBOUT, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS, TO SET A REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE OF THE 1ST AND 3RD WEDNESDAYS AT 7:00 P.M., AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER. VOTE: ALL AYE

6. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.,
Respectfully submitted,
Jaclyn Lehet