

Town Charter Committee

June 25, 2024



Board met in HYBRID session at 6:30 p.m. at Abbot Hall, 188 Washington Street
The following Board members were present constituting a quorum:

Amy Drinker, Chair	Seamus Hourihan
Rossana Ferrante, Vice Chair	Sean Casey
Jim Zisson	Amy Danforth
Ron Grenier	Caleb Miller
Bill Conly	Victor Wild
Thomas Massaro	Thatcher W. Kezer III, Town Administrator, Staff Support

Mel Kleckner, Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management
Karen Canfield, Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management

The Chair called the meeting of June 25, 2024 to order.

Minutes. Motion made and seconded to approve the minutes of June 13, 2024. All in favor.

Collins Center Presentation

The Chair reminded anyone watching the meeting on Zoom that all the documents the committee is reviewing are online at www.marblehead.org on the Town Charter Committee page. Mel Kleckner and Karen Canfield, Collins Center, made a presentation to the Committee on Charters and Charter Processes. It was agreed at the last meeting that the Committee must first understand how the government structure in Marblehead works, and how that compares with other similarly situated communities in Massachusetts. The Committee looked at a chart of four comparative communities (Longmeadow, Concord, Swampscott, and Danvers) that gave a brief description of the elements of their charters. Marblehead's Bylaws are limited in terms of how they capture the way the town government works. Marblehead is a well-functioning community but there are a lot of informal processes that have developed over time that are not well written down. Marblehead has many elected boards and the position of town administrator is under a MA general law, Chapter 41, that basically allows communities to hire a town administrator and the Select Board delegate as much responsibility as they want to that position.

Karen prepared a draft syllabus for the review of the various topics the Committee will be considering. Included are inflection points for public engagement and policy/legal input of others. This schedule can be shifted depending on the deliberations and topics of interest to the Committee. The schedule is an aggressive one that would conclude the work of the Committee prior to the May 2025 Annual Town Meeting.

Town Organizational Chart

The Town Administrator reviewed the current organizational structure, highlighting the numerous boards and committees appointed, and the proposed changes to improve reporting and clarity for state accounting. He presented a breakdown of the organization's workforce distribution between town and school employees, indicating a restructuring to give schools greater control

over costs. Details were given of the various departments, boards, and their respective functions, emphasizing the integral role of the Select Board, which manages the town's finances, utilities, and land use. The process for appointing various positions, including the Housing authority, was reviewed as well as the organizational chart for the fiscal year 2024, clarifying the roles within the Select Board and the Town Council. Recent organizational changes in the department, including the creation of new positions and the realignment of responsibilities was presented as well as changes taking effect on July 1st of this year, including the creation of a new community development planning department and the reclassification of certain positions. The decision-making process for board appointments and elections remains the responsibility of town leadership. Documents detailing the town's general laws and special acts were presented. The Committee will be studying the bylaws and special acts, focusing on recent special acts, at a future meeting.

Committee members asked how items and questions that may not be on the syllabus would be addressed. The Chair suggested a "rainy day" list be created and asked members to send any items for the "rainy day" list directly to the Chair, who will aggregate and distribute them.

Housekeeping items

The Chair reminded the committee that all agenda documents will be posted online prior to each meeting. Committee members should arrange to be sworn in by the Town Clerk and complete the Open Meeting Law training online and review the Executive Branch materials provided by the Collins Center before the next meeting.

Public Comment

None

Next Meeting will be held on July 11, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. All in favor.



Kyle A. Wiley
Administrative Clerk

List of documents used:

Collins Center Memo, June 21, 2024/ Comparative Community Chart / Project Syllabus