

TOWN OF DURHAM

EXPLANATORY TEXT FOR REFERENDUM QUESTIONS ON CHARTER REVISION

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

On the November 3, 2026 election ballot, there will be three referendum questions regarding the Charter of the Town of Durham. This explanatory text has been prepared by the Town Clerk pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §9-369b(a). It is not intended to advocate for either the approval or disapproval of the referendum questions. Voters are also urged to read the proposed Charter revision as published on the town website and in the Middletown Press in full prior to casting their ballot so that they may draw their own conclusions.

General Explanation

The Charter of the Town of Durham defines the form of government for the town and sets out the roles and responsibilities of most elected and appointed town officials. The Charter also governs the framework for how town government is conducted, such as the process for adopting ordinances and the town budget, and the identification and operation of various town agencies. Periodically, communities update their charters to reflect changes in the way the business of government is conducted, to reassign roles and responsibilities or to clarify certain provisions. This process, called charter revision, may result in minor technical and administrative changes, as well as substantive changes to the structure of local government.

On July 21, 2025, the Board of Selectmen voted to appoint a Charter Revision Commission to consider and report on amendments to the Charter of the Town of Durham, according to the process set forth by the Connecticut General Statutes. The existing Charter was most recently revised in 2006. The proposed Charter is the compilation of the proposed amendments to the Charter approved by the Charter Revision Commission and the Board of Selectmen during this process. The Board of Selectmen, on August 24, 2026, rejected certain proposed revisions and, on September 2, 2026, voted to have the proposed Charter submitted to the voters of the Town of Durham in three separate questions on the November 3, 2026 ballot.

Question 1:

Shall the Durham Town Charter be amended to increase the number of members of the Board of Selectmen from three to five?

Yes _____

No _____

The revised Charter, in Sections 2.1, 4.1 and 9.5, proposes to increase the number of members of the Board of Selectmen from three to five – a First Selectman and four other members of the Board of Selectmen. The additional members would be elected at the next municipal election to be held in November 2027.

Question 2:

Shall the Durham Town Charter be amended to change the positions of Town Clerk and Tax Collector from elected positions to appointed positions?

Yes _____

No _____

Currently, the Town Clerk and the Tax Collector are elected by the voters for four-year terms at the biennial municipal elections. The revised Charter, in Sections 2.1, 5.4, and 9.4 propose to change these positions to be appointed by the First Selectman. This change would take effect at the end of the current term of office for those positions, which is December 2027

Question 3:

Shall additional provisions of the Durham Town Charter be amended other than as provided in questions #1 and #2 above, all as recommended in the final report of the Charter Revision Commission dated August 5, 2026, as subsequently amended by the Board of Selectmen on August 24, 2026, and as on file with the Durham Town Clerk?

Yes _____

No _____

In addition to the revisions proposed in Questions 1 and 2, the Charter Revision Commission has recommended a number of other changes, many of which are stylistic or grammatical, and others of which are substantive.

Listed below are some of the substantive revisions that are proposed. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and the actual document should be consulted by the voters.

- 2.9 – Compensation of town officials and employees may be adjusted as determined by the Board of Selectmen to be in the town's best interests, subject to budgetary limitations
- 3.1.4 – Notice and warning requirements for town meetings have been expanded and modernized
- 3.2.1 – Detailed Town meeting procedures have been proposed
- 3.4 – Provisions have been proposed to establish a process for emergency appropriations and for the declaration of a public emergency
- 3.5.1 – Proposed revision allows for the amendment or repeal of ordinances upon petition of 100 electors, in addition to existing provisions for the adoption of ordinances

- 3.5.3 – Provisions have been proposed to establish a process for adoption of and limitations on emergency ordinances
- 3.6 – Detailed provisions have been proposed for the sale, purchase or disposition of town-owned real estate
- 3.7 – Provisions have been proposed for granting or acceptance of easements, rights of way and temporary construction access
- 3.8 – Provisions have been proposed for acceptance of private roads and road discontinuance procedures
- 3.9 – The threshold requirement for referendum approval of a special appropriation has been proposed to be amended from \$100,000 to 10% of the Town's net budget. For context, for the 2026-2027 budget, 10% of the Town's net budget is \$523,534.40.
- 5.1.9 – Detailed provisions have been proposed for special appropriations and the limit of such appropriations not requiring town meeting approval has been proposed to increase from \$20,000 to \$40,000
- 5.2 – Additional criteria have been proposed for qualifications and provision of assessment services
- 5.3 – Statutory requirements for the Board of Assessment Appeals have been detailed in the proposed Charter
- 5.5 and 5.6 – Proposed revisions clarify the respective duties of the Town Treasurer and the Finance Director
- Chapter 6 – the descriptions and duties of the various officers, boards and commissions are proposed to be updated to reflect changes in the statutes and procedures since the adoption of the current Charter and to more closely align duties and functions with statutory powers and requirements
- 7.3 – the proposed revision calls for the Board of Selectmen to consider whether a charter revision would be appropriate at least once every ten years
- 7.6 – proposes to add provisions permitting remote and hybrid board and commission meetings in accordance with state law
- 7.8 – proposes to establish clearer ownership rights and privileges with respect to town assets and property
- Chapter 8 – the various public safety functions and providers are consolidated into this one section
- Chapter 9 – proposes the transition provisions and effective dates for the Charter revisions

A majority vote on each question will determine whether the proposed Charter is approved or not.

Copies of the current Charter, the proposed Charter and a document comparing the current Charter and the proposed Charter are available in the office of the Town Clerk and on the Town of Durham website at www.townofdurhamct.org.