

**Town of Somers
Charter Revision Commission**

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June 28, 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, the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) is submitting herewith recommendations for revision of the charter of the Town of Somers.

The Commission carefully considered the comments of Somers citizens at the Public Hearing, and those of the Board of Selectmen as related after that hearing. The Commission strongly recommends a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Charter Revision Commission to allow the Board of Selectmen the opportunity to explore more thoroughly our thought process in making our recommendations.

In addition to the recommendations below, we are attaching a proposed Organization Chart and an insert/strikeout version of the Charter containing our recommended changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS, CHARGE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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

Yes. the CRC recommends the Town Clerk be appointed by and may be removed by the proposed Town Administrative Officer subject to the approval of the First Selectman and 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 CRC recommends the establishment of new position, Town Administrative Officer, reporting directly to the First Selectman and appointed or dismissed by a supermajority of the Board of Selectmen. The Town Administrative Officer would run day-to-day operations of the Town of Somers, and all town departments would report to the Town Administrative Officer, who would in turn report to the First Selectman. The First Selectman would remain the actual and statutory Chief Executive Officer of the town. Concurrently, the CRC recommends increasing the Board of Selectmen to 5 members to reduce workload and increase diversity of opinion within the board. The CRC contemplates significant reduction in pay for the First Selectman, commensurate with significant reduction in workload.

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

No. The CRC extensively examined statutory mandates and historical operation of both the Zoning Board and Planning Board, 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, as set forth in our attached draft.

6. 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.

7. Clarify the reporting structure of the town's finance officials (to report to the Town Administrative Officer) and ensure consistency of titles throughout the Charter.

8. 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.

You can be certain that all members of the Charter Revision Commission worked diligently and assiduously in familiarizing themselves with the issues, applicable statutes, and opinions of town employees and members of the public. There were no preconceived notions brought to our discussions, and opinions were changed by thoughtful discussions. In all such discussions, the best interests of the Town of Somers remained foremost.

It has been a pleasure to serve the town.

Respectfully,

Andrew K. Rockett, Chair

Robert Chester
Terri Henderson
Terri Schmidt
Graham Van Keuren
Ralph Williams