

Comments as of April 12, 2021

What Question or Comment do you have for the Charter Review Committee?

Submitted via link at watertown-ma.gov/charter and crc@watertown-ma.gov

1. 1/11/21

Matt Lashof-Sullivan

I would like to submit this comment for the charter review,

I understand the appeal of a council/manager system, and I think it has much to recommend it -- the town is generally well-run. But there is an issue of diffusion of responsibility. The Town Manager doesn't have any direct accountability to the constituents, because he is not directly elected. But when I have occasionally reached out to the Town Council about an issue, I am often told that it's an issue for the town manager. Same basic issue for the School Committee vs. the Superintendent.

I would like for the democratically-accountable branches to at least have clear authority over any issue that would normally be handled by the Town Manager/Superintendent. I envision something like a general delegation of many matters to the Town Manager/Superintendent, but with the proviso that the council/committee is free to pass a resolution on any issue within the authority of the Town Manager/Superintendent, and such resolution would be binding. I don't want to hear from my elected officials that they won't/can't do something because it's for the Town Manager/Superintendent to do.

Generally, for any given town issue there should be some individual or group who is democratically elected and who has authority over that issue. It should be clear to all residents who that person/group is.

Separately, I'm not sure that district councillors should continue to exist. Watertown is small, and these district councillors are always running unopposed, whereas the at-large races are always contested. It's better not to have an elected office where nobody is running for it.

2. 1/15/21

Tiffany York

Dear Watertown Charter Review Council, please read through the following, discern, and act on my request to include Vision for Watertown within the subcommittee for the Preamble. Without Vision, Understanding of Watertown's reality (amongst the most vulnerable and impacted in Watertown), and Equity frameworks the preamble will only further perpetuate inequity, systemic racism, and white centered policies. Further, in my opinion, in no way is a subcommittee on the Preamble and then the same members on the charter review council voting on said preamble...fair or equitable. Nor is it transparent. Nor is it collaborative.

Watertown Vision Section

Possible Visions to discuss with representatives from MOST impacted community members

- City Government Equity Statement:
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/2020/05/26/milwaukee-county-passes-ordinance-on-racial-equity/>; What will our town council/mayor/ government be held to?
- Biotech (Is Watertown the next Kendall)

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- Representative: residents potentially employed by biotech businesses:
Hourly/service/admin/researchers/scientists
- Forward-Thinking
- Adaptable
- Scalable
- Watertown stays “townie”
 - Representative: Folks over age of 60 (or ages at which Social Security is main income), multigenerational families who own property/land/businesses
 - Town Manager Driscoll (in position for over 25 years) and any other elected or appointed person for this longevity
- What impact does Prioritizing a passing budget every year have?
 - Representative: Town Auditor, Town Manager (for pros/cons of passing budget every year- what did that actually cost us?)
 - What has been asked for by community members and not happened- review of what has been asked of Town Council or Town Manager and didn’t pass due to ‘budget’
 - COVID- the city’s govt, school, programs etc basically had to grind to a halt when COVID hit... lots of reasons why, and if budgets had been expanded in certain areas/collaboration leveraged before COVID, where might be in a better spot? And how can we use those learnings to guide Charter and City policy and personnel?
- What impact does Raising Taxes for below have and how will that inform our future
 - Mental Health Programs
 - Livability
 - People, Positions, Changes
 - Housing/Affordable housing
- Representatives who live, build, engage with and in Affordable Housing
- Town Council needs to relay and present where our town is with affordable housing policies/percentages/previous contract language with companies coming into town, policy impact, lived impact within residents who currently reside in affordable housing
- Reparations/Home Owners: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/first-time-homebuyer-mortgage-assistance-program-map>; Charter should have language for a 1,3,5 year plan for an outcome of loan programs like City of Oakland; <https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations>; Charter should have reparations commitment again 1, 3, 5 year road map
- Access/Training/Job support for Watertown residents
 - Representative: Library folks who have worked on these type programs- learning from their programs; School Admin- they have a professional development team (assume it is funded through town budget?) how do we leverage that for Watertown city/vision
- Inclusive, Livable, Thriving City and Community
 - Representative: other city/town reps for Equitable Transportation Plans, Reparations Plans, etc.
 - Operationalizing Racial Equity, Community-Focused, Collaborative
- The below is an excerpt I found particularly empowering and visionary and I have replaced Chicago with Watertown for emphasis and linked the full report at the end

“...envisions a **Watertown** that no longer concentrates poverty and racially segregated people from socio-economic opportunity; where structural racism no longer is manifested in city policies, programs

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or investments; and where a person's race or zip code no longer determine their health outcomes, potential to build wealth, or access to opportunity.

Residents from across the City are sustaining racial justice protests demanding reform in policing and across a range of government programs where the continued legacy of systemic racism creates deep socio-economic disparities for Black and Brown communities. Now is the time for bold thinking and action. Perhaps never before has the City been better prepared to commit to a new course that is founded on the power of community, that commits to desegregating our city, that provides community wealth building pathways for all regardless of the color of their skin or their transit line, and that promotes healthy communities to close the racial life expectancy gap. Through thoughtful policy decisions, investments and program placement that incorporate these values, development occurring in transit-served locations can and should more effectively benefit all **Watertownians**, regardless of whether they reside near transit." Paraphrased from :

<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/sites/etod/Pdfs/eTODPolicyPlanFinalText-AltText-ScreenReaderCompatible.pdf>

I appreciate the Charter Review Council's consideration, review, discernment and action in establishing our city's vision, preamble, and framework in collaboration with folks who are most impacted in Watertown through the above issues. Without Vision, Understanding of Watertown's reality (amongst the most impacted in Watertown), and Equity frameworks the preamble will serve no one.

3. 1/18/21

Stephanie Venizelos

197 Westminster Ave

Hello, Town Councilors/Charter Review Committee Members,

When will minutes will be posted for the six meetings that have taken place since late October? The only meeting minutes I could find on the CRC website page are from October 6th - linked to this week's meeting agenda. Although I have watched many of the meetings on WCATV's site, I'd appreciate the option to quickly review minutes from the last meeting, when I receive the reminder. If they are posted somewhere else, please let me know where to locate them (I've tried numerous links in the 2020 folder...).

I appreciate the time and effort you are all contributing to this important process, and look forward to participating in whatever ways I can, over the coming months.

4. 1/19/21

Jocelyn Tager

Most of these meetings I can't attend because of work commitments. However, I would like to make some observations. I've worked in other municipalities such as Cambridge and Medford. As far as I can tell, we have a decent Town Council President/Town Manager system.

Cambridge, like us, elects nine town councilors. However, those nine choose from within their ranks, the mayor. Who knows the wheeling and dealing behind the scenes in selecting the councilor who is to be mayor. Cambridge also has a town manager.

Our system, in which all our residents can vote to elect our Town Council President is far superior. And

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our Town Manager attends Town Council meetings.

Medford has a mayor, but their mayor does not sit on Town Council, so there is a lot of back-door stuff and shenanigans whenever there are major issues to address. Because our TC President sits on Town Council there seems to be much less of what I witnessed in watching Medford.

Belmont's three selectmen system seems too small to me.

So, I think our TC President/Town Manager system has worked well-or well enough.

I'd love to see our Town Council election system discussed. It seems to me that four town council members have elections every two years and three seem to have none at all. This structure seems unfair, although I like my District Councilor a lot. She has had a tough election not too long ago. But the others have been on Town Council with no election (running unopposed) for a very long time.

5. 1/25/21

Tia Tilson

While I missed the first 15 minutes of tonight's meeting (I couldn't find a working zoom link!), I don't think a timeline was voted on? I attended the rest of the meeting; did I miss the conversation about communications?

I find the structure of reviewing the Charter within the frame of accountability, transparency, accessibility very helpful and appreciate this approach. However, I find it difficult as a member of the public to understand what has been discussed at past meetings and what is scheduled to be discussed going forward. How can the public fully participate if they can't find the agendas, minutes and supporting documents on the town website? Watertown Forward, which I became aware of about three weeks ago, has been able to provide excellent summaries of these meetings with links to relevant documents. This has become a living example of how Watertown governance falls short on transparency, accessibility and accountability. This is why I am trying to get clear on how the public can participate and for how long.

Might I offer a few observations from my first meeting tonight? The barriers to public understanding and participation are high, and I recommend greater outreach and more time for public input.

The Charter website:

- The agenda for tonight wasn't posted in advance.
- The zoom link was broken in several places on the Charter page.
- Minutes are not posted for any of the previous meetings.
- The agenda/document link for the previous meetings only goes to the agendas -and doesn't include the documents.
- Reference documents are hard to find on the Charter website. And don't seem to include the Collins memo referenced in tonight's discussion.

It is awesome that 25 people participated in the Zoom call that is about 20 more people than came to the most popular meeting during the last Charter review. And of the 25 names called out, I know most of them to be highly engaged activists in this town. It shouldn't be this difficult for people to be involved.

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Also, a formal request. Since budget seems to be a point of reference - I would like to request a document be distributed as part of this process that shows the size of the budget at the time of the last charter review and budget growth over the 10 years between 2010 and 2020. I request that it also include projections on where we anticipate the town budget to be by 2030. We should be considering the Charter and town governance structure for our future growth.

6. 2/8/21

Pi Conde

535 Mt. Auburn St.

I am interested in volunteering

7. 2/12/21

Krystyn Elek

40 Union St.

I would like to see the Charter Review Committee take up the issue of WPD accountability at the local level. There are statistics from WPD records that suggest bias exists in the citations and arrests made in Watertown. The WPD has been approached by community members with reasonable proposals for increased community engagement and additional anti-bias training, only to reject these efforts. There are serious allegations of unprofessional behavior and culture within the department. It is unacceptable to many Watertown residents that the police are accountable to one man alone, the Town Manager. The community is wanting greater accountability, appropriate and relevant transparency, and a reimagined budget for the police. There are many communities around the country that have acted through their charters to create closer oversight of local police departments.

8. 2/16/21

Ilana Mainelli

97 Duff St.

I present these thoughts/suggestions/comments in no particular order. Unfortunately, I have not grouped them chronologically or by subject.

1. After we approve the revised charter, if we keep the Town Manager as an appointed (unelected) position, we need to increase the transparency and public input into the specifics of their job description and performance standards, and the evaluations of their performance. One way to address this would be to do the TM's evaluations in open meetings of the TC, not in executive session, even if the TC needs to use executive session to discuss salary specifics for the TM.
2. The Town Council President position, as the current charter defines it, is effectively a very weak "shadow" mayor that sort of runs interference between the public, the Town Council, the School Committee, and the Town Manager.
3. It is not reasonable to expect the Town Council President to do all the things people are asking of them when it is only a part time position. This leads me to think we would be better served by a full-time person in that role = a mayor.
4. Probably after we settle the Mayor/TM debate, we also need to address the makeup of our legislative body, the Town Council. We should discuss the ratio of representative councilors to at-large councilors, and the boundaries/size of the Town Council Districts.

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5. Right now our 4 at-large Town Councilors all live in the same general section of Watertown. We should consider the extra weight this gives to those districts and the demographics in those neighborhoods.
6. We should change the composition of future Charter Review Commissions. This CRC should address who chooses the members and what are the qualifications for membership on future CRC's. In future, there should be at least 50% public representation. Probably more efficient not to have every TC on future CRC's. How will the "public" members of them be chosen?
7. More members of the CRC should have more input into the CRC meetings agendas.
8. If we keep an appointed TM, we should include requirements for them to interact with the public more often in their job description and then evaluate their performance of those expectations. Public forums at certain intervals. Answer correspondence and phone calls in certain timeframes? Involvement in non-business hours civic events, other than meetings.
9. I think the Town Council President has a conflict of interest in setting the agendas for, and running the meetings of, the CRC at which the future of a form of government to which they are central is being debated.
10. What is the current schedule for evaluating the TM's performance and renewing their contract vis a vis the schedule for completing and voting on this charter review? We don't want to be cornered on our choice of type of government by the existence of a contract for the TM that take us past the implementation date of the new charter.

9. 2/16/21

Rita Colafella

56 Cuba St.

I liked the macro review of the charter process since it uncovered some finer points. One theme that came up from certain questions and comments is that of equity, and how it still is not garnering the attention it so needs.

- The at-large vs. district representation discussion made me realize that the council's composition could be an easy lever for more equitable representation.
- The questions around COLA language, salary increases and health insurance brought this question to mind - are there members of the council who derived a good portion of their income/benefits from this position? Maybe this needs a deeper dive.
- The question about hiring a Diversity Officer had been asked and has been previously. Again, it is something that warrants serious consideration. There has not been a pro/con discussion about this.
- The idea about having qualifications or obtaining qualifications to hold town council office can hinder more equitable representation. Even though it may not be the intent, this suppresses participation as it may discourage persons without college degrees or persons with disabilities from even entertaining the idea of running for office.

10. 2/16/21

Rita Colafella

56 Cuba St.

This set of comments about the 2/16 Charter Review Meeting is a criticism. I had no issue with the macro review as it led to some great discussions and thoughts to consider. I had no issue with the request to put comments in the Q&A instead of the Chat as a lot of Zoom calls do something similar; it's just a facilitation mechanism. The straw poll motion at the end of the meeting, however, was an issue because it was political gameplay. I understand motions can be made by anyone at any time, and that there's process such as seconding the motion and having discussion before a roll call is taken because

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we need to maintain order. However, this episode was a unmitigated mess.

The timing of the motion caused people to context switch, whether that was the intent or not. It became a disorientating tactic that made me feel as if we were being manipulated. One minute, I am thinking "how can we keep current government form by changing representation composition or what kinds of policy-making decisions should come under the legislative body, and how does it affect other offices or committees in town?" The next minute, I am asking, "why is this motion being made? It is to get people to tip their hands or apply pressure?" With the exception of one vote, I was able to correctly guess all the votes, which was a disappointment, and the poll did little to provide guidance to Mike.

While I appreciate the heads up of this being a motion at every meeting, it now adds a gaming element to the process. Do committee members need to remember to quickly and loudly ask for discussion before the process becomes muddled? I have to wonder if this is what occurs at every town council meeting. I hope not because it would prevent any real examination of the issues or movement forward. It can also be a motivating factor behind the desire for a mayor and weak council.

11. 2/20/21

Jacky van Leeuwen

32 Whites Ave.

Can the charter include a responsibility of Town Council to require the Town Manager to report to TC annually on the retention rate of employees of color per department?

12. 2/20/21

Kate Coyne

120 Worcester St

1. Do we currently have a 360 peer review of our Town Manager and Department heads? If not, this is a problem which should be fixed asap (and done by a 3rd party, reviewed by Town Manager and Town Council).
2. If we had a mayor, would we have a 360 peer review for our Town Manager and Department heads given the Mayor is directly accountable via the people's vote, we would want some semblance of professionalism and accountability within our Town Government that are not voted in (again this may help along with good management overall).
3. Why did our Town Council have a straw vote? This seems 100% not on the up and up as it then may influence people on the board down the road. This has drawn a dark shadow on the town council and was done without the entire town's well being in mind.
4. Our current Town manager has shown he is A+ for fiscal management and then "D" on all other departments (don't take my word for it, review the 360 input...or not if there isn't any, talk to the workers). The residents and the workers deserve well managed professional leadership at Town Hall. In order to have this we need a change from the status quo. The people that work for the town and the residents deserve better and the current system is failing them.

13. 2/22/21

Kim Modi

26 Parker St.

Salary should be reviewed as part of the review; we have some of the most well-paid civil servants in the Commonwealth and they are nominally responsive to citizen concerns.

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14. 2/24/21

Deborah Peterson

I have bcc'd all the members of the CRC on this email.

I can't decide what form of government I want if I don't know what outcomes I want. Neither can the Charter Review Committee.

I understand the frustration that led to the straw poll at the most recent Charter Review Committee Meeting. The process to date has been informative but not deliberative. The recommendations of this committee need to represent a strong consensus, so when it comes to approval by voters it will have broad support. You have made a great effort to be even handed but I think the Committee now needs a more directed approach – a guided discussion where all members will share what they hope to fix and what they want to preserve as a starting place to identifying some shared desired outcomes. Based on conversations to date, I believe there are many areas of concordance which can then be the basis for exploring charter options. Divergent points of view are also likely but linking outcomes to charter changes would ground the deliberation in tangible and supportive rationales rather than partisan allegiance to a particular form of city government.

I know you hope for encourage public feedback and it has been difficult with remote meetings. I think you need to prioritize where public input is most important and I would argue that it is most important in determining desired outcomes. This is an area where community members can more easily weigh in and give input. . The transparency that would result from agreement on shared outcomes based on robust public input may reduce the volume of public input in subsequent stages. Please take a look at the “Platform of Ideas” [link](#) being generated by Watertown Forward to see a summary of charter related issues organized by themes raised by a diverse group of community members. As you can see, community members are invested in the outcomes more than the “form” and this is an area where the public is ready to engage.

I know many on the Committee and respect the varied points of view they bring to the task. Given the opportunity, I believe a more transparent discussion of desired outcomes will result in more shared outcomes and at the very least a better understanding of the rationale for choices and trade-offs among them. For charter revisions that will both improve what needs fixing and preserve what is working well, you do have to start with an accounting and find common ground on what's working and what's not.

Thanks for your hard and continuing work.

15. 2/26/21

Aaron Dushku

121 Garfield Street

Dear CRC,

I have been sitting on some ideas for a while with the intention of putting more time and work into perfecting them but I've come to the realization that there are no perfect solutions and that I'm sending these to provide some food for thought as you weed through the many other ideas being presented to you. I am also aware that some of these might not necessarily be charter issues but I'm keeping them in because a new charter might want to include some of them and if not, at least you'll get a taste for what's on my mind after my time on the council. I know that there are often unintended consequences

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of any action and that you're talking those through in great detail so no hard feelings if you've already discussed and want to discard these.

For starters, I think we should keep a TC/TM style of government because a lot of things DO work well and we are blessed that we have some good and well-intentioned people working in those roles now who work very hard within the current system. BUT, I believe that we should institute ways for the elected councilors to have more power over certain key matters and to see more responsiveness from the executive branch to their concerns and ideas.

Here are three areas that I've been thinking about and some thoughts:

I. **Ideas to change the Town Council**

Add at-large seats. Will give less power to district councilors who represent fewer actual voters and make change happen more easily for a greater majority of voting and engaged residents. I think that this is a nod to those who appreciate a Town Meeting-style government because it will allow their ideas to have a louder pulpit and more power when they express them to their elected representatives. Alternative idea might be to redistrict the town creating 5 districts divided up into districts evenly-sized by active voters and do this every 5 years. This would help to more easily plan for staffing at the polls, also.

Consider making TC terms longer and w staggered elections. Currently, the second year of elected terms can become more about campaigning and about the fear of taking decisive action and jeopardizing re-election hopes. This can paralyze the whole council as it tries to enact new policies.

Increase the pay for councilors. I'm aware that this is an issue that's been before committees and it might not be popular but I stand by it as a way to attract more candidates and to engage citizenry in substantive policy change and debate as a basis for more meaningful elections.

Like Council Vice President and School Committee Chair, consider making the TC president (TCP) elected by TC from its membership and not in its own separate election. This might not change a lot with respect to the current TC but in future, it would reward natural leaders who emerge and continue to foster good teamwork. It might also allow for more turnover in the job from year to year which might be good -especially if the TCP ever loses confidence from the majority of the TC. (Nothing against Mark and Vinnie who are both excellent leaders but I think that this is something we need to plan for as those two will eventually reach an end to their public service commitments and careers.). I think that it would also give a better understanding to the roles and responsibilities of the TCP which I suspect often go unnoticed by most people. Furthermore, it doesn't force ambitious councilors to choose between making a run at TCP and keeping their current seat.

II. **Change appointment rules** for important positions to shift some control to TC,

Council Clerk -too dependent on TC President to do it all himself. The process is not well described as to how he is supposed to fill the position. I am not particularly outraged or concerned by the impacts of the current setup (Marilyn does a good job) but I remember that there was uncertainty when we filled the position last and I was surprised at how little process was prescribed.

Police Chief and Planning Board members -I think that positions that are so powerful and important to the community, should be appointed by the elected officials. Just like the Superintendent of Schools is hired by the School Committee. These are jobs where the selected individuals get a ton of scrutiny from

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the public and I recall that there was always a lot of energy spent by active citizens trying to find ways to participate and influence these decisions whenever I witnessed those positions getting filled.

Can we formalize a process whereby a special TC or citizen's committee is called for this?

-if this is too much to swallow, maybe make final appointment only binding after sharing a rubric of top candidate evaluations for discussion in advance of any appointment/confirmation vote. Otherwise, the council has no means to compare candidates when they make their appointment vote. As things stand now, we all know very little about the candidates for these positions before they are hired and this feels wrong. Let's pull that curtain back a little.

III. **Town Manager responsiveness/Town Councilor influence and feedback loops...**

More frequent evaluations or feedback opportunities should be considered for the Town Manager and this could give a little more power to the elected members of the town government. If more frequent, this feedback would be less emotional and would carry less drastic repercussions from a bad review (like the TM losing his job or his annual salary increase). It would also allow more room for timely criticism and for the manager to demonstrate responsiveness to it faster. The budget priority guidelines are not mentioned in the town charter except in the way that councilors are permitted to propose budget items to the TM each year. This successful vehicle should be formalized in the charter as it offers a chance at annual feedback in this way for financial matters. The TC has no such annual feedback avenue for policy and management matters. It is very difficult for TC to engage the town's professional staff in meaningful ways to implement new policies. Staff are often put into a precarious situation when approached by councilors as they know that their one true master is the town manager.

A charter-mandated 'policy priorities' guidelines (PPG) process might also give TC's a better idea of the methods used by TM to address policy matters. It would also give TC a little more power to influence department staff without undergoing the full ordinance development or amendment process or proclamations. Such a process would also break down some of the parliamentary guard-rails and limitations that TC have in engaging the TM over policy. As the BFO Committee oversees the BPG (budget priority guidelines) development process, these PPG's could be developed by a new policy committee but by following the same blueprint (e.g. a guidelines document, a nomination template tabulation, discussion moderation, voting by TC members and a ranking based on those votes). As it is, the annual BPG process is continually flooded with policy-related suggestions from councilors who try to word them as budget (or personnel) issues and the BFO committee rejects them as they're not relevant to the scope of their exercise. The detailed process may not need to be detailed in the charter but the act of providing this annual guidance should be considered.

Here's an example from my time which might illustrate where this might work better: TC and residents have concerns about traffic. TCP unilaterally declares that a committee on transportation be formed and over the next 2 years the committee hammers out the TDM Ordinance and other recommendations. The ordinance development process was laborious and demanded more of the TC and the committee than might normally have been expected. The process benefitted from extra effort and research by committee members, public participants, staff and consultants.

What if, instead, the TC had a ranking sheet at the beginning of the term and listed policy reform for transportation as it's highest priority?

Then, over the course of year 1, the manager asked departments to run through some internal policy review and gathered ideas from peers in their professional community on how to improve things. Ideas

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got floated back to TC as potential referral items for TC committee action where needed or just became new department-level policies/regulations and got reported back to the TC. At the end of year when the 'policy priority guidelines' were reviewed again by TC, the responsiveness could be evaluated as issues got re-ranked. This would take the hard labor out of the hands of part-time TC members and let the professionals take action without day-to-day micromanagement or repetitive night-meetings over the course of months. It would also give them cover for the multiple (unranked) policy-related pushes that the TC members make in an ad hoc manner throughout their terms. -it also means that we don't need to update the Comprehensive Plan every year when we're trying to prioritize what things will get done.

Just had to get these out to you. I know they're rough and disorganized. Thanks for giving me a forum and for all of your work on things. Hope this helps more than distracts.

16. 2/26/21

Kate Coyne

120 Worcester St.

Will these questions be posted on a website for all to read/responses or do they go into the VOID? (will we get a response or get a response on website? Please respond to my email to let me know one way or the other.

17. 3/10/21

Tina Goldsmith

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to give feedback about the town. My husband and I are retired and moved to Watertown in August 2019. We love the river, the dam, and taking walks there, etc. We use the library very frequently and love it. I tutor a non-English speaker and find it very rewarding.

We communicate with the town via telephone. We were able to get our water main cleared pretty quickly (in about 4 months) so as to have decent water pressure. We have a parking pass from the senior center which is very helpful. We enjoy receiving the senior newsletter monthly.

Now, what doesn't work so well? What has been extremely egregious during this past winter snowstorms is the state of sidewalks, uncleared. THERE SHOULD BE A TOWN ORDINANCE THAT RESIDENTS MUST CLEAR SNOW FROM ADJACENT PROPERTY SIDEWALKS. We called a few numbers at city hall and the DPW and while everyone was genial, they were unhelpful. It is extremely dangerous to walk in Galen Street when sidewalks there are not cleared. The city should at least clear the most dangerous areas if residents can't or won't do it. By the way, Watertown appears to clear its streets quite well.

Another problem, which we have not called about, is the state of disrepair of the streets that are the closest to the Newton town line. Why aren't they being repaved? I'm speaking specifically of the bottom of Maple Street, and Jackson Road near Morse Street, and the Watertown Street end of Morse Street. Filling potholes and patching is not working!!

Finally, we have the beautiful river running through our town. More resources should be allocated to keeping it cleaner and in better condition, with more plantings, etc.

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Overarching, creating more green space, people-friendly walkways -
- yes, Watertown Square is a challenge... My husband would like more bakeries.

With kind regards,

18. 2/28/21

Rita Colafella

56 Cuba St.

Dear Committee,

I cannot help but think that the straw poll at the end of the last CRC on February 16th has negatively impacted the process, especially when several committee members were still investigating all possibilities. If it has not fractionalized the committee, then it has surely introduced undue pressure in a process that is not always frictionless. Going forward, there needs to be less friction in this process.

I strongly recommend the following for a more frictionless process:

- Get a facilitator to take on agenda preparation and meeting mechanics. There needs to be some predictability regarding expectations.
- Open the Zoom. A potential Zoom bomb is preferable to the current setup. A lot of time is spent on discussing the Zoom setup.
- Book four public forums over the next 12 weeks to hear public opinion and ideas before taking any votes on significant items.

This is important work, and unfortunately meeting after meeting, I continue to see complete disengagement from a handful of committee members and open hostility toward change from a couple of members. Watertown is undergoing enormous change, and the status quo or trimming at the margins won't meet the demands. The data may lag on this now, but by the next charter review in 2030, it will be very evident. Let's make sure to get it right.

19. 2/28/21

Shanti Freundlich

Dear Watertown Charter Review Committee,

My name is Shanti Freundlich, I live at 100 School Street #3 in Watertown. I'm writing to the committee with two requests to increase transparency in communication with the community around the charter review process:

- Please post the minutes from your previous meetings (October 20, 2020 - February 16, 2021) on the [Charter Review website](#), and then continue to post them promptly. While the previous agendas include links to minutes for voting purposes, as of February 28, 2021 the latest minutes posted on the website were from the October 6, 2020 meeting.
- Please add to the Charter Review website and/or to the meeting minutes the questions, comments, suggestions, and other feedback you receive from the public through the form, direct email, Zoom Q&As, and any other format (with individuals' identifying information removed).

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20. 3/2/21

Nancy Hammett

119 Riverside St.

I have shared this with the CRC members. I would appreciate this being shared with the Collins Center experts as well. Thank you.

To CRC Committee members:

I am writing as an interested resident to share some comments on the Charter Review process. I strongly believe that this review is an important opportunity for extensive public input, and is a chance for Watertown to improve its public engagement, whatever the final decisions are about changes to our charter. The issues involved in the Charter Review are complex, and require a good understanding of how our government works in practice (as well as in theory) for residents to provide useful input.

While I understand the desire to reach a decision early on about the meta-question (Manager vs Mayor), I myself find it impossible to have an informed opinion about that question without substantially more discussion and education about the workings of our government. I strongly urge the CRC and its Communications Subcommittee to explore ways to sponsor more open and robust debate and education opportunities about a number of questions, before expecting informed input by most residents on that question.

This could take the form of panel discussions and debates – perhaps with the help of the library – with extensive opportunities for the public to ask questions and make arguments. I know this can be difficult, given time pressures, Committee members' workloads, and open meeting rules. Perhaps education sessions conducted by the Collins Center, without input from Committee members (to avoid deliberations) but recording so that Committee members and residents could view after the fact. With both verbal questions and chat content preserved. Such events would give less constrained opportunities for public input, and might also reveal factual misunderstandings or divergent assessments about how the government currently works that shape people's views about desirable charter changes. Clarifying facts and sharing assessments should be done before people are expected to make decisions about what changes are needed.

In addition, I think it's important to start with a debate about what is and is not working well in Watertown now, followed by an analysis about what structural factors or informal practices contribute to the successes and failures.

Finally, I urge the Committee to make available to the public all the information that the Committee is discussing before the meetings, to give time for people to be informed listeners, and to share information on the results of the CRC poll and other relevant material. Much progress has already been made in sharing useful information – from the Collins Center and elsewhere – on the Committee website, which is very encouraging. Thank you.

I will submit further comments shortly about specific topics I would welcome more education and discussion on, regarding how the government currently works.

Thank you for considering my comments. And thank you for the time and energy the Committee is putting into this important effort.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

21. 3/7/21

Jacky vanLeeuwen

Whites Ave

Do we screen our police officers and new applicants for white supremacist beliefs? Does Chief Lawn get evaluated for a culture of and commitment to anti-racism among his officers?

Do other department heads get evaluated for a culture of and commitment to anti-discrimination?

What is the retention rate of people of color in town hall departments?

Please consider these concerns when finalizing charter changes.

Thank you.

22. 3/7/21

Tiffany York

CRC Committee, please add this recommendation to the agenda for the city's CIO role and to the notes and upcoming CRC meeting to push for immediate discussion and vote on- a strategy for City Govt Communications Transparency.

Transparency in City Govt Communications (a roadmap not exhaustive)

- THRESHOLD will need to be set and will need to be reviewed annually to determine if in fact its creating any impacts on timelines (for example: decisions that affect over 10% of residents... or a policy that would affect over 5 local businesses.... or a zoning change/creation that would affect families with children school... these thresholds will help set up a culture of transparency)
- 30-90 day public comment period for any decision; proposal has to be aired on TV, online segments, community organization, filed into official record (held at library), town hall postings, and emailed out by each councilor to each district;
- Response to public comments are REQUIRED (this allows for agency by any resident to act if decision impacts them after they have commented re: decision);
- Redraft/resubmission REQUIRED after public comment window;

Thank you for continued commitment to transparency and accountability.

--

Please know that I honor and respect boundaries around personal time, caretaking, rest, and well-being. If you receive this message while engaged in any of the above, please protect your time.

23. 3/7/21

Tiffany York

CRC Committee, please add this recommendation to the notes and upcoming CRC meeting to push for immediate discussion and vote on- a strategy for City Govt roles:: Accountability.

Term Limits

No person shall be eligible to be elected as a member of the town council if, at any point during the term of office for which the person may be appointed or elected, the service of the eligible person would exceed 8 consecutive years on the town council.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

*(a) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of XYZ per Watertown Govt,
(b) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of Town Manager/Council or
(c) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of XYZ Watertown Govt Org Chart,
(i) any person elected or appointed to the office (or committee) of XYZ Town Govt
→ Desired Outcome is to get Term Limits to 4 years. Realizing we come from no term limits, it's possible we set this up initially as a higher number with a caveat/goal of getting to 4 years.
→ Desired Outcome is to apply Term Limits, or ability to apply, whether we stay Town Council/Manager or move to a Mayor in future years.*

Thank you for continued commitment to transparency and accountability.

24. 3/12/21

Rita Colafella

56 Cuba St.

Dear Committee,

I want to tell the Charter committee that last week's meeting was better managed. Keep that up. Mike did a very good job of leading the way. I appreciate the committee's holding back and letting the process run.

Lastly, I do like the idea of a two track system because it does not appear like we have much time, and in my opinion, Zoom is not conducive for this kind of activity. I would like a committee to reconvene less in than 2 years, preferable 16-18 months. Any more time than that would remove urgency and lead to reactive solutions.

Thanks for taking the feedback.

25. 3/13/21

Mary Jane Sadler

25 Puritan Road

When can we change the charter in order to get a mayor? How do we help in getting this measure passed? Thank you.

26. 3/15/21

Merle Kummer

375 Arlington Street

Dear Charter Review Committee member,

I'm a Watertown homeowner. I'm writing to support the Collins Center two-track proposal, with the years end in in 3, so we can review the charter again in 2023.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

27. 3/15/21

Deborah Peterson

To the Charter Review Committee,

It seems clear to me that the current committee and current process will be unable to deliver a new charter in the available time and the Collins two track proposal offers a way forward. The level of community dissatisfaction with current town functioning has been made clear during these meetings. The extent of this dissatisfaction in almost all areas of town government regarding vision, communication, responsiveness, and transparency calls for a larger process that entertains more transformative options that will take time and more dialogue.

The community representatives on the current Charter Committee chosen by the Town Council President have very effectively articulated what I see as our collective needs. They have delved into the issues deeply and I would hope they will be given priority for the new ad hoc group.

It has been frustrating to me that the current Committee did not identify common goals and desired outcomes for change. I hope they can do this before disbanding. Identifying specific outcomes will provide a transparent platform for evaluating alternative approaches and a evaluation tool for assessing success.

My gratitude to all of you who have served with good will and hard work on this committee.

28. 3/16/21

Jacky van Leeuwen

Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to give my feedback to Mike Ward's proposal. It may be too early in the process, but I also am providing my thoughts about Mike Ward's ["Potential Areas for Discussion"](#).

I agree with changing the year for the next review, although I favor a bit of a longer transition so that the next review would be **2025**. This would give adequate time for a Town Manager to be evaluated and the overall governance reviewed based on the changes we are able to make in this cycle.

I have had this opinion from early on as I could not see making a major change to mayor without assessing whether our current form can 'change with the times'. Once we have agreed on a commitment to goals/visions and have specified expectations related to good governance, we can assess how our current form is working.

I agree with paring down the Charter Review Committee to 9 non-Town Council members. I haven't heard other views on this and I'd be curious to hear them.

I hope, in the next few months, we can focus on making significant changes to the charter and be better poised next time to both **improve public engagement** and to **use the new metrics and visions/goals to evaluate governance**.

I went through Mike Ward's ["Potential Areas for Discussion"](#) (2/16/21 Collins) where he suggested areas to focus on, many based on public feedback (much highlighted in the [Platform of Ideas](#)).

Comments as of April 12, 2021

The areas where the suggestion may be more than 'minor' (in my opinion) and will need some focus:

1. Length of Town Councilor terms (Article 2). *(I think they should expand to 4 years).*
2. Town Council to elect TC President or remain as is?
3. Council President to give an Annual State of the City report/address.
4. Council President on School Committee?
5. Access to Information Article 2-6 had no suggestions for changes and I don't have any but I'd be curious about others' thoughts, especially from the Town Councilors.
6. Article 2-7 suggestion to add admin/analyst/legal asst to support TC. *(I support this).*
7. Article 2-9 suggestion to add Annual Town-wide public forum.
8. Residency requirements for Town Manager? Eliminate waver? Article 3-1
9. Article 3-2 language which specifies/strengthens expectations of TM re: following policy direction and long term vision of TC. *(I support this).*
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11. Change process of picking board and committee members?
12. Expand Article 3-6 re: Evaluation of TM
13. No major changes in Article 4 (School Comm)
14. Financial

Can committees be formed (as with Preamble) to break down some areas and expedite language change proposals?

Such as, several committees for Article 3 (Town Manager: 9, 10, 11, 12 from above). One for review of Article 5 (Financial), one for Town Councilor terms, etc....

Thank you for all the hard work and challenges of guiding this process.

29. 3/16/21

Tyler Kemp-Benedict

44 Whitney Street

Dear members of the Charter Review Committee,

With one caveat, I support the proposal by the Collins Center to split the charter review process, for the reasons outlined in the proposal.

My concern is with the method of choosing the members for the next CRC. If all of members are appointed by the town council president and confirmed by a majority of the council, a committee could be seated that fails to represent a significant minority of constituents. I think this method leaves the power too concentrated with the council president, with no way for a minority of councilors to change the composition of the committee.

Is there a feasible method for choosing and confirming committee members that ensures all constituencies - or at least all council members - have meaningful representation on the committee? Could council members as well as the council president nominate some number of candidates for the CRC, to create a candidate pool larger than the final number of committee members, and then the council use ranked choice voting to narrow the number to the final nine (or whatever number is decided)? I'm not an expert on RCV, so I'm not even sure that would solve my concern. If not, could there be a process for a minority of councilors to challenge and amend the composition of the committee before it is seated?

Comments as of April 12, 2021

29. 3/16/21

Ilana Mainelli

Comments on specifically the Current Two-Track proposal

1. **Agree with the tenets of this proposal in general but it will only serve the purpose of making it more possible and effective to address the larger issue of the form of Watertown government during the next and accelerated charter review if we insert certain changes to the charter review process in the current CR cycle so that the next CRC is better equipped.**
2. Agree that the CRC, as currently constituted is too big.
3. The TC, and especially the TCP, have a built-in conflict of interest in the current CR process.
4. The TCP has too much control over CR: They appoint the resident members, chair the CRC, set the agenda, and run the meetings.
5. The resident members of the CRC should not be chosen solely by the TCP but who/how else to do it? The Collins Center proposal adds the TC to the process but still leaves it in the hands of only elected officials without enough public input and the TC may deadlock in their part of the proposed process.
6. While I was tempted to eliminate TC's totally from the CRC, I think it is helpful to have their experience for input. Note that the Collins center says "Most have a few councilors or none. There are arguments in favor of either of those possibilities ..."
7. Their proposal chooses to suggest having no TC's on the CRC apparently because of the difficulty of finding a good and agreeable method to selecting which ones it would be.
8. However, I propose to address several of these issues at once by **having a few elected officials on our CRC but changing the balance of power between the public and the elected officials.**

Thus my Proposal for a NEW Charter Review process

- The CRC has 9 members.
- We make Charter Review a part of the municipal elections at certain intervals (interval tbd).
- In those years we elect 6 members of the CRC during the municipal elections.
- Candidates must be residents of Watertown and mount a campaign for office like for any other municipal elected position.
- This would take the authority/responsibility of choosing the majority of the CRC away from elected or appointed Watertown officials and give it directly to the voters of Watertown
- It would have the added benefit of publicizing the entire upcoming CR process during the entire municipal election season.
- Candidates should only be allowed to run for one office at a time on a single ballot so effectively these 6 seats would be reserved for members of the public. If a current office holder wanted badly enough to be on the CRC in that upcoming year they would have to give up their other office. The potential candidates could "pull papers" for both seats and then choose which of them to pursue by the filing deadline. The current CRC would have to decide how many signatures a CRC candidate would need to gather to qualify for the ballot. Of course, former office holders would be welcome to run.
- The other 3 seats would be held by elected officials.
 - 1 seat for the TCP. They would campaign on their ideas and intentions for being on the CRC just as they now include being a member of the School Committee as part of their campaigns.
 - 1 for a representative of the 4 District Town Councilors.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

- 1 for a representative of the 4 At-Large Town Councilors.
- The two groups of TC's would each choose the representative from their group. They would have to do so between the end of the election and the inauguration of the new TC. This would enable them also to include their plans for CR in their campaigns and again, hopefully, highlight the importance of the CR process to the voters/public. Having a deadline for them to choose their representative would force them to make a choice and not allow each to hold out for themselves to be the representative.
- The chair of the CRC shall be chosen from among the CRC members when it convenes the following January. It could be any member of the CRC.
- Timing of the Charter reviews –
 - Under my proposal the accelerate/next CR would have to be in 2024 or 2026 because it has to be done in a year following a municipal election and we couldn't implement it for 2021.
 - After that we could repeat the process every 6,8, or 10 years.
 - The city and the CRC members, having been chosen by municipal inauguration day in early January, would use the rest of January to prepare and convene their first meeting no later than the first week of February.
 - A known problem with this proposal to which I don't have an answer yet is that if we do the CR in the year *after* a municipal election, then it will be 2 years after that before we can put the revisions on the ballot.
- Necessary preparations for Charter Reviews –
 - Like the provision in the Collins Center proposal "to create a new ad hoc committee with a broad mandate to take the next year or two to collect community input on these issues, . . ."
- Need to give the CRC members more resources to be ready to do their job. The city must provide the following to each CRC member at least 14 days before their first CRC meeting:
 - Current Town Charter
 - Current Town Govt Org chart
 - Last 3 Annual Budgets
 - Key Employee Profiles: Town Manager & Asst Managers employee profiles
 - Includes: length of employment, contract status, salary & benefits
 - Town council profiles
 - Same details as employees, vary where appropriate
 - Relevant sections of MA general law/code related to Charter Review/functioning of the town/Home Rule
 - Access to their own town email account for the purpose of serving on the Charter Review Committee.
- Need to give the CRC more administrative and research support.

Suggestions for other changes to insert on current Charter Review so that next one works better

1. Charter Review should be in sync with Town Manager's contract periods.
2. We need more unstructured meetings for open discussion amongst members of the CRC and between the CRC and the public, including detailed discussions of each section of the charter.
3. Greater transparency and accountability by our elected officials –
 - a. The Town Manager and the Town Council President each must address the city at least once per year. The event must include *both* a presentation and a public forum.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

- b. Town Council members must hold office hours at least quarterly. These must be publicly announced at least one week ahead of time.
 - c. Each Town Councilor must participate in at least one Town Hall Forum style public meeting per year.
4. The charter should include a process for the Town Council and the public to evaluate the performance of the Town Manager and by which the Town Manager will evaluate their department heads.
5. Watertown should drop the “City known as the Town of” moniker because it is outdated and misleading. That was a transitional moniker when Watertown first moved from a town to a city. We should drop it for 3 reasons:
 - a. We’ve outgrown it by the size of our population.
 - b. We’ve outgrown it by the size of our budget.
 - c. It is misleading. Many MA laws are applied differently to cities vs. towns and the current designation confuses people (residents, employees, board members, elected officials) as to which rules apply to Watertown.

Older/Other suggestions/comments

1. Public Input into *this* CR –
 - a. We need access, at least once, possibly through the structure of Watertown Forward, directly to the Collins Center personnel and resources.
 - b. I want to hear from and get advice/suggestions from *former* Watertown elected officials.
2. Town Council Terms – It might facilitate more serious deliberation if the whole TC didn’t turn over every 2 years.
 - a. District councilors terms remain at 2 years.
 - b. At-Large councilors terms change to 4 years and stagger them so we elect 2 each municipal election like
 - c. the School Committee.
 - d. TCP (or mayor if we change to that) term to remain at 2 years
3. Future Town Council makeup –
 - a. Right now our 4 at-large Town Councilors all live in the same general section of Watertown. This gives extra weight to the districts in which they live and the demographics of those neighborhoods.
 - b. Possibly change the TC to 6 District Councilors (2 precincts/District) and 2 At-Large members.
 - c. This would not involve the thorny issue of redistricting because $4 \times 3 = 6 \times 2$.
 - d. Need to discuss issue of District vs. At-Large with Collins Center experts.

29. 3/17/21

Rita Colafella

74 Forest Street

Dear Charter Review Committee,

First, President Sideris, you did a strong job facilitating last night. A lot of items came up, and they were discussed.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

Second, I like the idea of having a second CRC made up mostly of the public. I don't know if this was Mike's version of an Occam's Razor to get the committee jumping or he was at wits' end with the stumbling blocks. Either way, it's ingenious.

Regarding form of government, I would need a non-binding ballot measure or a body that can get a 66% response rate from the public because I can't rely on anecdotes or accept elections as proxy for things that are favored or unfavored. From reading the room, I see there are enough votes to change the form of government and I don't think a single zoom public forum will have much impact.

I could be wrong on this, but let's assume this CRC ends up recommending the current form stay in place. I think a second, one time, CRC in 2 years would make this initial review more robust, confirm recommendations/adjust course and prevent the current momentum from stalling out, as a 10 year lookback would. Two years could be optimal, in this case, as it may be when we reach a new equilibrium.

This is an exceptional time. Some historians theorizes that grand upheavals occur every 80 to 100 years. Given this theory, this is precisely when a US Constitution would have come about. That foundational document is not without its flaws, however. Most convention attendees sitting in a hot Philadelphia hall just wanted to go home after a while. It's human nature to give short shrift when we are tired. So take this idea as an opportunity to experiment, ignore best practice and envision.

What will the world be like in 10 years?

- Will there still be an independent Watertown or will Boston have annexed us?
- Will the life sciences developments be a grand success or epic failure?
- Who will be leading the state then? It will not be DeLeo, Galvin or Baker.

All of these are possible and have different probabilities. Questions like these need big data, broader perspective and more time. This CRC has made the time issue crystal clear. It has been a bell that the CRC has rung loudly, almost clamorously at times, and it cannot be unring now. So please consider this idea of a one time, second CRC.

Thanks for listening,
Rita

29. 3/17/21

Jocelyn Tager

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

I ask you to vote for the current form of government we have: Manager, all-town elected Town Council President, and eight elected additional Councilors of Town Council.

Because I lived and still work in Cambridge and because I have run solar programs in many of our surrounding towns, and helped Medford write their solar ordinance, I've watched or worked with elected and appointed officials in other towns. I've come to appreciate the fact that we don't have a mayor selected among the town councilors, or a mayor who doesn't sit on town council, or any of the other forms of government I've witnessed.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

I think having a town-wide elected Town Council President is a very good idea. I've come to think that a Council with nine members is a very good size. More would make those meetings and their work unmanageable. Running a town is like running a business. And running a business calls for a CFO. It is highly unlikely that any candidate running for Town Council President or Mayor would have the background or the experience to be a good CFO, but a good Town Manager should be exactly such a person. We have that now: we have a financial genius in that position. We are building two new ZNE schools without an override. What other town has done this? So, I see no reason to swap a government structure with a professional in that position for one dependent upon an elected official in this type of position. I think that would be a huge mistake.

So, I ask you to vote for a Town Manager.

29. 3/17/21

Margaret Wong

74 Forest Street

In regard to the discussion around should we have a Town Manager vs an elected Mayor, how do we find information about what is different between the two structures? Is there an org chart explanation of what having a Mayor would mean? The current PDF that explains the Town Manager structure is very helpful. It would be good to have a proposed structure chart of what having a Mayor means. Does the Mayor also appoint the various positions that the current Town Managers appointed, and the major difference is just instead of having the Town Council hire the Town Manager, the residents would vote for the Mayor? It's hard to have a fair comparison if we don't have an understanding of the structural differences, and most of us don't have knowledge of town/city governments to reference. We are definitely a city and not a town and should not go backwards into having selectmen.

29. 3/18/21

Robert Shay

139 Russell Ave

I understand that at your April 6 meeting you will be making a decision as to whether to go forward with your work assuming a Council/Manager form of government or a Mayoral form. While not having delved into the pros and cons of this question to the extent you obviously have, my thoughts are as follows:

- Over the past 40 years our current form of government has had its stronger and weaker moments (and at present I think it is quite strong). It has delivered very solid performance in terms of fiscal responsibility (being able to rebuild the three elementary schools without having to issue bonds and having a top credit rating that will enable us to borrow for the new HS at very advantageous rates), maintained the town's infrastructure and delivered reliable municipal services.
- However, I think many residents have found it difficult to keep up with and understand what is going on in town government, and to know how they can influence town policy on matters of importance to them. With the demise of the Watertown Press and the Watertown Sun, there is nowhere to turn for weekly updates on the issues of importance to residents (and I say this with deference to Charlie Breitrose whose Watertown News does all it can). Attending all the various committee meetings where these issues are considered, even with the great coverage provided

Comments as of April 12, 2021

by cable and now accessible via Zoom, given their duration, is not humanly possible. And I appreciate the lengths to which our town Councilors go to be accessible and provide their constituents with information.

- This said, I believe that there are measures that can be taken within our Council/Manager form of government to address these issues of transparency, communications and access through revisions to the charter, and I'm concerned about the possible drawbacks in a community like ours of giving the considerable powers inherent in the mayoral form of government to a single elected official.

Therefore, I would favor making the necessary amendments to the charter to address these issues within the framework of our current form of government.

Sincerely,
Robert Shay
139 Russell Ave.

29. 3/18/21

Jacky van Leeuwen

I am strongly urging Mark Sideris and other CRC members to not delay in forming committees where possible. All the work so far should not be wasted.

We don't have to wait for the 4/6 meeting to get to work on the non-TM-vs-mayor issues (1-7 below to start with).

Please.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 16, 2021, at 8:13 AM, Jacky van Leeuwen <jackyrvl@gmail.com> wrote:

Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to give my feedback to Mike Ward's proposal. It may be too early in the process, but I also am providing my thoughts about Mike Ward's "[Potential Areas for Discussion](#)".

I agree with changing the year for the next review, although I favor a bit of a longer transition so that the next review would be **2025**. This would give adequate time for a Town Manager to be evaluated and the overall governance reviewed based on the changes we are able to make in this cycle.

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I agree with paring down the Charter Review Committee to 9 non-Town Council members. I haven't heard other views on this and I'd be curious to hear them.

I hope, in the next few months, we can focus on making significant changes to the charter and be better poised next time to both **improve public engagement** and to **use the new metrics and visions/goals to evaluate governance**.

I went through Mike Ward's "[Potential Areas for Discussion](#)" (2/16/21 Collins) where he suggested areas to focus on, many based on public feedback (much highlighted in the [Platform of Ideas](#)).

The areas where the suggestion may be more than 'minor' (in my opinion) and will need some focus:

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2. Town Council to elect TC President or remain as is?

Comments as of April 12, 2021

3. Council President to give an Annual State of the City report/address.
4. Council President on School Committee?
5. Access to Information Article 2-6 had no suggestions for changes and I don't have any but I'd be curious about others' thoughts, especially from the Town Councilors.
6. Article 2-7 suggestion to add admin/analyst/legal asst to support TC. *(I support this)*.
7. Article 2-9 suggestion to add Annual Town-wide public forum.
8. Residency requirements for Town Manager? Eliminate waver? Article 3-1
9. Article 3-2 language which specifies/strengthens expectations of TM re: following policy direction and long term vision of TC. *(I support this)*.
10. Add to duties of TM, as suggested by M. Ward, related to Communication.
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12. Expand Article 3-6 re: Evaluation of TM
13. No major changes in Article 4 (School Comm)
14. Financial

Can committees be formed (as with Preamble) to break down some areas and expedite language change proposals?

Such as, several committees for Article 3 (Town Manager: 9, 10, 11, 12 from above). One for review of Article 5 (Financial), one for Town Councilor terms, etc....

Thank you for all the hard work and challenges of guiding this process.

Jacky van Leeuwen

30. 3/25/21

Fahwad Ali

20 Ralph Piteri Terrace

We would like to have a mayor. So many roads are cracked and harming our cars. Manager didn't do anytime. FYI please check Mt Auburn street how terrible it is.

Thank you

Best,

Fawad

31. 3/31/21

Nancy Decker

106 Spruce Street

I believe a mayor rather than a town manager is better for ensuring Input from Watertown residents.

32. 4/1/21

Benjamin Unger

141 Common Street

Dear Charter Review Committee,

Thank you for the work you do. My wife and I bought a home and moved to Watertown in July, 2020, and I have been struck by how responsive and effective the city government is. The current charter likely deserves much of the credit. Make major changes at your own risk.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

Buying a home we needed information from around 4 Watertown agencies. I sent emails on a Saturday in the middle of a pandemic. I told my wife not to expect much. By 10am on Monday morning I heard back from everyone. In addition I've had waterlines inspected. I've registered to vote and voted. I've purchased rain barrels from WPW. I've dropped off recycling and had waste picked up. The fire department dropped by to investigate smoldering embers in an illegal fire-pit I had started and inadequately extinguished. (Sorry! Won't to that again.) Everyone involved with the Watertown Government seems competent, professional and eager to help solve your problems. I've lived in many places and rarely interacted with individuals so good and never so consistently good across the board.

I suspect that such great people get hired and stay motivated working for Watertown in part because the system is not political. I understand that the the manager system of government was started around 100 years ago as a reform to introduce professionalism into city management and reduce the influence of politics. I see that clearly here in Watertown. The system's not broke. I'm not sure what problem we'd be solving by undoing an important improvement and reform that works so well.

Thank you for all of the great work you do every day and for your consideration here.

Sincerely,
Ben Unger

33. 4/2/21

Lynne S. Brandon
17 Appleton Street

I do not support a change to a mayor. I think it will significantly change the "flavor" of the town, which still has a "small town" feel. Professional government can be accomplished in many ways, and sometimes the concentration of duties/power exacerbates existing problems, rather than solving them.

34. 4/5/21

Armen Dedekian
91 Arlington Street

As landlord of 91 Arlington St., Watertown, I hope the new Charter will allow landlords and tenants to be allowed on street overnight parking year-round. This can be waved for Snow Emergencies. Thank you.

35. 4/5/21

Sheila Fay
508 Belmont Street

RE: Mayor or Town Manager.

As a resident and small business owner in Watertown for many years, and having had family that lived in other towns around the area to compare town governments, I believe Watertown needs to have more accountability for the town manager . Therefore I believe it would be better to move to a mayoral form of government where the mayor is elected by town residents.

Comments as of April 12, 2021

Watertown often feels as if it is 20 years behind policy changes that are happening in the area. We are slow to adopt new or creative ways to respond to the rapid development. And the town was terrible in its support for restaurants during Covid lockdowns -- when even Belmont was able to figure out a way to make outdoor dining more feasible.

There is so much more that would make Watertown a more dynamic and interesting town to live in -- and I just don't see it happening. And it is almost impossible to find out why things move so slowly or not at all.

The citizens deserve more openness and accountability -- and having a voice to influence the town direction more concretely through electing the major "manager" would be a big step forward.

35. 4/5/21

Mark & Ernesta Krackiewicz

Dear Charter Review Committee,

We urge you to vote to retain the current form of Council/Manager government that we have in Watertown. It is true that there are some issues with the current operation of our government, but we believe there are substantive improvements that can be made to deal with these problems, e.g. holding the Town Manager and department heads accountable to set performance metrics, institution of an annual state of the Town report, adoption of performance based budgeting. Also, the Council needs to be given additional resources and authority to oversee the functioning of government. But we strongly believe that a change to a Mayor system could be a serious mistake. Having listened to the discussions in the meetings, read the Collins Center material, watched the interviews with Mayors and Managers, and seen what is happening recently in other Massachusetts communities, we believe that Mayors can result in undue political influence on administrative decisions and appointments. Mayors can have great authority, including veto powers. With so much power vested in one individual, demagoguery is a risk; with the Town Council/Manager form of government, power is more diffused. Mayors do not necessarily bring any expertise or experience in good administrative management of local government. Without an able chief administrator, the operations of Town government can fall into disarray. At worst, department heads can run rings around an incompetent Mayor, making the whole governmental system even less accountable to residents. Mayors can gain a great deal of political power (and can thus be hard to remove, even in the case of obvious corruption - as happened in Fall River in the last couple of years).

Please vote to retain the Council/Manager system and then refine our Charter to improve the abilities of the Council to oversee the functioning of the Manager and Town government.

Mark and Ernesta Krackiewicz

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Joan Gumbleton

32 Falmouth Road

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John DiMascio and Marilyn Devaney recently made excellent statements to the Watertown News regarding the Charter Review. We should consider all three methods of government that are available to us. We need more public input to arrive at an intelligent decision that will be the best for Watertown. Many people I have talked to are unaware of what the Charter is and what this review is all about. We need to take more time to send out information to our people so that they can be informed and give their input. We should not rush this process, especially during covid times when people are so distracted dealing with issues of getting vaccinations, taking care of their children at home and worrying about their education and just dealing with their busy everyday lives. If we can delay this vote, I think it would be best for everyone. If a vote is taken tonight, I would not prefer a Mayor. In today's political climate I believe the decisions should be made by more people rather than the power of one.

36. 4/6/21

Rita Colafella

Dear Town Council President and CRC Members,

I appreciate the opportunity to give testimony at the public forum. I write today in favor of changing Watertown's form of Government to an elected Mayor with term limits. I have lived under two forms in Watertown, technically. Over the past decade, I have been paying close attention to this form.

As a business school graduate, I understand the importance of financial statements, and recognize the effects that a poorly planned budget can have on an organization. However, government is different from a business. A government's success isn't solely derived from a strong bottom line. Policy, accountability, function, transparency, empowerment and vibrancy all contribute.

Government, especially a local one, needs to be answerable to its inhabitants, every single one. It needs to be accountable when things run amiss or are ignored. It needs to readily leverage tools and processes, which is difficult when the form of government is outlined in one way but actually transpires in another way. When teasing apart the causes for issues under this form, I find it to be an exercise in understanding opaqueness, and this gives me more than just pause. This form has not been able to address current issues with communication, diversity, development or democracy. I wish it could.

Unfortunately, this form does not appear to have robust elements for successfully addressing such issues. An elected Mayor can more readily provide those elements. Readily available is what Watertown needs right now because the time for its government to pivot has come.

36. 4/6/21

Margaret Mullen

5 Lloyd Road

Dear Charter Review Committee members,

Thank you for providing this opportunity for Watertown residents to participate in the important Charter Review process. I plan on attending the April 6th meeting briefly in the beginning but will have to leave for another commitment. I may be able to rejoin later, but I decided to put my thoughts in writing rather than speak at the meeting.

I have been a resident of Watertown for about 6 years, and I came here because of the proximity to work and the affordability of housing. I have come to appreciate this community as one consisting of caring, thoughtful people who strive to make this city a wonderful place to live, work, and play in for

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everyone regardless of their background or needs. Is it perfect? Of course not. The city, like me, is a work in progress – and probably always will be.

While I don't believe the question the committee is focusing on at the April 6th meeting - Do You Want A Mayor or A Town Manager? – is the only or most important question, I do think that a **Mayor/Council hybrid form of government** – similar to our neighbors in Cambridge – **may work well for Watertown**. However, I still feel that I do not have the best understanding and need more information and answers to other questions first.

Why this is not the only or most important question.

The materials provided by the Collins Center, Watertown Forward, and information from other organizations and individuals all point to the same thing – there is no one right form of government. All forms have been known to succeed and fail.

From what I have gleaned from the materials provided (which I much appreciate) there are various forms of government that we could choose or design but what is important is that the form of government we choose should work well and addresses the issues and challenges raised by this community.

From the meetings and comments thus far, many issues or areas of improvement have been identified – transparency, accountability, accessibility, communication, diversity, equity, forward thinking, and so on. A key question, and one I feel needs more information and discussion about, is – does the current form of government allow for these issues to be addressed successfully? Is it the case that there are no policies/structures in place to accomplish these tasks or are there policies/structures that are not enforced/utilized or even work against achieving goals to address the issues? Does the compensation structure, composition of the council, division of responsibility between our elected officials and administrators enable or prohibit the ability to do the work needed, contribute to levels of public awareness of the working of government and the individuals working in it, encourage or discourage other engaged capable individuals from running for office? Does the current form of government embody the spirit and vision of the city - have we established what that is?

There are so many other questions and issues (eloquently expressed by other residents and members of the CRC) that it does not seem possible to address them in the time remaining to the committee even if we resolve the question at hand. My hope is that the Collins Center proposal of an ad hoc committee to continue this work over the next few years would be revisited as a solution to this crucial challenge.

Why the Mayor/Council hybrid form of government may be good for Watertown.

A change to the Mayoral form of government would not be a solution in and of itself. Many other changes would also be required – which I think is clear. I see this move assisting with two main concerns – **accountability and public awareness** (in Watertown and beyond).

Having an elected Mayor may address some of the accountability concerns that residents have expressed. A Mayor provides residents with one person (or one office) to contact with concerns, questions, or suggestions – who then easily directs people to the right person, avoiding the confusion some residents have encountered. A town manager (or other title, CFO for example) will still be necessary as these specific financial/management skills are key. Note, a solid financial outcome is just one measure of success and it is vital to incorporate other important measures – level of civic

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participation, resident satisfaction with level and scope of services, responsiveness to issues, quality of interactions with residents, innovative practices and solutions, etc.

Something I feel Watertown somewhat lacks is a recognizable character or spirit. What does Watertown stand for? What is it known for? I believe a Mayor could help fill this gap by demonstrating all that is good about Watertown and being the public face of the city. Raising the profile of the council members and the administrators would also be beneficial in this task.

In conclusion, as you can tell, I am not fixed in my opinion about the form of government Watertown should have. I am grateful to all who work in our current government and thankful for their hard work and efforts. I think we can all agree that the world we live in is becoming more complex and challenging and we need a government structure that can cope and adapt with this changing environment. I hope we can commit to engaging with the larger questions that have been raised during this CRC process and through that find the best mechanism to enable Watertown to become the place we aspire it to be.

Many thanks,

Margaret

36. 4/6/21

Eric Kemp-Benedict

Dear Charter Review Committee members,

I plan to attend tonight's CRC meeting. In case I do not have an opportunity to share my testimony aloud, I am sending it to you ahead of the meeting for the record:

Hello, I am Eric Kemp-Benedict, a Watertown homeowner. My wife and I first moved here 14 years ago and have found much to love in this city. Watertown is the first place where we ever owned our own home. I was attracted by the parks and the Greenway, as well as the trees and gardens next to people's homes. I've made good friends here. But the more I learned about the town's government, the more discouraged I became.

I want to be clear: I think we're discussing the wrong question this evening. But given the options in front of us, I will speak in support of a mayoral form of government.

I have to say that I struggle to see the benefits of our current structure. The seemingly most powerful actor in the city, the Town Manager, is invisible to me. The only time I recall seeing him was an appearance at a recent Public Safety Committee meeting, where he patronizingly dismissed concerns that had been brought to the committee chair -- not by myself, but I wanted to hear those concerns properly discussed. I was extremely disappointed.

The Town Manager hires nearly every department head, but appeared to take no action in response to an egregious misuse of departmental social media by the head of the Recreation Department.

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The fact that the Town Council hires the Town Manager is no substitute for accessibility, consultation, and public accountability. And while residents can bring requests to the elected Town Council regarding budget, the Town Manager doesn't have to take their recommendations into account.

I want transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from my town. Regardless of the form of government, I want the Charter to require that. But I am not confident that will happen if we keep our current structure. For that reason, I am calling for an elected mayor.

Thank you.

36. 4/6/21

Ilana Mainelli

My name is (Beth) Ilana Mainelli and I live at 97 Duff Street. My husband bought our single-family house in 1995 and I have resided in it since 1997. We both became involved in municipal issues soon after we moved here, and we have been members of the Watertown Democratic Town Committee for many years. I am also a former small business owner here. I used to own and operate a licensed Family Child Care in our home. My program used many municipal services including our playgrounds and the North Branch Library. We also have a young adult son who went all the way through schools funded by the WPS system – J.R. Lowell Elementary, Watertown Middle School, and Minuteman Regional Vocational and Technical H.S. I was also a member of the Watertown Election Commission from 2013–2016.

I have participated in several Charter Review Commission meetings over the past several months and I have been involved in further discussion of the Charter Review issues with Watertown Forward and informal conversations. After reviewing the Mayor/Town Manager question intensely for the past few weeks, I think that framing the decision before the CRC on 4/6 as "Mayor vs. TM" is misleading because it over simplifies the issue. I think the issue is more accurately titled "Will Watertown be more able to rectify the weaknesses in our municipal govt. by changing our form of government, or by revising how we implement the form of government we have now? If you, our Charter Review Commission, chooses on our behalf to recommend that Watertown change to a form of government with an elected Mayor as the head of our executive branch of government, that is only the beginning of the work involved in such a change. We would then have to choose which mayoral plan of government we want and specifically what the roles of each part of our municipal government would be. When we say "mayor" do we mean Plan B in MGL, Chapter 43, Section 1, with a directly elected mayor or do we mean Plan E in 43 MGL 1, as they use in Cambridge with a mayor chosen from among the city councilors, or any of the other four types of city governments approved by the state laws of Massachusetts, or even one of our own design created in a home rule charter? It would take a lot of time for us to hash out these "details" and then for us to implement the changes if they are approved by the Watertown voters in November 2021. I've done some minor research into Watertown's transition from a Town to our current form of government with the charter changes in 1980 and I see that it not only takes a lot of time and effort to choose and plan the new form of government, but it can also take up to two election cycles to implement the changes.

I believe that we do have some problems, areas of weakness, in our current municipal government here in Watertown, MA:

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- There is poor communication from our executive branch and some parts of our legislative branch on general issues of municipal events and municipal policies.
- Residents often get a slow or no response to their inquiries of parts of the executive branch of our municipal government.
- Residents experience a general lack of transparency about general governmental activity.
- There is a general lack of accountability by the executive branch to the public, because the Town Council, our legislative branch which is supposed to represent us is weak and/or gridlocked in practice, even if they have more authority in our Charter.
- We have a cumbersome and unwieldy Charter Review process.
- We have a paucity of “new blood, and therefore new ideas, in much of our elected and appointed officials.
- We have a lack of diversity in our municipal workforce – elected, municipal employees, and school department employees.
- Our city budget, which should express our collective municipal vision and priorities seems to focus too narrowly on fiscal performance. (Good budgetary management/fiscal performance is necessary but not sufficient for the priorities of a city.)
- Some of the items in our charter and the functioning of our government are ritualized and out of date because of the pace of growth which Watertown has experienced over the last decade, since our last Charter Review, and will continue to face going forward.

BUT those problems won't necessarily be solved by changing our form of government. As I said earlier, such a change would require lots of choosing, planning, and implementing. I fear that it would probably squeeze out the time and effort we need to spend NOW on addressing the problems that I have listed, and more that other people may bring to our attention. Such a major change in our municipal government might also lead to other unanticipated problems. Therefore, I have concluded, that as of now, I would prefer to see us, everyone involved in the Charter Review process including as many residents of Watertown as possible, concentrate our efforts on addressing the weaknesses we have in our current form of government. It is a version of the old adage, “if it ain't broke, don't fix it,” but instead we should “(urgently) fix the parts which are broken and leave the rest alone.”

36. 4/6/21

Brian Hebeisen

Worcester Street

Dear Charter Committee,

Thank you for your work on this issue.

In many ways I am happy with how Watertown's government works and what has been accomplished in recent years. In particular it's finances and operations are generally sound or even excellent. It has also made some amazing accomplishments on the environmental front including 2 net zero elementary schools, a LEED ordinance, solar ordinance and 100% renewable resolution. However, I believe that in terms of Accountability, Communication, Engagement, Responsiveness, Access, Equity and 21st Century approaches, both the Town Council and Town Administration could do better. I also believe that the Town needs to develop more of a sense of vision and be less reactive to events.

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I am not sure changing to a mayoral system of government would solve these issues and am concerned it could raise others. Rather, I think it is important that the Town work on the above issues, both through the Charter Review process and in other ways on a daily basis.

Thank you for your consideration,

36. 4/11/21

Nancy Hammett

To CRC members:

I am a resident of Watertown, writing to ask that decisions about what topics will be addressed at each forthcoming CRC meeting be announced to the public as soon as the decisions are made. Given the short time frame left to consider a number of complicated topics, it is very important that both the CRC members and the general public be able to plan ahead, ask questions, and request information well ahead of any discussion and votes.

Thank you.