

Town Charter Committee

April 10, 2025



Committee met in HYBRID session at 6:30 p.m. at Abbot Hall, 188 Washington Street
The Chair called the meeting of April 10, 2025, to order.

The following committee members were present constituting a quorum:

Amy Drinker, Chair	Seamus Hourihan
Rossana Ferrante, Vice Chair, remote	Sean Casey
Jim Zisson	Caleb Miller
Ron Grenier	Tom Massaro
Bill Conly, absent	Victor Wild
Thatcher W. Kezer III, Town Administrator, staff support	

The Chair announced that the meeting is utilizing a webinar platform and is being recorded.

Minutes. Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes of March 13, 2025. All in favor.
Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes of March 25, 2025. All in favor with Victor Wild voting present.

Ron Grenier joined the meeting.

Boards/Committees/Commissions, discussion. The following boards, committees and commissions joined the Charter Committee for discussion and the opportunity to answer questions from the Committee regarding the current structure of their department, delivery of services, budget process and to allow for the opportunity to discuss any suggestions or recommendations:

Council On Aging. The following COA Members were present: Marcy Schwam, Chair (remote), Karen Janscy, Phyllis Smith, Lisa Palmer, Meredith Reardon, Marjorie Shea and Lisa Hooper, COA Director. Sean Casey reviewed draft language and explained the legal basis for the Council, highlighting the distinction between the Council on Aging department and the Advisory Board. The Council on Aging Board is advisory. Discussion included modifying the language to reflect this accurately. Rosanna Ferrante joined the meeting remotely.

Members of the Council on Aging Board offered the following suggestions and comments related to their operations:

- update terminology to focus on "needs of adults 60 and over" rather than "problems of aging," emphasizing healthy living and enriching lives.
- update the language in the Charter to reflect the change in the state's department name from the Office of Elder Affairs to the Executive Office of Aging and Independence.
- need for additional office space
- need for an extra social worker and a volunteer coordinator position.

- need for a dedicated parking lot and the desire to offer programs beyond 3 pm for working seniors.
- lack of public transportation to nearby cities for medical appointments

The Council on Aging Board members discussed their role and potential restructuring. The board has no fiduciary responsibilities, with 60% of the COA's operating budget covered by the town and the rest through grants. The board members also briefly discussed staffing challenges for keeping the building open and the potential for hybrid meeting spaces.

Rossana Ferrante joined the meeting remotely.

Discussion on Draft A, continued. The Charter Committee continued its review of Draft A, reviewing all holds placed by committee members starting with Article 6.1, Zoning Board of Appeals. The committee also discussed the need for consistency in the language used across different sections of the bylaws. The Chair will consult with town counsel regarding the definition of "resident" vs "registered voter". Sean Casey will make revisions to the draft A Charter as discussed.

Public Forums. The committee discussed plans for upcoming public forums on the charter process, including a comprehensive presentation by Sean Casey on May 27, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will be hybrid, followed by two brief presentations; May 29, 2025 in person at the Council on Aging and May 30, 2025 via Webinar. The Committee will be promoting these public forums on multiple platforms.

Public Comment. None

Next Meeting Date. Tuesday, April 22, 2025. 6:30 p.m.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. All in favor.



Kyle A. Wiley, Administrative Clerk

List of documents used: Draft A, January 25, 2025/Committee holds