



Town of Somers
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

August 21, 2018

Board of Selectmen
Town of Somers
600 Main St.
Somers, CT 06071

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

Colleagues,

In accordance with the Resolution of the Board of Selectmen as amended April 5, 2018, the Charter Revision Commission (Commission) is submitting herewith recommendations for revision of the charter of the Town of Somers.

The Commission carefully considered the comments of Somers citizens at two Public Hearings conducted by the Commission, another held by the Board of Selectmen, those of the Board of Selectmen in your letter of August 8, 2018 asking the Commission to reconsider certain draft recommendations, members of the public in attendance at our meeting of August 15, 2018, and those of the First Selectman and a member of the Board of Finance, present at that meeting. After significant discussion the Commission voted to submit to you recommendations as set forth below. We believe specific wording of any charter changes should be drafted by the Board of Selectmen, in accordance with these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS, CHARGE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

1. Shall the role of Town Clerk become an appointive rather than elective position?

Yes. The Commission recommends the Town Clerk be appointed by and may be removed by the proposed Chief Administrative Officer subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

2. Shall the town remain guided by an elected Board of Selectmen, or should we move to a Town Manager form of government?

Neither. The Commission recommends the establishment of new position, Chief Administrative Officer, reporting directly to the Board of Selectmen. The Chief Administrative Officer would act as the town's statutory Chief Executive and Administrative Officer, and would be responsible for implementing policy as set by the Board of Selectmen, and executing or causing to be executed all town ordinances, regulations or resolutions voted by the Board of Selectmen. The Chief Administrative Officer would run day-to-day operations of the Town of Somers, and all town departments would report to the Chief Administrative Officer, who would in turn report to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen would retain ultimate authority to hire and fire personnel.

3. Shall the Zoning and Planning boards be combined into one appointed/elective body?

No. The Commission extensively examined statutory mandates and historical operation of both the Zoning Board and Planning Board, researched operations in numerous municipalities similarly situated, and was unanimous in recommending maintenance of separate boards.

4. Shall the number of members on the Zoning Commission be revised?

No. Given our recommendation to maintain separate boards, the paucity of volunteers willing to come forward, and the ability of the Board of Selectmen to appoint members, we recommend no change.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN ADDITION TO THE CHARGE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

5. Ensure the Town Charter is gender neutral in its wording.
6. Remove the provision providing for separate election of the First Selectman, and references to the First Selectman as Chief Executive and Administrative Officer in town. Add provision for election of 3 members of the Board of Selectmen, with election of the Chair of the Board of Selectmen from and by members of the Board of Selectmen. Revise charter to ensure Chair of the Board of Selectmen is responsible for setting agendas for and presiding over meetings of the Board of Selectmen.

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7. Add the positions of Registrars of Voters to the charter, and increase the term of the Registrars to 4 years, to reflect the time needed to become familiar with the positions' duties and responsibilities.
8. Ensure consistency of titles throughout the charter, particularly the Chief Financial Officer, also referred to as the Director of Finance and Treasurer.
9. Clarify Town Meeting language as to what needs to be sent to Referendum, retaining the ability of the electorate to lower the budget at Town Meeting, in accordance with statutes.

Please be assured the members of the Commission executed their responsibilities most diligently and faithfully. Notwithstanding disparate views and strongly held opinions, discussion of issues was always professional, friendly and with a common goal of the best interests of the town we're all so proud to live in.

It has been a pleasure to serve the town of Somers.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew K. Rockett', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew K. Rockett, Chair

Robert Chester
Terri Henderson
Terri Schmidt
Graham Van Keuren
Ralph Williams