

Town Charter Committee

September 11, 2025



Committee met in HYBRID session at 6:15 p.m., when a quorum was reached, at Abbot Hall, 188 Washington Street

The Chair called the meeting of September 11, 2025, to order.

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

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS OVERVIEW. Representative Jenny Armini met with the Committee to have a discussion regarding the state legislative process for adopting Marblehead's proposed Town Charter. At the time this discussion began, the committee did not yet have a quorum present. Because the conversation was for informational purposes only, the discussion was appropriate to proceed. Shortly thereafter, member Caleb Miller joined the meeting via Zoom, establishing a quorum. At that point the meeting was formally called to order at 6:16 PM, and the conversation with Representative Armini continued under open session.

Representative Armini explained the sequence of steps once the Charter is submitted as a home rule petition: assignment of a bill number, committee hearings before the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, and subsequent readings in both the House and Senate. She emphasized that Marblehead's petition is unlikely to be controversial but that timing will be critical. Because the legislature's formal sessions end in July 2026, it is likely the Charter will not advance until the next session beginning January 2027. This timing makes it aggressive, but not impossible, for the Charter to be returned in time for a June 2027 Town Election. More realistically, a special election later in 2027 or inclusion on the June 2028 ballot may be necessary. The committee discussed how hearings, reconstitution of legislative committees in 2027, and ballot preparation deadlines would all affect scheduling. The consensus was that communication with the Select Board and Town Clerk will be critical to determine whether a special election is warranted if state approval is delayed.

MINUTES. Motion made to approve the minutes of August 26, 2025. Moved by Grenier, seconded by Casey. On a roll call vote the Committee voted as follows: Casey, in favor; Grenier, in favor; Massaro, in favor, Miller, in favor; Drinker, in favor.

Victor Wild joined the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

CHARTER COMMITTEE UPDATES.

Committee and Board Outreach

September 11, 2025

The committee reviewed the ongoing outreach to boards, committees, and commissions regarding Articles 6 and 7 of the draft Charter. Meetings have been held with the Housing Authority, Municipal Light Board, School Committee, Water & Sewer Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, and Harbor & Waters Board, among others. Feedback has generally been constructive, with some technical adjustments to language requested. The process has underscored the importance of aligning Charter language with state statutes that govern certain entities, such as Chapter 164 for the Municipal Light Board.

The committee agreed to wait for feedback from individual boards before reviewing language in Articles 6 and 7 to avoid conflicting revisions. Town Counsel will review specific questions raised by boards to ensure compliance with state law.

Article 9 (Finance) Revisions

Sean Casey presented proposed changes to Draft B Article 9, reorganizing capital improvement provisions and adding clarity regarding enterprise funds and other revenue sources. New language specifies that operations of the Housing Authority, Municipal Light Department, and Water & Sewer Commission are primarily funded by user fees and subject to state law. These changes were well received, with only minor edits noted for consistency. The committee agreed to forward the revised draft to CFO Aleesha Benjamin for review to confirm accuracy before finalization.

Legal Counsel and Drafting Standards

The committee discussed its approach to Town Counsel review. Members agreed that they are drafting language based on committee intent, then asking counsel to confirm legality and statutory compliance. This ensures that the Charter remains readable for residents while meeting state legislative drafting standards. The Collins Center is also reviewing Draft B and will provide feedback shortly.

Draft B Discussion. The Committee commenced its review of Draft B holds at Article 5 and skipping Article 6 and Article 7 for later review after feedback is received from boards and committees.

Housekeeping and Communication

The Chair noted that reminder emails to boards and committees have been effective in generating feedback. An additional outreach effort has been made to committees not specifically mentioned in the Charter to ensure broad awareness. The committee emphasized the importance of transparent communication to build public support leading into May 2026 Town Meeting and eventual ballot consideration.

Several members commended the Chair and Sean for their extensive outreach and documentation, noting that communication has been key to past successes in Marblehead projects.

Public Comment. None

Next Meeting Date. Tuesday, September 23, 2025. 6:00 p.m.

The Chair took a moment to acknowledge that today, September 11th, is a day we remember and will not forget.

Motion made to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Moved by Grenier, seconded by Massaro. On a polled vote the Committee voted as follows: Miller, in favor; Casey, in favor; Grenier, in favor; Massaro, in favor; Wild, in favor; Drinker, in favor.



Kyle A. Wiley, Administrative Clerk

List of documents used: Marblehead Charter Legislative Process, Charter Draft B, Town Charter Executive Summary draft, B9 Finances v 1.4 Annotated, B9 Proposed changes to Article 9 8.28.25.