

1-Why did the Charter Commission choose Town Council form of government?

Town meeting form of government is no longer effective or efficient. The Charter Commission unanimously chose town council form of government as it strikes the balance of an effective and efficiently run government and the accountability and transparency residents told us was a priority.

Gained Efficiencies

Town Meeting meets only twice a year, and important decisions are made too slowly, and opportunities are missed. We need a legislative body that can take action on important issues as they arise. And while it won't fix our finances, a town council form of government may prevent bad decisions that impact our financial future and also make it easier to approve opportunities with the potential to bring in money for the town. It also allows for better and more long-term forecasting and planning.

Greater Accountability and Representation

Over the past 5 years, regular town meeting participation has averaged just 3.29% of registered voters. Voter participation in regular town meetings where there isn't a controversial or special interest article on the warrant averages just 1.83% and has been as low as 1.07%. Our decisions are being made by the same 200+/- people who are able and willing to attend town meeting. And, oftentimes, decisions are made by whichever special interest group shows up—voting solely in their own interests and not what's best for the town.

So, if only a fraction of the population is making the decisions for all of us, we should all get to decide who those people are. We want them make decisions that are in the best interest of the entire town and, if they don't, we should be able to hold them accountable.

And while voter apathy is an issue, it's not the only reason for low town meeting turnouts. Parents, caretakers, and those who work non-standard hours have consistently voiced their concerns that they cannot attend town meetings – leading to a disenfranchised population with no voice.

Dedicated Decision Makers

It is nearly impossible for an average citizen to attend or even watch all the relevant meetings and read all of the documentation (if it's even been made available) in order to make a truly educated decision at Town Meeting. Some of the issues that citizens are being asked to consider and vote on are complicated and their implications wide-ranging. These are not decisions that are well-suited for a large, group discussion held over a short period of time. It is a cumbersome and daunting task that tends to deter more people than it attracts.

We should be electing people who will be part of the long-term planning, who will put in the effort to fully research and understand the measures being brought before them, who will participate in measured, thoughtful discussions, who can understand the full implications and make well-informed decisions that are in the best interest of the town as a whole.