

Received 6/29/26

3:30 PM Jodi Moore, ATC

Town of Durham

Charter Revision Commission

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 7:00pm

Community Center Gym, and Remote via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/RWYASxpEZvaTKYNLyCo_Jjss4OfwKcCVmlmho5n4ePv8Dse5U2CoYpEjBZRdeQ32.IHoHfzDb40V-GXyy?startTime=1781737217000

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Call to order

Co-chair Martin Anderson called the Charter Revision Commission meeting of Wednesday, June 17, 2026 to order at 7:00 pm

Also present: Matt LaFayette, Joh Bugai, Christian Godbout, Eileen Buckheit, Al DiVincentis, Laura Francis, Nick Charest: Town Clerk and Recording Secretary

Absent:

Other members of the public present: Richard Parmelee, Pamela DeFilippo, Sue McInstosh, other members of the public

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
 - a. **MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY LAURA FRANCIS TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR THE JUNE 17, 2026 MEETING AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**
3. Approval of Minutes
 - a. May 6, 2026
 - i. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 6, 2026 MEETING AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.**
 - b. May 13, 2026
 - i. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE, SECONDED BY EILEEN BUCKHEIT TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 13, 2026 MEETING AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**
4. Public Comment
 - a. Pamela DeFilippo made a public comment expressing concern for the proposal of a Town Administrator, questioned the need for an expensive position when the person is not required to live in town. Also expressed concern for changing Tax Collector, Town Clerk, and Treasurer to appointed positions. Stated that the proposal will consolidate power and eliminate oversight. Expressed support for the Library

- b. Sue McIntosh made a public comment expressing that people should have sovereignty and power should not be concentrated at a centralized Town Hall
- c. Richard Parmelee made a public comment in support of keeping Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Treasurer as elected positions. Proposed changes will take power from the people. Also expressed opposition to changing financial thresholds for town meeting from \$20,000 to \$40,000. Previous town meetings have not been informative. Expressed opposition to Town Manager

5. Commissioners' comments on complaints and observations by those attending at Public Hearing #2

- a. Eileen Buckheit stated that the Treasurer is not a checks and balance to the Finance Director. Suggested that the Town consider some other way to provide checks and balances. Also explained that the current threshold to go to town meeting is causing dysfunction in Town Hall due to the amount of town meetings which does not allow the Town to take advantage of the marketplace
- b. Matt LaFayette, in response to a public comment asserting that the charter revisions were driven by certain members of the committee, stated that he had opportunities to make changes, ask questions, and vote on all items
- c. Al DiVincentis agreed with Matt LaFayettes comment, commission was collaborative. Charter does not remove powers from the library that are given by statute. Explained reasoning for proposed Town Administrator for consistency, professionalization, and to assist with personnel, grants, and procurement. They will have no policy authority and will serve in a similar capacity to a project manager. The role was proposed in the hope that it will result in a reduction of taxes.
- d. Christian Godbout suggested revising Library portion of charter based on recommendation of Library Board of Trustees
- e. Laura Francis stated that the proposed language is consistent with other modernized charters across the country. Noted that government operations have become more complicated over the past several decades.
- f. It was noted that the commission must submit a document to the Board of Selectmen by July 1st. Briefly discussed the research and outreach that was done
- g.

6. Correspondence

- a. Review/approval of payment to Halloran & Sage for Town Counsel of \$1,170
 - i. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCISSECONDED BY CHRISTIAN GODBOUT TO PAY A BILL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,170 FOR HALLORAN AND SAGE FOR TOWN COUNSEL. ALL AYE, AL DIVINCENTIS ABSTAIN. MOTION PASSED**
- b. Correspondence from Kristian Higgins opposing the town manager and supporting the library
- c. Correspondence from Jon Scagnelli, registrar of voters concerning the Registrar of Voters inclusion in the charter

- d. Correspondence from Christine Michaud supporting the Library Board and their proposed revisions
- e. Correspondence from Katie DeNino? (name inaudible) supporting the library's requested language
- f. Correspondence from George Eames with his comments made at the public hearing
- g. Correspondence from Pamela DeFilippo requesting information about this meeting
- h. Correspondence from Library Board of Trustees proposing charter language
- i. Correspondence from Matt Taber concerning the Board of Assessment Appeals discussing the Town Administrator and suggesting the First Selectman be made part time
- j. Correspondence from Lynne Allen providing corrections to spelling and grammar in the draft charter
- k. Correspondence from Rich Roberds commenting on the legal points raised by George Eames during the public hearing
- l. Correspondence from Pamela DeFilippo requesting the PowerPoint presented at the public hearing

7. Old Business

- a. None

8. New Business

- a. None

9. Commission Work Session

- a. Review of timeline

- i. Draft charter must be presented to Board of Selectmen by July 1st, they will provide comments and suggestions to Charter Revision Commission by August 1st

- b. Review and approval of changes based on public hearing and email feedback

- i. Discussed whether to include Town Administrator in draft charter to allow the Board of Selectmen to discuss the proposal and give the voters the opportunity to decide. Reiterated that Town Administrator is not a policy-making position and would be similar to an office manager. Day to day operations would be handled by the Town Administrator, allowing the Board of Selectmen to focus on other projects. Stressed that the public would need to be informed on how the Town Administrator position functions
- ii. Discussed comments on legal language. Expressed that the charter was written in plain English and is a legal document
- iii. Discussed reverting Library language. Laura Francis suggested clarifying language for sections which seem to conflict with statutory authority and powers of the Library

- iv. **Section 1.4 Hiring of Staff**

- 1. Proposed Language
- 2. Statute gives hiring authority of Assistant Town Clerk to Town Clerk, and provides language on Registrar of Voters hiring. Laura Francis noted there is a legal opinion that the First Selectman is the hiring

authority. Added clarifying language which gives hiring authority if the statutes also provide for such

3. Discussed comments on language which allows boards and commissions to hire special legal counsel or secretarial services. Noted need to differentiate between staff and elected officials. It was suggested that language be added that provides checks and balances for compensation recording secretaries receive.
4. Proposed language which prohibits board and commission members from receiving compensation directly or indirectly for goods or services
 - a. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE SECTION 1.4 LANGUAGE AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**
 - i. Noted that Selectmen receive a stipend, clarified that language will not conflict
5. Matt LaFayette suggested adding in exception for Selectmen so they can receive their stipend. Added in "except as provided in this charter"
 - a. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY EILEEN BUCKHIET TO ACCEPT SECTION 1.4 AS AMENDED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

v. **Library**

1. Reviewed language proposed by the Library Trustees
2. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE SECONDED BY EILEEN BUCKHEIT TO APPROVE LANGUAGE AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

vi. **Section 4.1 Number of Selectmen**

1. Draft includes language which states selectmen shall be compensated in a manner set by a vote at the Annual Budget Meeting. Discussed changes necessary to avoid conflict with approved section 1.4 amendments
2. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO ADD THAT THE SELECTMEN MAY BE COMPENSATED IN SUCH MANNER AND AMOUNT AS SET BY THE VOTE OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING ON RECOMMENDATION OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**
 - a. Laura Francis noted that if a town administrator is approved, the board of selectmen may change to an uncompensated board. Discussed whether to change "may" to "shall," noting that exact amount of compensation will be determined by the Board of Finance and the Annual Budget Meeting
3. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE SECONDED BY MARTIN ANDERSON TO AMEND SECTION 4.1 WITH THE CHANGE OF "MAY" TO "SHALL". ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED.**

- vii. **Section 2.1 General Town Elections**
 - 1. Generally agreed to revert back to elected Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Town Treasurer. Discussed having five selectmen if the town administrator position is approved, and having three if not. It was suggested that five selectmen be proposed in the draft for the Board of Selectmen to discuss
 - 2. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO RESTORE THE TOWN CLERK'S POSITION TO AN ELECTED POSITION. THREE AYE, FOUR NAY, MOTION FAILED.**
 - 3. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO RESTORE THE TAX COLLECTOR'S POSITION TO AN ELECTED POSITION. TWO AYE, FIVE NAY. MOTION FAILED**
 - a. Briefly discussed need to professionalize position
 - 4. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY MATT LAFAYETTE TO RESTORE THE ELECTED TREASURER POSITION. FIVE AYE, TWO NAY. MOTION PASSED**
 - a. Eileen Buckheit reiterated that the Treasurer is not a checks and balances position and suggested that if the town wants to improve checks and balances the Town should explore other options

- viii. **Section 2.2 State Election**
 - 1. **MOTION BY AL DIVINCENTIS, SECONDED BY MARTIN ANDERSON TO REVERT BACK TO OLD LANGUAGE FOR SECTION 2.2. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

- ix. **Section 2.7 Vacancies: Expiration of Terms**
 - 1. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY EILEEN BUCKHEIT TO ACCEPT SECTION 2.7 AS PROPOSED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

- x. **Section 3.1.1 Powers of the Legislative Body**
 - 1. Made minor change to language to be consistent with delegation of powers to other bodies
 - 2. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO APPROVE SECTION 3.11 AS AMENDED. ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

- xi. **Section 3.1.2 Annual and Special Meetings**
 - 1. Noted comment at public hearing that statute says a town meeting can be called by 20 electors, however the charter has the ability to increase.

- xii. **Section 3.2.1 Voting Qualifications**
 - 1. Briefly discussed eligibility and whether to say "and" or "or"
 - 2. **MOTION BY MATT LAFAYETTE, SECONDED BY TO AMEND SECTION 3.2.1 SECTION 4 TO READ "OR" INSTEAD OF "AND." ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

- xiii. **Section 3.9 Actions Requiring Referendum**

1. Discussed threshold for town meeting, suggested changing amount to \$500,000. Noted that requiring a referendum incurs cost for poll workers, requires notice, and may not have high turnout
2. **MOTION BY LAURA FRANCIS, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO REDUCE \$1 MILLION THRESHOLD TO \$500,000. MOTION WITHDRAWN**
 - a. Discussed bonding versus referendum. It was suggested that the threshold be 10% of the town budget
3. **MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON, SECONDED BY AL DIVINCENTIS TO ADOPT SECTION 3.9 SUBSTITUTING “10% OF THE TOWN BUDGET OR MORE” FOR “ONE MILLION DOLLARS OR MORE.” ALL AYE, MOTION PASSED**

10. Next Meeting-June 23, 2026

11. Adjourn

MOTION BY MARTIN ANDERSON SECONDED BY SEVERAL TO ADJOURN. ALL AYE

Meeting adjourned at 9:40pm,
Respectfully submitted,
Nick Charest