

CHARTER PREPARATION

Charter submission. A proposal to adopt/amend/repeal a governance charter may be submitted to the legal voters of a municipality at an annual or special town meeting by the selectboard or a petition of 5% of the voters.

Revisions to voter-backed proposal. A charter proposal by petition cannot be changed by the selectboard, except for technical corrections, and must be submitted to the voters at the next annual meeting or primary or general election.

Copies available. Official copy of the charter proposal must be filed as a public record with the town clerk at least 10 days before the first of two required public hearings. The clerk must certify the date he or she received the official copy. Copies must be made available to the public upon request.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hearings and notice. Selectboard must hold at least two public hearings prior to the vote on the charter proposal.

First public hearing. The first public hearing is held at least 30 days before the special or annual town meeting. Notice for the first public hearing must:

- Be in accordance with 17 V.S.A. § 2641:
 - Post in at least two public places in the municipality, and in or near the town clerk's office, not less than 30 nor more than 40 days before the hearing; and
 - Published in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality at least five days before the hearing
- Show each charter section(s) to be adopted, repealed, or amended in amended form by showing deleted matter struck through and new matter underlined. However, if the selectboard decides the charter proposal is too long or unwieldy to be shown in amended form, notice shall include:
 - Concise summary of the charter proposal;
 - A statement that an official copy of the proposal is on file for public inspection at the town clerk's office and that copies will be made available upon request.

Second public hearing. The second public hearing is held no later than 10 days after the first public hearing if the charter proposal was made by petition. Notice for second public hearing is the same process as the first public hearing.

Revisions following public hearings. The selectboard may make revisions only if the charter proposal is from the selectboard and revisions are made no less than 20 days before the date of the special or annual town meeting to vote on the charter proposal. If revisions are made, the selectboard must:

- Post notice of revisions:
 - In the same places as the warning for the special or annual town meeting; and
 - Not less than 20 days before the date of the special or annual town meeting.
- Attach revisions to the official copy kept on file for public inspection in the town clerk's office.

SPECIAL OR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Notice for town meeting. Notice for special or annual town meeting is the same process and timing as for annual town meeting under 17 V.S.A. § 2641. The notice must also show each charter section(s) to be adopted, repealed, or amended in amended form by showing deleted matter struck through and new matter underlined. However, if the selectboard decides the charter proposal is too long or unwieldy to be shown in amended form, notice shall include a:

- Concise summary of the charter proposal; and
- Statement that an official copy of the proposal is on file for public inspection at the town clerk's office and that copies will be made available upon request.

Method of voting and ballot requirements. The vote on the charter proposal must be conducted by Australian ballot. The ballot must:

- Show each section to be amended in the amended form by showing deleted matter in struck through and new matter underlined;
- Allow the voter to vote on each separate proposal contained within the charter proposal.
- If the selectboard decides the charter proposal is too long or unwieldy to be shown in the proposed form on the ballot, voters must be permitted to vote on each separate proposal in its entirety in the form of a "yes" or "no" proposition.

Copies available. An official copy of the charter proposal must be posted conspicuously in each ballot booth for inspection by the voters during balloting.

POST-VOTE

Results. The town clerk must announce and post voting results immediately after the vote is counted.

Certification. Within 10 days following the day of the election, the town clerk must certify to the Secretary of State and provide:

- Each separate charter proposal and the facts as to its origin and the procedure followed;

- If the charter proposal as made by the selectboard, the minutes recorded by the selectboard that detail the origins and intent of each separate proposal;
- If by voter petition, the body of the petition and evidence of the required number of petition signatures;
- A copy of the official certified copy of the charter proposal filed with the town clerk;
- Copies of the warnings and published notices for each of the public hearings;
- Minutes recorded by the selectboard that detail each of the public hearings;
- Copies of warnings and published notices for the meeting to vote on the charter proposal; and
- A copy of the ballot and the results of the vote or votes on the charter proposal.

Confirmation. The Secretary of State must confirm the town clerk's certification, file the certificate, and deliver copies to: The Attorney General, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Secretary of the Senate, Chair people of the committees concerned with town charters to both houses of the General Assembly.

Effective date. The charter/amendment/repeal becomes effective upon enactment into law either as:

- Originally proposed; or
- Amended by the General Assembly.