

Town of Durham
Charter Revision Commission
Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Room 1, Community Center, and Remote via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording

Passcode: TC.t8%CR

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Co-Chair Martin Anderson called the Charter Revision Commission meeting of Wednesday, October 15, 2025, to order at 7:00 p.m. Also present: Matt LaFayette, co-chair Laura Francis, Al DiVincentis, Christian Godbout and John Bugai.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

M. Anderson led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION BY L. FRANCIS, SECONDED BY A. DIVINCENTIS, TO ADD #8 NEW BUSINESS (C) BUDGET DISCUSSION. VOTE: ALL AYE

MOTION BY J. BUGAI, SECONDED BY M. LAFAYETTE, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. VOTE: ALL AYE

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

a. August 26, 2025

MOTION BY A. DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY J. BUGAI TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 26, 2025, MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. VOTE: ALL AYE

b. September 10, 2025 Public Hearing

MOTION BY L. FRANCIS, SECONDED BY A. DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. VOTE: ALL AYE

c. September 10, 2025 special

MOTION BY L. FRANCIS, SECONDED BY M. LAFAYETTE, TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2025, SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. VOTE: ALL AYE

5. Public Comment

Rick Parmelee: would like to see any proposed revisions clearly marked for the public to review, First Selectman should be required by Charter to respond to questions at the Annual Budget Meeting, Labor contracts should be reviewed by Town Counsel, candidates who serve on interview panels should not be offered said job, zoom options for meetings should be more or less mandatory, elected/appointed staff should be on camera on zoom calls, Building Inspector

should retain some of the responsibilities of the Facilities Manager, drug and alcohol testing should be addressed in the Charter for town employees, some of the public does not have access to computers how can that be addressed, improve hearing accessibility for the public at meetings whether it be technology etc., Finance Director position should not be expanded, will be requesting any revisions to the Treasurer job position, and felt the Board of Education appointments should stay on the ballot.

Marie Wilde: asked that proposed revisions be clearly marked for the public and suggested including the commissions rational behind the proposed revisions.

Debra DeFelice: asked if all members have access to the email inbox, recommended the commission consider moving their meeting dates in 2026 as the 3rd Wednesday of the month is very busy for other board meetings, and asked that redlined proposed revisions be shown. M. Anderson responded the emails are monitored and distributed to all members.

6. Correspondence

M. Anderson explained the Commission has received email correspondence which is shared with the members prior to each meeting. He suggested including the correspondence in the meeting minutes rather than reading each email individually. He noted that several emails were encouraging the Board of Education elections stay on the ballot. A. DiVincentis will respond to all correspondence that it was received.

7. Old Business

a. Rules of Conduct

L. Francis reviewed the proposed Rules of Conduct with the members. No changes were suggested.

MOTION BY L. FRANCIS, SECONDED BY A. DIVINCENTIS, TO APPROVE THE RULES OF CONDUCT AS PRESENTED. VOTE: ALL AYE

The approved Rules of Conduct can be located on the [town website](#) for the public.

b. Agenda Template

L. Francis spoke about having a basic agenda template for all meetings, based off the agenda tonight. She recommended adding "Other" under Old Business as a catch all. The members agreed this will be the structure moving forward.

L. Francis explained a Microsoft Teams invite was sent to all members, where all shared documents will live. The members agreed they would still like Tom Hennick to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss Freedom of Information.

c. Updated Proposed Timeline

The members reviewed the proposed timeline; there are many blank dates that still need to be filled in. A. DiVincentis volunteered to work on the timeline for the next meeting.

8. New Business

a. Interview Process

Members reviewed a draft list of (9) interview questions:

1. Referring to the current town Charter, what section or sections have the biggest impact on your role and/or the role and purpose of your office or town responsibilities?
2. What sections in the current Charter need to be better explained, updated, or clarified?
3. Are there ways to streamline or change roles or functions in the Charter that would benefit the town and your work?
4. Are there provisions in the Charter that are seriously outdated and in what way?
5. Are there Charter defined handoffs between or among departments or personnel that need better structure, clarification, refinement, or elimination?
6. Does the Charter have gaps defining your office's role and/or function that need to be addressed?
7. Are there Charter provisions that add work or cost but aren't providing much value?
8. Do you know of any Charter provisions that should be changed because they are inconsistent with current state or federal law or codes of professional conduct?
9. Are there any other matters regarding the Charter that you believe need to be addressed by the Charter Review Commission whether or not they directly affect your work?

Interviews will start with staff members and eventually boards/commission members. A list of staff members was created and grouped together depending on the families of jobs/responsibilities. Each commission member will interview a group, gather information and report back to the commission. L. Francis noted this is a discovery stage.

L. Francis will interview the following: Selectman Tom Hennick, Registrar of Voters Heather Petit and Democratic Town Committee Chair Kristina Talbert Slagle.

M. Anderson will interview the following: Selectman Rob Chadd, Registrar of Voters Jon Scagnelli and Republican Town Committee Chair Phil Augur, Building Official Matt Meeker, Assessor John Philip, Health District Connecticut River Area Health District and Town Planner Robin Newton.

A. DiVincentis and E. Buckheit will interview the following: First Selectman Brendan Rea, Executive Assistant Jaclyn Lehet, Town Counsel Rich Roberts, Finance Director Beth Moncata, Facilities Director Charles Bedo and Public Works Road Foreman John Jenkins.

J. Bugai will interview the following: Town Clerk Nicole Charest, Tax Collector Martin French and Treasurer Brett Eagleson.

M. Lafayette will interview the following: Fire Chief Terrence Wall, Emergency Management Director Jack Trifilo, Resident Trooper Stefan Inglis, Resident Trooper Patrick Sullivan, Fire Marshal Robert Doyle, Tree Warden Josh Miller and Animal Control Officer April Leiler.

C. Godbout will interview the following: Community Center Carolyn Havrda, Library Director Lauren Redfield, Recreation Director Brian Medeiros and Social Services Coordinator Morgan Perry.

Staff will receive the interview questions and a direct link to the town charter prior to their interview. Members will receive contact information and best hours/location for staff.
Agenda item for next meeting.

A. DiVincentis to confirm with First Selectman Rea that Town Counsel can take a preliminary review of the town charter.

b. Editing Strategy/Protocol

The commission will use Microsoft Teams to document everything. Members liked the idea of including the rationale behind proposed revisions and confirmed all proposed revisions will be clearly redlined for the public to see.

c. Budget

M. Anderson explained that the last Charter Revision Commission had a budget of \$25,000, he noted this was 25 years ago. He expressed his struggle to come up with a realistic number, he does not know how much town counsel will eat into funds. It is important to inform Board of Finance of the commission's needs.

In the past, the commission budgeted for legal expenses, Recording Secretary, printing (noted this would be in the next fiscal year), and public hearing notices. Some additional costs could include the use of technology for public engagement. L. Francis offered to meet with the First Selectman and Finance Director to further discuss a budget request.

9. Commission Work Session

a. Preamble

L. Francis noted the current charter includes a lot of legal language and wondered if the charter should be modernized/more user friendly. As an example, she reviewed the Preamble with updated language.

PREAMBLE – CURRENT LANGUAGE

We, the electors of the Town of Durham, acting pursuant to the applicable statutes of the State of Connecticut relating to the adoption of town charters, in order to provide a basic organic law defining the powers, duties, rights and obligations of the citizens, officers and administrative bodies of the Town of Durham, do hereby approve this Charter for the Town of Durham.

PREAMBLE – ALTERNATE LANGUAGE

We, the electors of the Town of Durham, acting under the authority of the Constitution and General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, adopt this Charter as the fundamental law of our Town. Through this Charter we set forth the framework of local government, define the powers and responsibilities of our residents and public officials, and affirm our commitment to open, accountable, and effective self-government.

A. DiVincentis agreed with this alternate language, noting it is plain English and everyone reading it can understand/comprehend. C. Godbout agreed the charter should not hide anything. Members agreed with the proposed revisions.

MOTION BY C. GODBOUT, SECONDED BY A. DIVINCENTIS TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSED REVISED LANGUAGE TO THE PREAMBLE OF THE TOWN CHARTER AS PRESENTED. VOTE: ALL AYE

The committee reviewed how documents will be saved within Microsoft Teams. A. DiVincentis will have a working Town Charter document with any proposed revisions and the rationale behind it.

The committee discussed how they will proceed with going through the Town Charter, which sections will come first or what will be prioritized. Ideas such as subcommittees or straw poll to discuss “hot-topics” (such as Board of Education election) were discussed.

L. Francis explained she has access to a group of Town Managers who are willing to come to a meeting to discuss the charter, town governance etc. She noted the group is sensitive to the size and feel of Durham. The committee agreed it was best to start this sooner rather than later.

10. Commissioner Reports

None at this time.

11. Next Steps and Assignments

L. Francis will coordinate setting up presentations from Tom Hennick (FOI) and Town Managers group previously discussed.

12. Next Meeting – November 4, 2025

The next meeting will be **Wednesday, November 5th***

13. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.,
Respectfully submitted,
Jaclyn Lehet

/Attachments

From: [Amanda Gigante](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: BOE elections
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 8:00:42 PM

CAUTION: This email is from an external source. Please DO NOT click links or open attachments without positive sender verification of purpose. Never enter Username, Password or sensitive information on linked pages from any email.

To whom it may concern,

I am opposed to Bob Moore's recommendation to change BOE elections from the general election to a town meeting format.

This change would be very inconvenient for many as it significantly restricts voting accessibility and requires you to attend a weeknight meeting to cast your vote.

I appreciate you taking the time to hear my opinion and I hope you take it into consideration.

-Amanda Gigante

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Brian Read](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: Charter revision
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 9:42:35 AM

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposal of moving Board of Education (BOE) elections back to a town vote rather than using the general election.

The goal of any election should be to maximize participation in order to ensure that the results reflect the broadest and most accurate representation of the community's views. Reverting to a system where a small number of residents—often fewer than 100—make such an important decision is not only irresponsible, but in my view, a political maneuver designed to skew representation in favor of a particular outcome.

In a modern, busy world, residents need flexible options and a reasonable window of time to vote—not a single meeting at 6:00 PM, which many simply cannot attend due to work, childcare, or other obligations. Town governance should make it easier for people to participate, not harder.

Candidates for the BOE should run on clear, public platforms just like any other elected official, and the full community should have the opportunity to weigh in—fairly, transparently, and conveniently—at the ballot box.

Let the public decide what's best for Durham. Anything less feels like a step backwards.

Sincerely,

Brian Read

Resident of Durham 39 years

From: [emma quick](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: BOE Election Changes
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 9:11:58 AM

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Good morning Charter Commission,

I am writing with some surprise and concern regarding Bob Moore's recommendation to change Board of Education elections to a town meeting format. I had not heard this discussed at all during BOE meetings, and a discussion of it is not reflected in recent minutes, besides mention that a letter was sent last week, so I appreciate you reading his letter publicly.

I adamantly oppose this recommendation, as it significantly limits access to vote for this very important role in our community. It specifically disenfranchises what should be the largest, most invested, and involved demographic voting specifically for those roles - parents of young children who are enrolled in our school system - who require child care/child transportation assistance to attend a weeknight meeting to cast their vote.

While I don't have specific numbers on hand, even our most well-attended town meetings have produced a very small fraction of the number of votes cast on Election Day. I looked for Middlefield's most recent BOE election results via town meeting, but all I could find was that it was a voice vote - no counts or roll call, it doesn't even say how many people were in attendance. Is this what we want for Durham? A handful of politicians and friends sitting in a town meeting, voting people into positions? This does not sound like it would allow for a less-politically-affiliated process. In fact, it seems like after disenfranchising voters, local politicians would be most of who is left to attend. The population of Durham is also much larger than Middlefield, do we have a large enough space to accommodate a public meeting, IF the number of voters from Election Day wanted to attend?

Personally, I don't think Durham should change to match Middlefield. The largest number of voters are reached on Election Day.

If concerns of party affiliation are felt to be relevant, and Middlefield is willing to change their process, a referendum may be an option, which allows for a full day of voting and I believe absentee options. If public outreach is the concern, this can be achieved in many other ways to encourage people to get to know the candidates and vote for people over party.

I do not feel changing the charter to restrict voting access is the appropriate fix.

Thank you,
Emma Quick

Sent from my iPhone

From: [FRANCES KELLY](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: Vote on BOE
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 2:58:44 PM

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It has come to my attention through social media a suggestion has come up to change the BOE member votes from general election to a town hall format. I strongly oppose this idea. Leave it with General session voting please.

Fran Kelly
Durham resident
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Gwen Hutter](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: Charter For Durham CT
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 8:58:21 AM

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Dear Charter Commission,

In an effort to be transparent and equitable it is in our Community's best efforts to:

- be able to continue to vote for our BOE members at the poles (12 hours at the poles is more inclusive than vote in 15 min at a meeting)
- have a way to vote our BOE members out (vote of non-confidece)

Thank you for your commitment to the best interests of our town.

Sincerely,

Gwen Hutter

From: [Philip Augur](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: Charter Revision input
Date: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 7:57:07 AM

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Dear Charter Revision Committee:

The Durham Republican Town Committee encourages the Charter Revision Committee to leave the election of Regional Board of Education members unchanged.

Election at the polls allows for maximum voter engagement, in stark contrast to election at Town Meeting where there have been occasions where less than three percent of the registered voters were present, with the “winner” having garnered support from less than one and three-tenths percent of all voters.

The Durham Republican Town Committee does not support a prohibition on citizens serving on more than one “land use” body.

State statute has a number of prohibitions on various roles and bodies that cannot be held at the same time — for example, someone cannot serve on both a Zoning body and a Zoning Appeals body at the same time. There is no need to move beyond what state law already covers, and we note that members of both parties serve on multiple land use bodies faithfully.

Best,
Phil

Philip S. Augur, Chair
Durham Republican Town Committee
DurhamGOPChair@gmail.com
(203) 494-1344
<https://www.durhamrtc.org/>

From: [Stuart Keating](#)
To: [Charter Commission](#)
Subject: BOE Election
Date: Sunday, September 14, 2025 11:50:39 AM

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I opposed using the Town Meetings, for BOE elections.
I support the continued use of the general elections to elect BOE members.
Elections at Town Meetings allow self interest groups to coordinate and load the meetings with their members and supporters. This basically minimizes the general public's choice.

Stuart Keating
Old Farms Road
[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)