

Charge to the Littleton Charter Committee

Background: Littleton government structure is established through a combination of state laws, several town bylaws, and by Town Meeting votes that may not be reflected in the bylaws. There has been no comprehensive review of the structure of Town government in many years. A July 2024 Government Structure Review, conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, recommended the Select Board initiate the process to consider developing a town charter. The Select Board is initiating this review with the goal of reviewing the structure of Town government, analyzing the effectiveness of that structure and, if areas for improvement are identified, to make recommendations for changes. This review should not prejudge that any changes are necessary, but should be open to analyses and suggestions that changes are warranted.

Scope of Review: The review should identify the primary features of Town government as it is currently structured. The review should include relevant state laws, town bylaws and past town meeting votes that establish the current structure. The review should include discussions of how well the structures are working and identify options for modifying the structure that might improve the functions of government. The use of Town Counsel shall be used to review any proposed amendments before committee final recommendations. The charter review process seeks to recommend changes to ensure Littleton's government meets the current and anticipated needs of our residents and is responsive to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Areas for discussion should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Consideration of shifting from a Town Administrator to a Town Manager form of leadership
- Type of town meeting – open or representative
- Selection of town board and committee members – which elected; which appointed; and by who?
- Consideration of dissolving, or restructuring, boards/committees/commissions
- Selection of town hall personnel - which elected; which appointed; and by who?
- Size of boards and committees, length and staggering of terms, which positions cannot be held by same person
- Division of authorities between Town Manager/Town Administrator and Select Board
- Budgeting and finance processes
- Consideration of new provisions, such as for referendums, recalls and periodic reviews of government structure
- What structures should be in Charter (requires legislature to change) versus in bylaws (no legislature involvement).

The Charter Review Committee should refer issues on such matters to those committees charged with the responsibilities, except to the extent the issue is directly critical to the structure of town government.

Membership:

The membership of the Littleton Charter Committee (LCC) shall consist of 7-9 members, as determined by the Select Board. Applications to serve on the LCC may be made through the Town of Littleton website. Applicants must be town residents. A background in areas including management, budgeting, planning, human resources, and economic development, as well as knowledge and experience working with Littleton town government, is preferred but not required. The application deadline to serve on the LCC is Wednesday, January 29, 2025 by Noon. The Select Board plans to discuss and appoint the members of the LCC at their Monday, February 3, 2025 meeting, scheduled for 6:30 PM in the Sturtz Room of the Ruben Hoar Library, 35 Shattuck Street, Littleton, Massachusetts.

Governance:

- The LCC shall be appointed by and report to the Select Board.
- Members of the LCC shall be appointed to a two-year term by majority vote of the Select Board.
- The business of the LCC will be conducted in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting law.
- The members of the LCC will elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and a Clerk.
- The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Council.
- The Chair shall be responsible for preparing the agenda, notifying members of the meetings at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting, except in emergency circumstances, and posting of the meeting in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting law (G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25).
- Agendas will be sent to the Town Clerk at a minimum of 48 hours in advance to post.

Timing issues: The Select Board anticipates the LCC will be named and commence work no later than February 2025. LCC members should anticipate meeting twice a month for 18-24 months. The LCC should ensure public outreach and communication throughout the process, including town boards, committees and staff, and give status reports to the Select Board at least quarterly. The goal is to have a draft report with any recommended changes by the end of May, 2026, followed by further public outreach with the objective of having a final report and recommended changes ready by September, 2026, for inclusion in the warrant report for the Fall 2026 Special Town Meeting.