

2-Why did the Charter Commission decide to have all councilors elected at-large? Why not precincts?

The manner of electing councilors was the subject of considerable discussion and deliberation – more than any other decision. The two primary reasons for the decisions, explained further below, were that we wanted to ensure that ALL councilors are accountable to all townspeople and we wanted to maximize the pool of candidates who are willing to serve.

The Commission decided that at-large representation provides more accountability: councilors should not be beholden to any one precinct, neighborhood, project, or group – they should be answerable to everyone. We want councilors who will make decisions on a holistic basis for the good of the town as a whole and not just the precincts in which they reside. Our town is small enough that any decision affects almost everyone in some way.

Electing councilors at-large also maximizes the quality of candidates and choices available to voters. A good candidate should not only be able to run when they want but also be able to get elected regardless of where they live. And a bad councilor shouldn't be able to retain their seat just because 80% of voters don't have a vote in whether that councilor stays or goes.

Precinct seats could also lead to further voter apathy when we're trying to re-invigorate and engage the voting population. The best way to maintain engagement is to make sure that everyone gets to vote for all councilors and anyone can run in any election.

The case for precincts is focused on representation but, ultimately, people tend to seek out a person they know or feel comfortable approaching. And that may not be the councilor who lives in their precinct. Through the new charter, voters will have the broadest choice in deciding who they feel best represents them.