

Town Charter Committee

May 15, 2025



Committee met in HYBRID session at 6:30 p.m. at Abbot Hall, 188 Washington Street
The Chair called the meeting of May 15, 2025, to order.

Amy Drinker, Chair	Seamus Hourihan
Rossana Ferrante, Vice Chair	Sean Casey
Jim Zisson	Caleb Miller
Ron Grenier	Tom Massaro
Bill Conly	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 April 10, 2025 and April 22, 2025. All in favor.

Daft A, 7.5 Recall Provision. Discussion.

The committee discussed its approach to reviewing Article 7.5 in light of the recent town meeting debate on recall language (Article 52), which did not pass. The committee agreed to consider a "baseline charter" that reflects current town operations, with standalone components, like recall provisions, to be presented as separate warrant articles for town meeting consideration.

A lengthy discussion followed on the placement and timing of recall provisions in the town charter and whether the committee should continue the discussion on recall provision at this meeting since it will not be included in the "baseline charter". Some members felt it should be a separate discussion after they complete the "baseline charter" review with 1 member feeling that there should be no discussion on recall at all as the committee does not set policy. The committee ultimately agreed to proceed with the discussion as planned and to treat recall as a standalone provision, separate from the main charter articles, and to use Sean Casey's framework to evaluate its potential inclusion.

Jim Zisson made a presentation on the recall election process in Massachusetts that provided an overview of how recalls work at various levels of government. Recalls may be initiated for a variety of reasons, but the process typically involves collecting a certain number of signatures from registered voters within a set timeframe. Annual elections might not be effective for recalls due to the time needed to initiate and complete. The challenges of defining specific criteria for recalls and the potential for recalls being used as a political tool, rather than a deterrent for poor performance, were discussed as well as the recall process and its potential impact on the community, with concerns raised about the divisiveness and ease of initiating recalls. The committee discussed thoughts on the effectiveness of recalls and the possibility of achieving similar outcomes through annual elections or term limits. The committee discussed recall

provisions, and whether to allow simultaneous recall elections and replacement elections and agreed to table this section and to present it as a standalone article later.

The Committee will start reviewing Article 8 at its next meeting.

Public Forums Planning Discussion.

The committee discussed plans for upcoming public forums on May 27th, 29th, and 30th, emphasizing the importance of listening to community input rather than engaging in extensive deliberation. The TCC agreed to draft ground rules for these forums to clarify the purpose of public participation.

Housekeeping.

State Representative Jenny Armini will attend a meeting in September to talk about the Charter process at the State level.

Meeting Dates: the Committee discussed their meeting schedule as follows:

June 12, 2025, and June 24, 2025

July 22, 2025

August 26, 2025

September 11, 2025, and September 23, 2025

October 9, 2025, and October 28, 2025

November 13, 2025

December 11, 2025

Seamus Hourihan suggested there be a “new business” item on the committee’s agenda for items that may come up for discussion. The group also addressed concerns about social media engagement and public communication, with some members suggesting a more proactive approach to addressing public questions. The Chair remarked that she believes public comment is best made to the committee during its meetings in open session, not via social media or phone calls.

Public Comment. None

Next Meeting Date. Tuesday, May 27, 2025. 7:00 p.m. (the first public forum)

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