

TOWN OF LITTLETON

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE REVIEW

JULY 2024



D L S
DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

PREPARED BY:

DLS | Financial Management Resource Bureau
www.mass.gov/dls



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July 29, 2024

Select Board
Littleton Town Hall
37 Shattuck Street
Littleton, MA 01460

Dear Board Members,

I am pleased to present the enclosed report summarizing our review of the Town of Littleton's government structure. The Division of Local Services is committed to assisting municipal governments in achieving effective financial stewardship. It is my belief the implementation of the recommendations presented here will help your community become better positioned for the future.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Zack Blake, Financial Management Resource Bureau Chief, at 617-626-2358 or blakez@dor.state.ma.us.

Sincerely,

Sean R. Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner

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INTRODUCTION

The Division of Local Services (DLS) Financial Management Resource Bureau has completed a review of the Town of Littleton's government structure at the select board's request. As a best practice, every eight to ten years, a community should conduct formal reviews of its government structure to ensure it can remain proactive and progressive in addressing emerging challenges, sustaining fiscal health, and modernizing procedures. By periodically assessing and modifying town government, local leaders and residents can ensure it continues to provide the support needed to reinforce sound practices related to fiscal stewardship, service effectiveness, and resource efficiency.

The last formal review of the town's structure took place 17 years ago, under a town government study committee. In 2007, the committee issued an extensive report with 14 recommendations, many of which have been implemented during the intervening years. A key outcome was strengthening the town administrator's role by codifying certain duties and authority in bylaw and also creating an assistant town administrator position. In addition, the town converted the treasurer and collector from elected to appointed positions, adopted a bylaw to create a consolidated finance department, and established a human resources department.

A new assessment of the town's governing structure was a formal goal of the select board for fiscal year 2024, which led to the request for this review. This report presents our observations and recommendations on actions the town can take to improve its governmental effectiveness through structural modifications. In light of the recent period of marked instability in the town administrator position and the continually intensifying service demands that call out for strong coordinating efforts and centralized oversight, we think this is a very compelling time for the select board to thoughtfully and thoroughly review all aspects of the town's structure with the goal of developing a town charter proposal. In addition to offering guidance for such a process, our report presents a series of potential changes to deliberate on as part of the mission.

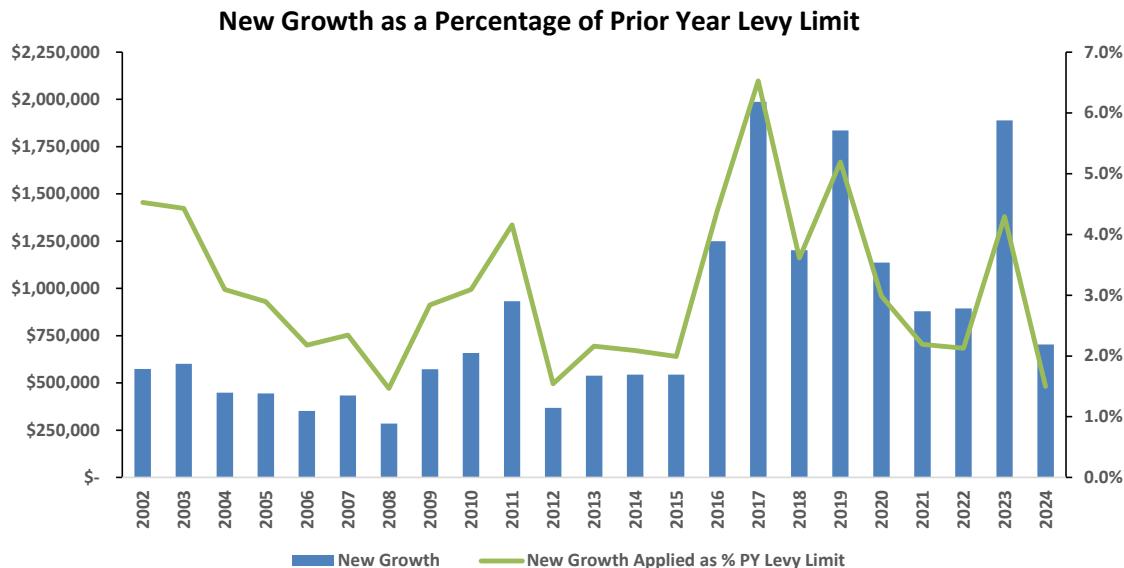
OVERVIEW

The Town of Littleton is an outer suburb of Boston located in Middlesex County at the junction of Interstate 495 and State Route 2. Over the last three decades, the town's population has grown by 41 percent, from 7,192 in 1992 to 10,139 in 2022, steadily adding about 1,000 new residents each decade. This rate of increase is two-and-a-half times that experienced by the state and county over the same period, and it puts Littleton in the top 10 percent in the state in this metric.

Apart from its accessibility and country charm, the town boasts a highly rated school system, maintains a bond rating of AAA, and proudly offers community services in the new library and soon a new elder and human services building. Above-average wealth factors also contribute to Littleton's desirability. The town's per capita income of \$64,359 and equalized valuation per capita of \$248,858 both exceed state averages.

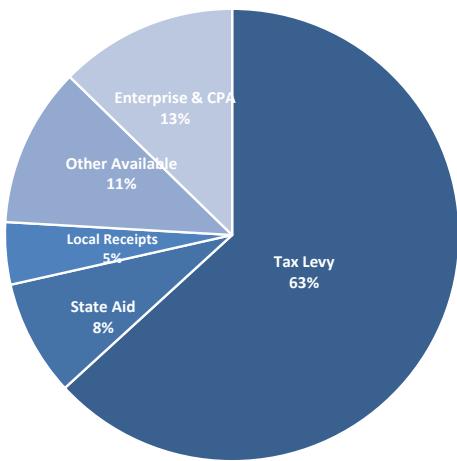
In the last several years, the town has had an increased focus on economic development while also striving to maintain the community's traditionally semirural character. Commuter rail service to Boston, The Point mixed use destination for shopping, grocery, restaurants, and entertainment, and the upcoming King Street Common development plan for multifamily housing, retail, and commercial space are indicative of the growing community. But the town is also home to Long Pond recreation area, acres of conservation land, and enduring family farms that allow it to retain the rural environment residents expect and enjoy.

As illustrated in the chart below, Littleton has benefited from both the town's appeal and economic activity by expanding the tax levy through new growth, which represents additional value added to the property tax base from new construction or improvements to existing properties and other additions to the tax rolls. As an indicator of a community experiencing real estate development, and in turn, what to expect in terms of property tax growth, it can also suggest future expenditures to anticipate with new developments (e.g., additional school children, public safety, infrastructure, etc.).

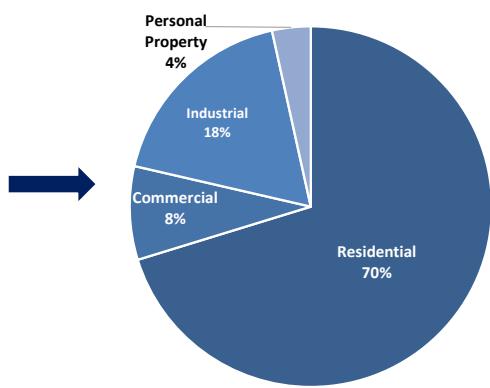


Almost two-thirds of Littleton's \$79M budget comes from the property tax levy, of which 70% is funded by the residential class and 30% from commercial, industrial and personal property. The town has employed a split tax rate since 1988 as a way to ease the tax burden away from residential property owners to the other classes.

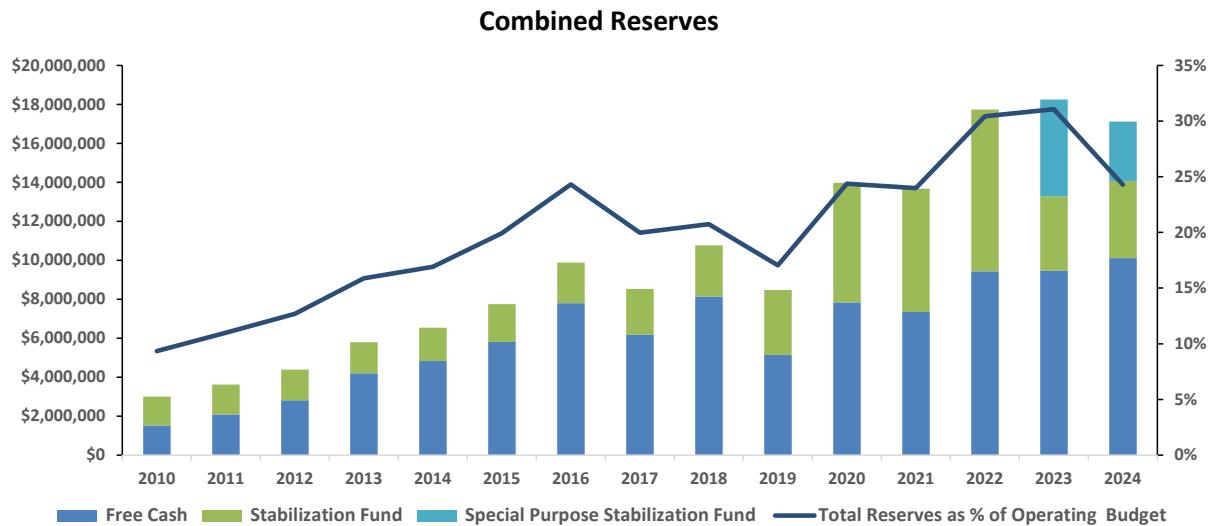
FY2024 Total Budget Sources



FY2024 Tax Levy Components



With adherence to sound policy and solid budgeting practices, the town has steadily built-up reserves, to the point where it has begun the current fiscal year with over \$17M in reserves, equating to 24% of the operating budget.



GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

There are many variations in how local governments are structured across the cities and towns that make up the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. State statutes generally provide allowable methods of governance and offer guidance on minimum requirements, thereby allowing a municipality to establish a government that is most preferable to their citizens.

Littleton's form of government is organized under a combination of state statutes and locally adopted bylaws. The town is governed by open town meeting and an elected, five-member select board, which serves as its chief policymaking body. The finance committee, consisting of seven appointed volunteers, provides opinions on annual appropriations and advises town meeting voters on warrant articles.

The town administrator, appointed by the select board, is empowered to appoint department heads, subject to the board's approval, excluding the police and fire chiefs. Additional duties established in the bylaws focus on supervision and performance appraisals for department heads and staff. The town administrator is supported by an assistant town administrator.

Following the retirement of a longtime town administrator in 2018, Littleton experienced a series of disruptive turnovers in that position. The current town administrator, who was appointed in early 2024, is the third permanent hire in the last five years, though there have also been a few interim

appointees as well. The current assistant town administrator began his Littleton career in 2022 and during his short tenure also served for a time as interim town administrator. This period of administrative instability led to various levels of select board engagement in the town's day-to-day operations, which has negatively impacted employee morale.

In part to help address the internal discontent, the town hired its first human resources (HR) director in 2021. Although the new HR department took some time to become staffed and organized, it has developed into a full-service operation for both town and school employees. The director, with town administration, established a staff engagement committee as a way to foster a positive working environment.

Meetings of the staff engagement committee revealed the need to better define the town's administrative chain of command at all levels: policymakers, administration, and staff. After these meetings and broader townwide discussions, the select board adopted a code of conduct for itself, which laid out the board members' responsibilities to the community, town administration, and each other. The code specifies that the board's primary function is to act as policymakers, not administrators. It also stipulates that direct interactions by select board members with town employees must be curtailed, and instead, their inquiries and requests should be funneled through the town administrator.

The bylaws include a one-sentence provision assigning responsibility for the budget process to the administrator, without further definition or clarification on the specifics. Historically, the budget was prepared by the finance committee; however, current policy assigns this duty to the town administrator, with the select board, finance committee, and finance director managing the process and calendar. The finance director is tasked with preparing initial revenue projections, compiling the initial budget, and presenting the full budget to the select board and finance committee. Littleton is presently without a finance director, so the current fiscal year budget was prepared by the assistant town administrator.

Leadership and oversight challenges such as Littleton experienced, along with service demands, financial matters, need for greater transparency, as well as the passage of time are some of the reasons communities review their forms of government, organizational structures, and bylaws. Taking a holistic approach, common discussion areas considered are:

- Does the community need a charter?
- Which positions, boards, or committees should be elected, and which should be appointed?
- What are the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of the chief executive officer?

- Are the lines of communication sufficient for the free flow of information between policymakers, administration, staff, and the public?

The following recommendations are provided for Littleton to begin their government structure conversations. To frame this discussion for Littleton, we offer the following 10 communities as the town's peers. The criteria used to determine these communities include population, total tax levy, percentage of levy funded by property taxes, income per capita, local school system, and location (close to major highways). Links to the peer community websites, charters, and bylaws are in the appendix.

Littleton Peer Communities

Municipality	Form of Government	Charter	Charter Type	Administrative Structure	2021 Population	FY 2024 Single Family Tax Bill	Average Single Family Value	DOR Income Per Capita	2022 EQV Per Capita	2024 Total Tax Levy	R/O % of Total Levy
Bellingham	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TA	16,905	5,461	424,679	41,502	196,224	53,819,005	63.65
Millbury	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TM	13,884	5,823	440,150	39,343	154,059	33,898,265	81.67
Ayer	OTM	No		TM special act	8,400	5,943	485,124	40,320	182,079	39,686,329	53.44
Auburn	RTM	Yes	Home Rule	TM	16,830	6,004	402,170	40,005	163,338	48,151,178	74.58
Norton	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TM	19,278	6,615	510,794	42,227	164,165	48,426,708	80.16
Foxborough	OTM	No		TM special act	18,519	8,223	608,662	56,963	206,557	60,565,674	75.42
Medway	OTM	Yes	Special Act	TM	13,131	8,938	620,664	65,475	213,171	49,160,402	79.74
Littleton	OTM	No		TA	10,121	9,974	672,106	64,359	241,858	49,780,498	70.23
Lynnfield	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TA	12,955	10,352	984,943	93,034	319,176	53,559,230	81.49
Bedford	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TM	14,155	11,074	932,148	82,483	327,264	79,960,832	60.10
Hopkinton	OTM	Yes	Home Rule	TM	18,943	12,447	851,967	94,319	273,113	91,540,225	82.23

Consider a Town Charter

Given the town's changing population, economic development, difficulty attracting and retaining senior level professionals, and several boards and committees outside of the central reporting relationships, we recommend that the select board initiate the process to consider developing a town charter. By establishing a charter, the town can succinctly and clearly define its government structure, establish the distribution of powers, delineate lines of authority, and codify annual strategic planning, budgeting, and capital planning protocols. It would enable Littleton to institute structural changes to improve management and institute more efficient operations, as well as accomplish the select board's goals to reorganize and re-energize the town's boards and committees.

When considering adopting a charter, the town has two options that differ in timing and legal requirements – either an appointed government study committee (GSC) or an elected charter commission. Most frequently, towns form a government study committee to examine the structure and operation of government. If changes are warranted and a charter is recommended, the committee drafts the proposed charter as either a special act or Home Rule petition. The government study route allows for the appointment of a balanced, open-minded committee that is given a manageable time frame to complete its work. Alternatively, the town voters can elect a nine-member

charter commission under [M.G.L c 43B](#). This statute directs the commission to meet certain procedural requirements and to complete its final report within 18 months. Any recommendations by the commission would then be placed before the voters for acceptance or rejection. A summary of the two methods is provided in the appendix.

Following the success of the previous committee, we recommend that the select board appoint a new government study committee (GSC) charged with considering how the town might be restructured as part of enacting a charter. As its ultimate mandate this time, this GSC should conclude its work with a draft town charter to present to the select board. The select board would then put a finalized draft in an article to be voted on at the next annual town meeting. If approved there, the town would submit the proposed special act to the state legislature for review and approval. Local action to adopt a charter through a special law need not be approved by voters at-large before, or after, the legislature's enactment to take effect. However, as a matter of practice, the state legislature or town meeting almost always makes the adoption of such contingent on a ballot vote approval.

In conducting its work, we suggest the commission or committee members consider the following guidance:

- Approach the process without biases or predetermined outcomes
- Seek assistance from town counsel or an experienced consultant familiar with governmental organizations, including drafting of charters
- Set a timeline for key milestones and report progress to the select board
- Meet with department heads, employees, and other local officials
- Encourage local input through surveys and public forums
- Research and review other Massachusetts town charters
- Speak with officials from other communities about their experiences establishing charters

Policymakers should approach the project as with any major undertaking by communicating goals, progress, and stumbling blocks; listening to varying opinions; and being visible throughout the process by holding roundtable discussions and posting social media updates.

If and when decisions are made to make changes, we recommend the town publish a detailed transition plan that presents the current and proposed structures and time frames as a way to keep the public well informed of the process, decisions, and implementation.

Elevate Role of Town Administrator to Town Manager

Littleton local officials, like those in many expanding communities, have routinely had town manager-versus-town administrator discussions. Although Massachusetts General Laws lack a fixed definition distinguishing a town administrator from a town manager, generally speaking, a town administrator performs duties at the direction of the select board, whereas a town manager has authority codified through a charter or special act to direct day-to-day operations independent of the select board. Some of the attributes that typically differentiate a town manager is the power to appoint and manage department heads, negotiate and execute contracts, and approve payroll and vendor warrants.

That being said, it is important to focus less on the titles and more on the public's expectations of the position. There are some examples of communities in the Commonwealth headed by town administrators with formal powers akin to those typically associated with town managers. The point being that less attention should be paid to the title and more attention to the structure and duties of the position, and once determined, designate the appropriate title.

Given the growth of the community, expectations of the staff, and needed delineation of policymaker and administration (perceived or otherwise), we recommend that Littleton adopt a town manager administrative structure. There appears to be a recognition by the select board that as management of municipal government has grown more complex over time, there is greater need for the town administrator's authority to be enhanced to carry out the board's policies, goals, and objectives. Initiating either a GSC or charter commission will provide an opportunity to reexamine the position's responsibilities and how this job should be defined going forward. An empowered town manager would have the authority to be more effective in representing the select board, developing the annual budget, overseeing projects, managing procurement, hiring and holding personnel accountable, and directing the day-to-day work of town departments.

Additionally, changing to a town manager from a town administrator may attract more seasoned and qualified job applicants when a vacancy arises because of the more CEO-like authority and responsibilities. Among the 10 towns we consider to be Littleton's peers, all but two have a town manager. This structure is more common among towns with AAA credit ratings.

Common areas for discussion when contemplating migrating to a town manager include:

- What is the purpose for making a title change?
- Does, or will, a title matter when recruiting?

- Are the distinct roles and responsibilities of the town manager and select board understood by the community and staff?
- How will any fears of a power change in the community be allayed?

Redefine the Director of Finance and Budget to CFO

The current bylaws call for a department of finance and budget led by a director, who reports to the town administrator. As presently codified, the director shall also serve as either the town accountant or treasurer/collector. Currently, the role is being fulfilled by the assistant town administrator. However, that position is already a full-time job without adding all the finance director's responsibilities.

Communities across the state have struggled to staff municipal finance positions. A recent trend sees a shuffling of employees from one community to another in pursuit of better work environments, salaries, or benefits. For a growing community such as Littleton, from financial complexity to service demands, finding a finance director combined with the everyday responsibilities of the accountant or the treasurer/collector will be increasingly difficult. We therefore recommend the town revise the bylaw to refine the director's position to be a standalone chief financial officer (CFO).

Ensuring the financial officers (accountant, treasurer, collector, assessor) have the skills, time, and support to be successful in their positions is vital. These roles are separate from a higher-level managerial role responsible for evaluating the financial impact of policy decisions; providing in-depth fiscal analyses on the potential cost impacts of collective bargaining agreements, capital acquisitions, new debt, or proposed economic development projects; and proposing policy decisions on debt limits, reserve fund levels, and annual budget guidelines.

The bylaw gives the finance director primary responsibility for engineering the annual budget process and forecasting revenues for the upcoming year. By select board policies and job description, the finance director is additionally charged with developing the capital plan, long-range financial forecasting, and developing and implementing fiscal planning policies. With the upgrade in position and by codifying all these responsibilities in the bylaws, the importance of this senior-level position is formally defined. We suggest the following be included:

- Coordinate critical financial functions that involve multiple departments, such as setting the annual tax rate, issuing tax bills, completing reconciliations, and determining financing strategies for capital projects.
- Draft/update financial policies.

- Conduct financial analyses, including the cost implications of current and future town contracts and obligations.
- Develop written procedures for finance departments with a focus on internal controls to minimize risk across town departments.
- Oversee centralized procurement of goods and services.
- Report to the select board and town administrator on the town's financial status and activities on an ongoing basis.
- Mentor and develop the professional skills of finance staff.

Review Elected Boards and Committees

Littleton currently has 11 separate elected boards and committees, only two of which (select board and school committee) are required by law to exist perpetually in an elected status. Having this many elected entities institutionalizes conflicting lines of authority and responsibility. We have been told the town has developed no less than eight memorandums of understanding (MOU) between the various separately elected entities to address this challenge. Defining internal managerial oversight through multiple MOUs is highly unusual, and it creates a disjointed approach to reporting relationships and operations. A better framework to pursue is a centralized, vertical structure of appointed positions and boards reporting in a line up through the town administrator. Therefore, we recommend Littleton review its elected positions for consideration to be appointed. This assessment can include the town's sole regular town employee who is elected, the town clerk.

As municipal services increase in demand and complexity, a clear trend has emerged in converting from elected to appointed positions. This provides a community with the advantage of recruiting individuals from a broad pool of qualified candidates, who can appropriately match the needs of a department. While this transition initially focused on roles such as the treasurer and collector, there is a broader movement to expand appointments to boards and committees. This conversion provides the opportunity to streamline reporting authority, more clearly define positional expectations and structural relationships, and institute consistent employee rules.

Moving away from elected positions also reduces unnecessary politics that can impede volunteer participation. The candidate pool is limited when relying on elections to fill committee and board positions since political environments and social media can discourage those who would otherwise be interested in public service. To this point, recent elections had uncontested races, which resulted in self-appointments, blank votes exceeding those cast for a candidate, and even reliance on write-in candidates.

Except for the select board, school committee, or any position or committee created by a special act, the town can convert any elected board or position to appointed status through majority votes of town meeting and town-wide ballot ([M.G. L. c. 41, § 1B](#)). Otherwise, a special act is needed. In addition, a GSC could examine the necessity for retaining certain boards that do not have a genuine policy role or that might contribute to less cohesive, economical, or efficient government.

Some of the considerations communities have encountered when making decisions to convert or eliminate elected officials' positions:

- Ability of appointing authority to define goals and objectives then match experience
- Allowing for a rigorous hiring process
- Eliminating the difficulties involved with getting volunteers to run or with recruiting appointees even if the board was made appointed
- Concern over candidates' agendas not matching town priorities
- Handling succession planning and replacing long-term incumbents

We include Littleton's board of assessors in this recommendation. Although elected boards of assessors still predominate in Massachusetts, representing 60 percent of all municipal assessing boards, they too have been part of the conversion trend to appointed status. Furthermore, in communities like Littleton, that have finance departments that include the assessing office, two-thirds of the time the assessing board is appointed. Finally, Littleton has had difficulty finding candidates for the board; a write-in took one of the five seats in the 2024 election. In fact, Littleton is one of only nine communities in the state with a five-member assessing board, and we further recommend the town consider reducing it to three members.

Composition of Municipal Boards of Assessors Statewide

Board Members	Elected	Appointed	Total
1	0	13	13
3	206	123	329
5	5	4	9
	211	140	351

To convert the board of assessors to an appointed status requires town meeting's acceptance of [M.G.L. c. 41, § 25](#) followed by a subsequently approved town-wide.

Consider Consolidating all Public Works Functions

Littleton should consider expanding the department of public works (DPW) to include the town's water, sewer, and cemetery operations. The DPW already includes divisions for engineering, highway, transfer station, and parks, although policy decisions regarding the parks are made by an elected park and recreation commission. A separate cemetery department is managed by a superintendent appointed by an elected cemetery commission. An elected commission also oversees the town's municipal light plant (MLP) in accordance with provisions in [M.G.L. c 164](#). The town's water operations come under an elected water commission, pursuant to a 1911 special act. The sewer department has also been added to the water operation. Although elections to the water and MLP commissions are done by separate ballots, candidates are expected to take nomination papers for both because the two have been functionally combined, and all their operations have merged into the Littleton electric light and water departments, www.lelwd.com.

Common public works structures found throughout the Commonwealth encompass functions besides roadwork, such as facilities, cemeteries, water utilities, etc. We recognize the success of the light commissioners overseeing both electric service and water/sewer operations. Nevertheless, as the town grows and the demands for water and sewer services increase, specifically with regard to the current sewer system expansion project, a more centralized, streamlined governance through the select board/town administrator should be considered. Therefore, we recommend the town review its various public works functions to consider a single department that encompasses all the operations associated with infrastructure and related assets, exclusive of the MLP.

As a Chapter 164 MLP, the light department's budget does not come under the authority of town meeting (other than authorizing debt), and its administration is also separate from the town's. However, the water and sewer operations are run as enterprise funds, whose budgets are authorized through town meeting vote and included in the town's annual tax rate recapitulation approved by DLS. The water and sewer divisions' personnel, equipment and capital improvement costs are the town's responsibility and should be included in the annual capital budget and long-range capital planning process. Similarly organizing staff and resources in a consolidated department of public works simplifies coordination of day-to-day operations and ensures efficiency of infrastructure maintenance and improvement, e.g., roadwork in relation to water and sewer projects.

Moreover, using enterprise fund accounting identifies the total cost of providing a service and determines user rates sufficient to cover ongoing operating costs. Year-end surpluses remaining in the fund may be used to pay associated capital, or debt service expenses. By embedding water and sewer operations within the light department, the true cost of each service may be obscured due to the comingled application of personnel, equipment, and other resources. Shifting the water and

sewer operations to within the DPW more clearly defines individual service costs as expected in enterprise fund accounting and provides policymakers with more informed financial condition information for future decision making.

The elected water commission was created by a special act in 1911, so the town would need a special act to either convert the board to appointed status or to add its functions to the select board's role. In consideration of this DPW reorganization, the select board would appoint water and sewer commissioners or serve as the role themselves. This then moves the managerial oversight of these entities to the town administrator, thus reinforcing the reporting structure found throughout the town departments. This framework is also applicable to cemetery operations and maintenance of town parks and fields should the town integrate all public works functions.

Perform a Comprehensive Review of the Bylaws

The purpose of a charter is to lay out a community's governmental configuration through broad statements of roles, relationships, and policies, whereas the bylaws serve to provide the codes, policies, and procedures under which the town operates (e.g., personnel rules, health codes, and zoning regulations). The charter and bylaws are meant to be companion documents that provide the foundation for long-term stability, with the bylaws having greater flexibility to adapt as circumstances warrant.

Therefore, together with the work of a potential charter, it is appropriate that Littleton conduct a comprehensive review of its general bylaws. This can be accomplished by the select board appointing a bylaw review committee consisting of a combination of three to five residents and town officials. The goals of a bylaw committee should be to (1) remove inconsistencies and clarify vagaries, (2) modify bylaws as necessary to reflect the town's actual governing framework and procedures, especially in light of changes made through the charter, and (3) propose new bylaws that are informative and directive of the town's existing or desired practices, allowances, and prohibitions. This includes identifying any missing positions, boards, and committees, and possibly codifying certain financial procedures that are currently addressed through policies (e.g., budget process, capital planning).

As guidance for the bylaw committee, we offer the following:

- Examine bylaws of Littleton's peer communities to discover how the provisions coordinate with a charter and what may be missing from the current bylaws.

- Review all existing bylaw articles and make decisions on which ones to retain, revise, or discard. Look for and resolve any inconsistencies among the bylaws, and remove references to any nonexistent committees, boards, and positions.
- Seek input from residents, employees, and officials through public forums (this can be associated with the discussion of the charter).
- Organize the bylaws under topic areas with headings in a logical flow. As with the current code, list all bylaw articles and their subsections in a table of contents.

Changes to the general bylaws require the approval of town meeting and validation by the Attorney General's office to become effective.

APPENDIX

Charter Commission /Special Act Charter

	Charter Commission	Special Act Charter
Initiating the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 15 percent of voters petition SB to place question of creating a charter commission on the ballot. ▪ SB has 30 days to place question on ballot at next regular election. ▪ Election must be at least 60 days after election order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a government study committee through either SB action or town meeting warrant article.
Determining Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Question on electing a charter commission with simultaneous votes cast for nine charter commission members. ▪ If question on electing commission is approved, the nine candidates with the most votes are elected (each voter may vote for nine candidates). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members appointed by the SB or moderator (generally when town meeting approves forming the committee). ▪ Residents can petition to bring the question to a vote. ▪ No set number of members, but generally five to seven. ▪ Members should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ objective and open minded about process ○ committed and reliable ▪ Residents should be confident that a broad range of views is represented.
Drafting the Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first public hearing is within 45 days of the election. ▪ Within 16 months of its election, the commission shall prepare a preliminary report including the text of the charter. ▪ Report to be published in a local newspaper; two copies to Attorney General for review for conflicts with state constitution or law. ▪ At least one public hearing must be held within four weeks of submission of report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No set timeframe; can work quickly or more deliberately. ▪ No requirement for hearings; however, public input should be planned throughout the process.
Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final report of the commission submitted within 18 months. ▪ SB shall place the proposed charter before the voters at the first regular election at least 2 months after submission of final report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report and draft charter should be completed well in advance of town meeting to allow inclusion on warrant.
Approval of Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If majority of voters approve the charter, it becomes effective on date specified in charter; if no date then effective upon passage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three approvals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Town meeting ○ Voters-at-large (historically required the state legislature – may be before or after the special act is filed) ○ State legislature.

Sample Town Meeting Motion to Form a Study Committee

Moved, that the *(town, select board)* form a Charter Study Committee to be comprised of *(number)* members appointed by *(the moderator, select board)*. Each committee member shall be a registered voter and, to the extent possible, possess expertise or knowledge relevant to the work of the study committee. The study committee is charged with exploring, by whatever means it deems appropriate, the merits or lack of merits associated with adopting and operating under a town charter. The committee shall present a written report of its findings and recommendations to *(the appointing authority)* no later than *(month, day, year)*. If the study committee recommends adoption of a town charter, it shall present a draft charter proposal as part of its report.

Town Forms of Government

Executive Branch	Legislative Branch	Description and Qualifications
Town Manager/Town Administrator	Town Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elected ▪ Can be removed via recall 	Requires Charter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town manager/administrator roles and responsibilities detailed in Charter. ▪ Can require specific education and experience. ▪ Removal by Charter or contract.
Select Board: Strong Town Manager/ Town Administrator	Open Town Meeting	Requires Charter or Special Act Select Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sets policy. ▪ Oversees the TM/TA. ▪ Installs consistency in management. Town Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All registered voters may take part and vote.
Select Board: Strong Town Manager/ Town Administrator	Representative Town Meeting	Requires Charter or Special Act Select Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Same as with Open Town Meeting. Town Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representatives are elected to speak/vote at town meeting. ▪ Guaranteed certain meeting attendance. ▪ Town meetings generally take several days to complete.
Select Board: Weak Town Manager/ Town Administrator	Open Town Meeting	Roles/responsibilities defined in bylaw <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easy to change based on SB, personalities. ▪ Representatives are elected to speak/vote at town meeting.

Peer Community Documents

Town	Documents
Auburn	Charter Bylaws
Ayer	Town Manager Act Bylaws
Bedford	Charter Bylaws
Bellingham	Charter/Bylaws
Foxborough	Town Manager Act Bylaws
Hopkinton	Charter Bylaws
Lynnfield	Charter/Bylaws
Medway	Charter Bylaws
Millbury	Charter/Bylaws
Norton	Charter/Bylaws

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Gary Wilson, Chair, Select Board
Charles Decoste, Select Board
Mark Rambacher, Select Board
James Duggan, Town Administrator
Ryan Ferrara, Assistant Town Administrator
Kelly Clenchy, School Superintendent
Steve Jahnle, DPW Director
Kathy Miller, Chief Assessor
Liz Tretiak, Director Elder & Human Services
Michelle Vibert, Human Resources Director
Steve Venuti, Chair, Finance Committee
Joe Knox, Light/Water Commissioner