

Received 4/29/26
12:00 PM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham
Charter Revision Commission Special Meeting
Saturday, April 15, 2026 7:00pm
Community Center Meeting Room 1, and Remote via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/RW9-teFkgG_O47uIyom9UaY8XFh1P9mggh8BhgKpiU-U-ltCYnshaomJO5AEXSmb.87pxJ-w9yaMqqn8-

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1. Call to order

Co-chair Martin Anderson called the Special Charter Revision Commission meeting of Saturday, April 15, 2026 to order at 7:00 pm

Also present: Matt LaFayette, Christian Godbout, Eileen Buckheit, Martin Anderson, Christian Godbout, Al DiVincentis

Absent:

Members of the public present: Richard Parmelee, Roger Kleeman, other members of the public

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Agenda

- a. **MOTION BY LAURA FRNACIS SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.**
- b. **Al DiVincentis suggested adding his report from a meeting and a timeline to the agenda.**
- c. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. April 8, 2026
 - i. Eileen Buckheit noted she was mistakenly marked as present.
 - ii. **MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE MINUTES AS AMENDED. ALL AYE, EILEEN BUCKHEIT ABSTAINED. MOTION PASSED**

5. Correspondence

- a. Al DiVincentis attended the Library Trustees meeting. Trustees are concerned that there will be significant changes to their section of the charter, they were reassured that the commission does not intend to take powers from the Library Trustees. Library Trustees were informed that the charter commission wants to add the ability for the town to close all town-owned buildings in the event of an emergency and to control capital improvement expenses. Library Trustees were invited to submit

language or suggestions to the commission for consideration. Al DiVincentis suggested discussing the timeline. Martin Anderson noted that the draft charter must be completed in advance of the 2nd public hearing in May. Laura Francis suggested the draft be completed a week before the hearing to give residents the opportunity to review

6. Public Comment on matters pertinent to the Commission's activities to be limited to 3 minutes per speaker

- a. Richard Parmelee made a public comment requesting that board and commission members speak louder at meetings and that zoom meetings should be utilized as often as possible. Suggested that the section "other town officials" should be eliminated. Expressed concerns that the town seems to be acquiring new positions and line items for funds and for resident access to information
- b. A member of the public suggested that the compensation review and personnel policy board should be involved in the hiring process should a town administrator be hired
- c. Richard Parmelee made a public comment expressing that compensation review is not properly utilized by the town

7. Commission Work Session

a. New Chapters or Sections for Review/Consideration

i. Town Administrator

1. Matt Lafayette suggested adding a provision that allows the Town Administrator question to be authorized at town meeting. Laura Francis suggested that the charter review questions be split on the ballot so the entire charter isn't voted down based on the town administrator issue alone. Discussed voter turnout for referendum versus town meeting and other process considerations
2. Discussed pros and cons of changing to town administrator and increasing selectboard to 5 members
 - a. Pros: broader representation, reduced risk of deadlock, stability if terms are staggered, better committee and liaison coverage, improved checks and balances and political balance, continuity through administrations
 - b. Cons: slower decision making, more coordination, higher costs
3. Discussed whether Selectmen or Town Administrator would have hiring authority and how that would impact a potential shift from elected positions to hired positions

ii. Definitions

b. Sections yet to be taken up for final Review/Consideration

i. Section 4.9 Duties of the First Selectman

1. Laura Francis noted that other towns do not list specific duties as Durham does.

ii. Section 4.9.1 Delegation of Duties

1. Suggested adding language which allows the First Selectman to delegate duties to Town Administrator.

2. **Proposed Language**

The First Selectman may assign and delegate his or her duties and powers to another selectman or town administrator, if any, unless prohibited by the general statutes.

3. MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON SECONDED BY LAURA FRANCIOS TO ACCEPT SECTION 4.9.1 AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.

iii. **Section 5.4 Tax Collector**

1. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE, SECONDED BY LAURA FRANCIOS TO MAKE THE TOWN CLERK, TAX COLLECTOR, AND TREASURER APPOINTED RATHER THAN ELECTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.**

2. Noted that section 2.1 on general elections would need to be changed if the positions were to be moved from elected to appointed

iv. **Section 5.5 Treasurer**

1. Discussed part time nature of position and separation of duties for financial staff. Noted treasurer is not a required position but that statutory duties must still be performed. Discussed treasurer's responsibility for investing town funds. Laura Francis suggested researching other towns

v. **Section 6.7 Town Clerk**

vi. **Section 2.1 General Town Elections**

vii. **Section 6.9.1 Fire Department**

1. Statutes say Town must provide fire protection service. Briefly discussed contract for services.

viii. **Section 6.17 Library Directors (pending Trustee meeting)**

1. Noted name change to Trustees. Al DiVincentis proposed additional section 6.17.1

2. Proposed Section 6.17.1 - Capital Improvements and Emergency Operations:

This charter shall be construed in a manner consistent with the general statutes including section 1119. Nothing herein shall be to diminish the authority of the Board of Library Trustees over Library Operations, policies, collections, or expenditures of operating funds appropriated for library purposes. The municipality would engage in authority over construction, reconstruction, renovation, structural repairs, and any project meeting the town's capital project threshold.

3. Clarified that the town would provide oversight, discussed whether the library trustees would have the ability to override decisions. Town would not interfere with statutory powers and responsibilities of Library Trustees

4. Al DiVincentis indicated he would draft language to be presented at the next meeting

ix. **Section 6.18 Compensation Review/Personnel Policy Commission**

1. Current Language

There shall be a Compensation Review/Personnel Policy Commission. This Commission shall provide continuing review of all compensation, including all monetary and non-monetary compensation and benefits, provided by the town to all public officials and employees. At the request of the Board of Finance or Board of Selectmen, this Commission shall also provide review and/or continuing review of compensation provided by the town to any other party, such as consultants, contractors, and service providers.

The Commission shall, at least annually, provide a written report of its doings to the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen, and a copy of such report shall be filed with the Town Clerk at least sixty (60) days prior to any hearing on the annual town budget.

No person whose compensation is subject to review by this Commission, and no person who is affiliated with any entity whose compensation is subject to review by this Commission, shall hold membership on this Commission.

The Commission may also advise the Board of Selectmen on personnel matters.

This Commission shall have five (5) members, and members shall hold terms of five (5) years.

The current membership of the Personnel Policy Board shall retain their seats, and shall serve their terms, as the same presently exist. Vacancies from whatever cause shall be filled by election at a Town Meeting, no contrary provision of this Charter withstanding.

2. Proposed language

The Board of Selectmen may appoint, from time to time, an ad hoc Compensation Review Committee consisting of five (5) Electors of the Town to review the compensation of elected officials and municipal employees not subject to collective bargaining and to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

The Committee shall submit a written report of its recommendations within the timeframe established by the Board of Selectmen and shall file a copy of such report with the Town Clerk.

No person whose compensation is subject to review by the Committee may serve as a member of the Committee.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or supersede the terms of any collective bargaining agreement.

3. It was noted that the Compensation Review board could coexist with the Town Administrator as a citizen review committee. Laura Francis noted that in other towns these committees are generally ad hoc.

Laura Francis suggested adding language which states that none of the value is construed to alter or supersede the terms of any collective bargaining. Also suggested the commission be ad-hoc and given charges as needed.

4. Added language specifying the board shall consist of 5 electors.

5. MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY EILEEN BUCKHEIT TO APPROVE SECTION 6.18 AS AMENDED

x. **Section 6.19 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency**

1. Current Language

There shall be an Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency consisting of seven (7) members whose powers, duties and terms of office are as set forth in an ordinance of the town dated August 27, 1973, and in the General Statutes as either may be amended from time to time.

2. Proposed Language

There shall be an Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency established in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes. The Agency shall consist of seven (7) members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The powers, duties, terms of office, and procedures of the Agency shall be provided by the Connecticut General Statutes and by ordinance of the Town.

3. Discussed combining with planning and zoning board as other towns have done

4. MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO ADOPT SECTION 6.19 AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.

xi. **Section 6.20 Historic District Commission**

xii. **Section 6.22 Department of Emergency Management**

xiii. **Section 6.23 Other Town Officials**

c. **Placement/numeration of Chapters and Sections**

d. **Evaluation of need for additional meetings**

8. **Set Special Meeting Dates**

a. **MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO SET A SPECIAL MEETING FOR APRIL 29th FROM 6pm-9pm. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

9. **Next Meeting- April 29, 2026**

10. **Adjourn**

MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS SECONDED BY SEVERAL TO ADJOURN. ALL AYE

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.,
Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Charest