

To: Bethany Town Clerk
Bethany Board of Selectmen

From: Robert H. Brinton, Jr., Chairman, Bethany Charter Commission

Subject: Draft Report of the Bethany Charter Commission

Date: July 4, 2022

The Bethany Charter Commission was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in November 2021. The Commission members are Salvatore Amadeo, Robert Brinton, Jr., Carol Goldberg, Donald Shea, Jr., and Elizabeth Thornquist. Town Attorney Vincent Marino also attended meetings and provided advice to the Commission.

The Commission held two public hearings and twelve meetings between December 2021 and July 2022. The public was allowed to comment at all meetings. The public hearing on the draft charter was attended by about 25 people, 20 of whom spoke at the hearing. Written comments on the draft charter were received from eight people.

At the initial public hearing, most comments indicated that residents wanted to keep the existing Town Meeting form of government. Therefore, Commission members focused on reviewing charters of small Connecticut towns that retained the Town Meeting form of Government, including the towns of Durham, Killingworth, Haddam, and Oxford. The charters of towns such as Woodbridge and Orange that kept a Town Meeting for some decisions, but assigned the power to adopt and amend ordinances to the Board of Selectmen, were also reviewed for other provisions potentially applicable to Bethany. The Commission used the Town of Haddam Charter as a model to guide the discussion of various provisions to be considered in a draft charter for the Town of Bethany.

The draft charter proposes few changes to our town government organization and procedures. For example, 4-year terms for the Bethany Board of Education and Board of Finance (rather than 6), vacancies on town boards must be filled by a member of the same party (currently no requirement), and the Board of Selectmen makes appointments of all appointed town boards and officials (rather than most). The draft charter also includes provisions intended to clarify requirements where there are no statutes or ordinances that directly address the issue. For example, rules of procedure for the Board of Selectmen, notice requirements for a budget hearing, and emergency powers of the First Selectman. The attached summary of proposed changes is intended to provide simple explanations of all proposed changes and clarifications.

The Commission voted at its July 1, 2022 meeting to submit the draft charter, as amended, to the Board of Selectmen. In accordance with Section 7-191(b) of the General Statutes, the draft report consisting of this memo, the draft charter dated July 1, 2022, and a summary of proposed changes dated July 1, 2022 are submitted to the Board of Selectmen via the Town Clerk.