Town of Winchester Charter Revision Commission Report 2026

Town Clerk Transition: Transition the Town Clerk role to a professionally appointed position.

out of 169 CT Municipalities

APPOINTED MODELS IN CT:

75 out of 169 Connecticut municipalities currently utilize this model.

HIGHLY TECHNICAL & STATE-MANDATED:

95% TECHNICAL role

95% technical role encompassing:

- Land Records, Vital Statistics, vital statistics, and
- Complex Election Laws.

Board & Commission Concurrent Service:

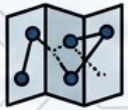
Establish limitations on serving concurrently on multiple major boards. Cannot serve on two at the same time.

- **Definition of "Major Boards":** For the purposes of this restriction, Major Boards are strictly defined as:
  1. Board of Selectmen (BOS)
  2. Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)
  3. Board of Education (BOE)
  4. Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission (IWWC)
  5. Board of Assessment Appeals (Tax Review)
  6. Water and Sewer Commission (W&S)
  7. Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)

Registrars Election Cycle: Extend the election cycle for Registrars to a **4-year term** (increased from the current 2-year term)

1. **Administrative Stability:** Ensures administrative stabilityby reducing turnover and retaining institutional knowledge.

2. **Financial Protection:** Protects the town's significant financial investment in extensive state-mandated professional certifications and rigorous training.



3. **Regional Alignment:** Aligns Winchester's election practices with prevailing regional standards.

Budget Timeline Adjustments: Implement structural changes to the town's budget timeline.

- **Board of Education (BOE) Benefit:** This shift structurally provides the BOE with an additional week to review, adjust, and finalize their education budget
- **Taxpayer Engagement:** Consolidating into a single, high-profile public hearing simplifies the process for citizens, creating a clear, well-publicized forum that encourages robust taxpayer commentary. One Public Hearing.
- **Board of Selectmen (BOS) Window:** This compression creates a shorter, more intensive decision-making window for the BOS
- **Referendum Failure Mitigation:** Moving the entire schedule forward creates a vital "turnaround buffer." *before* the July 1st statutory deadline. **14 days** between failed referendums.

Consolidated Post-Town Meeting Window: Shortened time after Town Meeting.

Eligibility for Boards & Commissions: Consistent language for eligibility on Boards and Commissions regarding Elector & Property Owner

BOS & TOWN MANAGER APPOINTING

Consistent language established for appointing Board and Commission members.

ELIGIBILITY DEFINED

ELECTORS
Clearly defined Electors of the Town.

PROPERTY OWNERS
Defined in Section 1708 of this charter.

Items Not Moved Forward

- Four-Year Terms for the Board of Selectmen
- IWWC membership from 9 to 7 - this was sent back to the commission for discussion
- Removal of Stipends for BOS - time
- Moving Gilbert line item to the Town side of the budget: This was ruled not consistent with law
- Fire Department Consolidation - requested the Fire Department create a proposal among all departments complete with leadership tiers, equipment study, financial impacts, etc.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION

The Charter Revision Commission recognizes the inherent challenges of incremental updates. We strongly recommend that the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager engage a professional firm, such as General Code, to restructure the Charter into a more logical and accessible document. Following this reorganization, the substance of individual sections can be updated more effectively. After the reorganization of the Charter, another Charter Revision Commission should be established to review necessary updates from the Town Attorney and others.

Next Steps

BOS Next Steps: Phase 3: Reporting & BOS Review

- By June 15, 2026: Submission of Report
  - CRC submits the Draft Report to the Town Clerk, who transmits it to the BOS.
- July 6, 2026: BOS Public Hearing
  - The BOS must hold its own public hearing on the draft **within 45 days** of submission.
- By July 21, 2026: BOS Recommendations
  - **Within 15** days of their hearing, the BOS must either accept the report OR send it back to the CRC with recommended changes. All accepted changes will go to the Town Attorney for specific language and ballot questions.

MEMBERS OF THE 2026
WINCHESTER CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

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