

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE TOWN OF BOLTON CHARTER

February 2021

Form of Government

Charter Section	Decision	Reasoning	Date Decided/Vote
5.1(B)1	Change wording re: "majority"	Per changes in BoS size and FC: a majority = 4, a higher vote = majority + 1	11/12/20 7-0
5.1(D) Consider changes to assigned powers and duties of town officials. Change Administrative Officer duties?	Change title to Town Admin, refine and clarify duties and when must report to FS and BoS	Current Form of Gov't works if clarify duties and line of reporting. Gives TA autonomy over day-to-day operations with oversight by BoS to prevent overreaching of authority. Eliminates current provision requiring four votes of BoS to hire or discharge. Termination of TA handled according to the terms of employment contract (current practice). Changes reflect current AO's job description and employment contract adopted by BoS.	7/16/20 4-3
6.1 Should "non-voting" be added in front of "ex officio"?	Yes	Current charter allows FS to vote on all boards. Not practiced but should be clarified that FS cannot vote.	11/12/20 5-2

Procedural

Charter Section	Decision	Reasoning	Date Decided/Vote
1.4(B) Make charter language gender neutral	Yes	Current definition in 1.4(B) still results in using masculine oriented language. Language will be made gender neutral to the extent reasonably practical. The terms "Selectman" and "Selectmen" will remain the same.	1/14/21 5-2 and 2/18/21 consensus on "selectman"
2.3 Allow non US citizens to hold elected office?	No change	CT constitution says to be eligible for office must be elector. Elector = US citizen	9/22/20 Consensus
2.4 Are current provisions sufficient?	Reverse current order. Change to coin toss as first method	Promotes good will, saves \$3K-5K, no disruption of town business as with special elections. Spec Elec still available if candidates do not agree.	5/20/2020 7-0 and 2/18/21 consensus
2.5 Issue 1 How should vacancies in elected office be filled?	Change to remove offer to alternate	Leaves in place ability of remaining board members to appoint. May appoint alternate. Some alternates don't attend meetings, so may not be best choice to hold full position.	9/22/20 Issue 1 Consensus
2.5 Issue 2 Change so appointee serves until expiration of term, not until next election?	No change	Appointee should run at next election to keep position	9/22/20 Issue 2 Consensus
9.1(B) Should owners of \$1K of taxes assessed on property be able to vote in town meetings and referenda?	No change	Possible administrative difficulty does not outweigh removing the right of these voters to vote.	12/10/20 Consensus and 2/18/21 Consensus
9.3(5) Threshold for vote at special town meeting for fed grants requiring local share	No change	Current (about \$111,000) level is reasonable.	12/10/20 Consensus
9.7(A)(1) and 8.6 (D)(1) Threshold for supplemental appropriations submitted to referendum	Change to 1.5% of annual budget	Current threshold of about 1.1 million too high. Town meetings attract special interest groups and many voters cannot make them so referendum reflects wider range of opinions. Also, should not be tied to grand list which has large fluctuations in re-evaluation years. Lowers threshold to about \$345,000.	12/10/20 6-1 and 2/18/21 Consensus
9.7(A)(2) and 8.8(B)(3) Threshold for borrowing submitted to referendum	Change to 2% of last annual budget	Currently, town meetings can approve borrowing up to about \$2.2M. Too high. Town meetings attract special interest groups and many voters cannot make them so referendum reflects wider range of opinions. Also, should not be tied to grand list which has large fluctuations in re-evaluation years. Lowers threshold to about \$460,000.	12/10/20 6-1
9.9 Use of paper ballots at town meeting	Change	If three people request, vote will be by secure anonymous ballot. Provides anonymity.	12/10/20 7-0
11.1(A) Election of Chair of BoE	Add "Except as otherwise provided by statute"	Eliminates conflict with CGS §10-218 Re-election of Chairman of BoE	12/17/20 Consensus

11.1(A) Organization of Elected Boards	Change timing of election of Chairmen of elected boards and commissions to within two months of a municipal election. Add "municipal" twice before "election" and remove "each year"	Addresses issue of when election of chair doesn't fall in 45 day period and special meeting is needed, and clarifies "municipal" election.	12/17/20 6-1 (the 1 is an abstention)
11.2(E) Post all meeting materials of BoS, BoE, FC online in searchable manner	Add "where practical and feasible"	Moves toward more transparency. Technology is advanced enough so this should not be burdensome or too expensive	12/17/20 Consensus
11.2(E) Record BoS, BoE, FC meetings for broadcast and preservation	Add "where practical and feasible"	Moves toward more transparency. Technology is advanced enough so this should not be burdensome or too expensive	12/17/20 Consensus

Structural

Charter Section	Decision	Reasoning	Date Decided/Vote
3.1 Eliminate references to Judge of Probate	Yes	No longer a municipal office	10/8/20 7-0
3.1(B) Discuss if positions should be elected or appointed	Leave Board of Assessment Appeals elected	Because deals w/ taxation & public	9/22/20 Consensus
	Leave Town Meeting moderator elected	Because highly visible to public	9/22/20 Consensus
	Change P&Z, ZBA, and Alternates to appointed	Land use decisions should not be influenced by members' political affiliation, we can look to unaffiliated voters to fill seats when appointed because parties rarely run unaffiliated voters, and more people willing to serve on boards if they don't need to run for office	10/8/20 7-0 for both commissions
	Change BoF to Finance Committee of 7 members	Configure: 3 members appointed from/by BoS including FS, 2 members from/by BoE, 2 at large members—one each appointed by BoS and BoE. Reduces redundancy in budget creation process, brings together BoS and BoE perspectives early in process, encourages collaboration, reduces difficulty of finding candidates to run for public office.	1/14/21 7-0. Now negated see box below.
		Configure: 2 members appointed from/by BoS, 2 members from/by BoE, 3 at large members to be elected. Reduces redundancy in budget creation process, brings together BoS and BoE perspectives early in process, encourages collaboration, reduces difficulty of finding candidates to run for public office.	2/18/21 4-3
	FS or designee on FC	1 member from BoS will be FS or designee	2/18/21 5-2
		Terms of FC members to be four years and staggered.	2/18/21 6-1
3.5(B) Change so unsuccessful candidate for FS does not serve on BoS?	Yes	Role of FS is distinct from role of other selectmen so a vote cast for FS candidate should only be for that office and not for that person to serve on the BoS if loses FS race.	10/8/20 4-3 and 2/18/21 Consensus
3.5(B) Increase size of BoS to 7? All serve 4 year terms?	Yes, increase to 7, and yes to 4 year terms	Tied to new FC. Helps with greater time commitment needed by BoS members serving on FC. Reflects wider range of opinions, requires more compromise and cooperation. BoS will have control over appointments to PZC/IWC and ZBA so four votes of 7-member BoS (as opposed to 3 votes of 5-person board) brings greater perspective to appointment process. Four year terms better for long-term planning, completion of initiatives, encourages more people to run for BoS because campaigning only every 4 years. Staggered terms allows more experienced members to pass on knowledge to newer members.	10/8/20 7-0
7.1 (A) Should IWC and P&Z be combined?	Yes, combine with option to BoS to separate	Makes application process shorter promoting business development, sometimes IWC & P&Z have conflicting opinions, better to have one big proceeding than two.	10/8/20 5-2
7.1(A) Remove EDC?	Yes	EDC may be forming a regional EDC and membership is low	11/12/20 7-0

7.3(A) Should non-electors be allowed to serve on boards?	No change	Appointed members of boards should be electors of the town	11/12/20 6-1 and 2/18/21 Consensus
7.3(C) Removal of appointed board members	Move to Chapter 12	Have all removal language in one place	11/12/20 7-0
7.3(D) Does it conflict with 7.1(C) ?	No change	Inserting "until successor appointed" takes care of possible conflict.	12/17/20 Consensus
7.3(D) Vacancies in Appointed Boards/Commissions	Move to Chapter 12. Remove automatic offer to alternates	Same action and reasoning as with 2.5. Put all vacancy/removal provisions in same chapter.	12/17/20 Consensus
7.3(D) Vacancies in appointed positions	Move to Chapter 12	Have all removal and vacancy language in one place	11/12/20 7-0
7.3(E) Term of those filling vacancies	Move to Chapter 12	Have all removal and vacancy language in one place.	12/17/20 Consensus
7.3(F) Reporting vacancies	Move to Chapter 12	Have all removal and vacancy language in one place.	12/17/20 Consensus
7.4(B) Fire Commissioners change term to 4 yrs, staggered year by year, appoint at least 1 new each year	Yes	Hard to get people to serve 5 years. Staggering keeps continuity.	11/12/20 7-0
7.4(D) Change how long TPBC in effect?	Change language to ". . . Shall remain in effect until the project is completed, as determined by the BoS."	Gives BoS ability to keep TPBC intact until they determine completion, i.e. upon release of bonds. Keeps personnel who have knowledge of project in place.	1/14/21 7-0
Add 10.2(G) Ok for town officials/employees to serve on Fire Department	Yes	Long history of selectmen and others of serving this way. Important to allow them to do that—valuable members and FD needs volunteers	11/12/20 7-0 and 2/18/21 Consensus
10.3 Removal process if conflict policy violated	Move to Chapter 12	Have all removal provisions in one place	11/24/20 7-0
Chapter 12 Title	Change to Removal/Vacancies	There are no recall provisions in charter so word" recall" should not be in title.	12/17/20 Consensus
12.1(A) Adopt definition of "cause" and eliminate "deemed resignation" provision in 7.3(C)	Change	Need definition of "cause" to guide BoS and give clarity to individual involved. Better to have an affirmative action to remove than a deemed resignation based on failure to attend.	12/17/20 6-0
12.1(A) Change BoS vote needed to suspend to 4 and remove to majority +1	Change	Reflect increase in size of Bos to 7.	
12.1(B) Improve Suspension Process	Change	Under current charter, suspension can occur w/o any substantiation. Will require a credible allegation of facts.	12/17/20 6 in favor, with 1 abstention

Budget & Taxation

Charter Section	Decision	Reasoning	Date Decided/Vote
8.2(A) Audit	Change timing of selection of auditor from annually to 4 yrs. Remove "competitive"	Makes appointment coincide w/new BoS 4 yr terms and current auditor works under a 5 yr contract.	11/24/20 7-0
8.3 Treasurer	Add provision that BoS shall appoint treasurer every 4 yrs and Finance Director may act as Treasurer.	Makes appointment coincide w/ new BoS 4 yr terms, and brings in line with current practice	11/24/20 7-0
8.4(D)(3)(a)(i) and (b)(i) Preparation of Budget	Add word "audited"		11/24/20 Consensus
8.5 Adoption of Budget plain language statement to voters	Yes	Plain language, tone neutral, explanation of the budget to be posted prior to referendum	11/24/20 7-0
8.5(C) What to do after two failed budget referenda	An alternative was considered but not supported	Encodes a point of view not appropriate for the Charter. Too much variation in grand list. Could result in unwanted tax increases.	11/24/20 3-4 motion failed

8.5(C)(1) Adoption Budget	Change "reduce" to "revise"	"Reduce" not a neutral term and charter language should be neutral. Only allowing the budget to be reduced is weighted toward those who want a lower budget, encourages voters to continue to vote against the budget, and does not promote compromise.	11/24/20 4-3
		Have "reduce" v. "revise" a separate question on the ballot.	2/18/21 6-1
8.5(E) How often tax bills are sent out	No change	Per conversation with town staff, would double workload, and town saves between 4K-5K in interest under current annual scenario. BoS has ability to adopt semi-annual taxing schedule.	1/14/21 Consensus
8.6(B) Transfers of Special Appropriations	Change written notice of transfers from w/in 4 business days to "prior to next scheduled FC meeting"	Staff suggestion.	11/24/20 7-0
8.6(C)(3)	Change \$20K cap on FC approval of supplemental appropriations to .2% of most recently adopted budget	\$20K is a static number. More appropriate to tie it to budget to reflect changes in town's financial condition. Flexibility until next charter revision.	1/14/21 7-0
8.6(C)(5)	Change \$20K figure at which FC must pass supplemental appropriations decision on to town meeting to .2% of most recently adopted budget	\$20K is a static number. More appropriate to tie it to budget to reflect changes in town's financial condition. Flexibility until next charter revision.	1/14/21 7-0
8.7(A) Include computers in CAPA?	No change	Accounting treatment of purchases is decided by CAPA committee.	12/10/20 6-1
8.7(C)(3)	Change \$10K minimum for project appropriations to be funded through the Fund for Capital and Non-recurring Expenditures to .05% of most recently approved budget	Allows for reality of growth in town's budget	1/14/21 6-1
8.9(E) Annual Report	Change date by which FC publishes annual report from Feb 1 to Mar 15	Staff reports that the audit is never ready by Feb 1.	11/24/20 7-0
8.11 Public Records	Add new section	Copies of budget and other materials must be available on town website.	11/24/20 7-0

Non-charter Issue

Charter Section	Decision	Reasoning	Date Decided/Vote
Add safety issues	No change	BoS has power to establish safety procedures and a public safety commission not appropriate matter for charter	1/14/21 Consensus

**Prepared by the Bolton Charter Revision Commission
Appointed November 2019**

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