

Received 4/30/2026
2:35 PM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham
Charter Revision Commission
Wednesday, April 29, 2026 6:00pm
Community Center Meeting Room 1, and Remote via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/Nb6K5NCWZePKUilibUjhVNHDpx3-x-u_8bREKRVGyqV1pP5yV-y0mcMQWZ7huFha.FJ2QzFDZggivAoiE

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Call to order

Co-chair Laura Francis called the Special Charter Revision Commission meeting of Wednesday, April 29, 2026 to order at 6:00 pm

Also present: Matt LaFayette, Christian Godbout, Eileen Buckheit, Martin Anderson (via zoom, left at 6:58pm), Christian Godbout, Al DiVincentis, Nick Charest: Town Clerk and Recording Secretary

Absent:

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
 - a. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS SECONDED BY SEVERAL TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.**
3. Correspondence
 - a. Received draft language from counsel
4. Commission Work Session
 - a. **Section 2.1 General Town Elections**
 - i. Agreed to review elected official sections prior to approving this section
 - b. **Section 4.9 Duties of the First Selectman**
 - i. **Current Language**

The First Selectman shall be responsible for:
(1) Executing and carrying out all ordinances, resolutions, policies and other action approved by the Board of Selectmen or a town meeting;

- (2) Coordinating administration of the agencies, boards, and commissions of the town, except those functions expressly reserved or delegated to such agencies by law;
- (3) Guiding the Board of Selectmen in the discharge of all the Board's duties and responsibilities;
- (4) Directing and supervising the activities of town employees, and where the First Selectman deems advisable, working with town employees, except employees of the Board of Education and employees whose employment is otherwise provided by law;
- (5) Keeping full and complete records of the activities of this office;
- (6) Providing monthly written financial reports and analysis to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance; such report shall be filed with the Town Clerk by the end of the following month;
- (7) Keeping or causing to be kept complete books of account showing the financial transactions of the town, and all other accounts and records as may be prescribed by the Board of Selectmen, the General Statutes, this Charter, and a town meeting.

ii. **Proposed Language**

(a) Grant of Authority; Powers, Duties and Responsibilities

The First Selectman shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Town and shall have all powers, duties, and responsibilities conferred upon that office or required by the General Statutes, as amended, and by this Charter.

(b) Administrative Guidance Handbook.

Within 12 months of the adoption of this Charter, the Board of Selectmen shall adopt a written administrative handbook or policy document describing the roles, responsibilities, duties and operational practices of the First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen. Such handbook shall be consistent with this Charter and the General Statutes and shall be advisory in nature. The handbook shall be amended and updated at least once annually by the Board of Selectmen.

- iii. Laura Francis clarified that the charter should be flexible to allow for changes in statute or the removal of outdated practices . Suggested language which requires the Selectmen to adopt and update an Administrative Guidance Handbook. Discussed duties that must be described in the charter versus those that should reference statute.
- iv. Discussed transition from old to new charter, Laura Francis suggested a transition provision chapter. Eileen Buckheit noted a lawsuit in South Windsor

caused by lack of transitional language. Suggested language which requires a handbook be created within 12 months and annually updated

- v. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY SEVERAL TO APPROVE SECTION 4.9 WITH THE ADDITION OF LANGUAGE WHICH REQUIRES AN ADMINISTRATIVE HANDBOOK BE ADOPTED AND AT LEAST ANNUALLY UPDATED WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF THE ADOPTION OF THIS CHARTER. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

c. **Section 5.4 Tax Collector**

i. **Current Language**

There shall be a Tax Collector who shall collect the taxes in accordance with the General Statutes and whose term of office shall be as set forth in Section 2.1 of this Charter.

ii. **Proposed Language**

See under Town Clerk

- iii. Discussed term limits, suggested the appointing authority have ability to set term. Noted that appointed and hired positions are not the same. Discussed methods to best maintain continuity and consistency at town hall.
- iv. Briefly discussed connection to finance department and potential for restructuring finance related departments
- v. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO EMPLOY THE SAME LANGUAGE APPROVED FOR THE TOWN CLERK, WITH THE OMISSION OF “ADDITIONAL DUTIES AS ASSIGNED BY THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR CONSISTENT WITH THE GENERAL STATUTES AND THIS CHARTER.” FOR SECTION 5.4. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.**

d. **Section 5.5 Treasurer**

- i. Discussed potentially eliminating treasurer position and assigning treasurer duties to the Finance Director. Reviewed potential language for abolition of office and reassignment of duties.
- ii. Restructured Chapter 5, renaming it “Finance, Taxation, and Financial Management” and adding Section 5.6 Financial Management. New section will include finance director, contracts and financial obligations, and delegation. Section 5.5 Treasurer would be removed
- iii. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS SECONDED BY LAURA FRANCIS THAT THE SECRETARY INTEGRATE ARTICLE 5 OF FINANCE INTO THE CURRENT DRAFT CHARTER FOR REVIEW AT THE NEXT MEETING. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

e. **Chapter 6 Boards, Commissions, Committees**

i. **Section 6.7 Town Clerk**

1. **Current Language**

There shall be a Town Clerk who shall perform all of the duties and functions in accordance with the General Statutes, and whose term of office shall be set forth in Section 2.1 of this Charter.

2. **Proposed Language**

The town administrator shall appoint a town clerk who shall be an employee of the town and subject to the personnel and administrative policies of the town

The Town Clerk shall have the powers and perform the duties as prescribed by the general statutes, and such additional duties as may be assigned by the Town Administrator consistent with the general statutes and this Charter. Town Clerk shall possess the qualifications and experience needed to serve in this position

Transition language: The provision of this charter relating to the appointment of the Town Clerk shall take effect upon the expiration of the term of the Town Clerk in Office on the effective date of this charter. Town Clerk serving at such time shall continue to serve until the end of such a term, at which time the position shall become appointed as provided herein.

3. Added language specifying that appointments are based on professional qualifications and experience. Discussed language which would be applicable if the town were to switch to a town administrator. Town Clerk duties are generally prescribed by statute, although additional duties are assigned by the First Selectman or Town Administrator. Discussed civil service system for hiring which would require an exam. Reviewed certification and training requirements for Town Clerk. Agreed to add language which states the appointment of the Town Clerk will take effect upon the expiration of the term of the Town Clerk in Office on the effective date of the charter

4. MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO APPROVE SECTION 6.7 AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED

ii. **Section 6.9.1 Fire Department**

1. Laura Francis suggested language which allows the town to designate a qualified entity to provide fire protection services, providing flexibility if the Durham Volunteer Fire Company Inc is dissolved. Noted that language should clearly state that it is the town's responsibility to indemnify volunteers and provide equipment and firehouse maintenance. Specified that workers' compensation only applies to injuries during the performance of duties

iii. **Section 6.13 Recreation Committee**

1. Discussed at last meeting

iv. **Section 6.20 Historic District Commission**

1. Current Language

There shall be an Historic District Commission consisting of five (5) members and three (3) alternate members whose powers, duties and terms of office are as set forth in an ordinance of the town dated June 25, 1973, and in the General Statutes as either may be amended from time to time.

2. Historic District Commission required by ordinance, powers are statutory

3. MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE SECTION 6.20 AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED

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

1. Current Language

There shall be a department of Emergency Management and a Director of Emergency Management appointed by the Board of Selectmen and it shall function in accordance with Chapter 517 of the General Statutes.

2. Proposed Language

The Town shall maintain an Emergency Management Organization for the purpose of protecting the lives and property of the residents of the Town and ensuring continuity of government in the event of natural or man-made disasters. The emergency management organization shall function in accordance with Chapter 517 of the General Statutes.

The first selectman shall appoint an Emergency Management Director pursuant to section 28-7 of the General Statute, and such deputies as necessary. The Director will serve at the will of the First Selectman and may be removed by the First Selectman at any time for cause. The Director shall report directly to the First Selectman and will advise the First Selectman on matters pertaining to civil preparedness and disaster emergency operations.

The Director of Emergency Management is authorized to prepare and maintain an Emergency Operations Plan consistent with state and federal requirements and to activate said plan during emergencies. In the event of a declared emergency, the Director may issue orders necessary to protect public health and safety, request mutual aid, and expend funds as authorized by law. All emergency powers granted herein shall be exercised in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes and shall cease upon termination of the emergency declaration.

3. Laura Francis proposed a new section titled "Emergency Medical Services" which states the town shall provide emergency medical services in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes

4. MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS SECONDED BY CHRISTIAN GODBOUT TO APPROVE LANGUAGE FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED

5. Discussed removing sections on specific emergency services and consolidating into Public Safety section. Laura Francis discussed creating an emergency management organization, cited previous experience with Chiefs organization consisting of department heads. Suggested the charter institutionalize this structure. Laura Francis indicated she would draft language

vi. **Section 6.23 Other Town Officials**

1. Current Language

Except as otherwise provided in this Charter, the town shall have such other town officers, departments, boards, commissions, and agencies as now exist and as are provided by the General Statutes, special acts, or as provided by any ordinance adopted pursuant to law. All such officers, departments, boards, commissions, and agencies, shall be elected or appointed in accordance with the General Statutes or by Special Act, or as provided in this Charter, or by any ordinance adopted pursuant to law, and shall continue to have such powers and duties, privileges and functions as are or may in the future be conferred on them by the General Statutes, Special Acts, this Charter, ordinances, or regulations adopted pursuant to law, or amendments thereto.

2. Proposed Language

TITLE: Other Town Offices, Departments, Boards, Commissions, and Agencies

Town may establish such other offices, departments, boards, commissions, and agencies as are authorized by the general statutes, special acts, this charter, or by ordinance.

The Board of Selectmen may establish, consolidate, reorganize, or abolish any offices departments, boards, commissions and agencies by vote of the Board of Selectmen unless otherwise provided in this Charter. Such persons and bodies shall be elected or appointed and shall exercise the powers and duties prescribed by the general statute, special acts, this charter, or by ordinance, or resolution adopted pursuant to law

3. Discussed adding language allowing Selectmen to establish, consolidate, and reorganize administrative offices and departments unless otherwise provided for in the charter. Reviewed language to clarify that positions required by state statute or charter cannot be eliminated. Suggested adjusting title to add "Offices"

4. MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS SECONDED BY LAURA FRANCIS TO ADOPT SECTION 6.23 AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED

vii. **NEW 6.17.1 Public Library – Capital Improvements and Emergency Operations**

f. **Town Administrator**

g. **Any Section needing a second look as recommended by Commissioners**

i. Eileen Buckheit suggested reviewing budget and town meeting allocation approval process. Discussed methods to improve the process while still allowing for public input

5. **Timeline Review and Set Special Meeting Dates if Necessary**

a. Second public hearing is set for May 13th. Discussed creating powerpoint to present to public. Discussed need for extra meetings or moving public hearing further out. Laura Francis indicated she would contact town counsel to ask about extending charter revision period

6. Next Meeting- May 6, 2026

7. Adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:58pm,
Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Charest