

Barrington Charter Review Commission

Public Comments Received via Email from Town Boards & Commissions or their Members

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Richard Simms** <rsimmslaw@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2023 at 1:01 PM

Subject: Town Meeting

To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Hi. I think the TM is outdated and no longer useful. A very small minority of the community is able to undo the work of boards and committees, both elected and appointed, that have spent months and months doing their due diligence. I trust our elected and appointed officials. If their work is unsatisfactory we will not vote for them the next time around or renew their board term . Those are my thoughts. Rick Simms, current planning board member.

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From: **Mike S** <rmseward@cox.net>

Date: Sat, Nov 18, 2023 at 1:13 PM

Subject: Comments

To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Below are the comments for your consideration that the Park & Recreation commission suggests should be included in the charter update.

Thank You,
Mike Seward
Chairperson Park & Recreation commission

Director of parks and recreation:

There shall be a department of parks and recreation which shall consist of the director of parks and recreation, such other officers and employees as may be prescribed by the Town Manager. The director of Parks and Recreation shall direct all its activities.

Park and Recreation Commission:

The Parks & Recreation Committee advises and recommends to the Town Council rules and regulations concerning the use and maintenance of all athletic fields, playgrounds, parks and recreational areas. The board consists of 7 full members and 1 alternate each serving A 2-year staggered terms and are scheduled to meet on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Collaboration between the Parks and Recreation Dept and Town DPW:

The Park and Recreation department shall cooperate with the Barrington DPW to enable necessary field resting, when fields are overused.

Collaboration between the Parks and Recreation Dept and the School Dept:

The department of parks and recreation shall from time to time with the consent of the school committee use any school buildings, and facilities including fields, in connection with its recreational program; provided that all facilities within school buildings shall be subject to the supervision of the school committee.

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From: **Sue Cherau** <suecherau@cox.net>
Date: Tue, Nov 28, 2023 at 9:25 PM
Subject: Town Charter - Request for Community Leader feedback
To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Dear Charter Review Commission members,

As requested, attached please find my feedback as a current member of the Cemetery Commission.

Regards, Suzanne Cherau

As a current member of the Barrington Cemetery Commission, I have reviewed the Town Charter, with close attention to Section 16-1-1 Commission in Charge of Cemeteries and Burial Grounds, which was previously amended 11-2-2004 and 11-6-2018. I have no requested edits or changes to the current language specifically in this section. The current language corresponds to the Cemetery Commission's stated purpose and practices. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback as part of the 10-year Town Charter review process.

Suzanne Cerau
Recording Secretary, Cemetery Commission member

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From: **Michael Soyka** <soykam1104@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Nov 29, 2023 at 9:48 AM
Subject: Comments regarding the Cemetery Commission entry in Title 16, Chapter 1-1
To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

As a member of the Cemetery Commission I recommend that no changes be made to Title 16, Chapter 1-1 in the Town Charter that creates the Commission and documents its responsibilities. In my limited experience with the Commission, the current structure appears to work well.

Michael Soyka

Barrington Cemetery Commission

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From: **Paquette, Erin** <epaquette589@g.rwu.edu>

Date: Wed, Nov 29, 2023 at 5:19 PM

Subject: Comment

To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Good afternoon,

I am providing a comment on the Town Charter from the Barrington Senior Services Advisory Board. The SSAB asks that when considering new alternatives to the Financial Town Meeting the Charter Review Commission consider the ability of seniors and individuals with disabilities to participate in approval of the Town budgets, particularly with reference to the ability to drive at night and/or to attend an in-person meeting in order to vote.

All the best,
Erin Paquette
Chairperson
Senior Services Advisory Board

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From: **Liana Maris** <lianalinmaris@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Nov 30, 2023 at 11:09 AM

Subject: DEI Committee input for Barrington Charter Review

To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Cc: Steven Felix <steven.a.felix@gmail.com>, A. Larry Berren <alberren@gmail.com>, <barringtondeicommittee@gmail.com>

Good Day!

On behalf of The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee of the Town of Barrington, we offer our input to the Charter Review. In our last meeting, on November 14th, the DEI Committee discussed accessibility issues with the current Financial Town Meeting that make it more difficult for many members of our community to participate. Specifically, the in-person nature of the event, in addition to its timing (a week day evening), and unpredictable duration—sometimes entering into the early morning—acts as a significant barrier to participation for significant proportion of Barrington residents, including parents of young children; people who work evenings, nights, or early mornings; and people with mobility difficulties. The small rate of town attendance further illustrates the lack of inclusivity inherent in our FTM.

In the interest of a more inclusive and democratic process, the DEI Committee recommends that the Charter Review Commission devise and recommend to the Town Council an alternative process for the approval of the annual town budget. Specifically, we recommend an approach that does not require in-person attendance for a one-time event. This could take many different forms, such as a ballot-referendum with a week-long voting period, or delegation of budget approval to an elected panel, including but not limited to the Town Council. As the Charter Review Commission moves forward, we hope it will strive for a more robust, inclusive, and democratic budget approval process.

Thank you for reaching out for our input.

Sincerely,

Steven Felix, Liana Maris, Larry Berren and the Barrington DEI Committee

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kelly Reiss** <ailuropoda8@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Dec 11, 2023 at 10:50 AM

Subject: Open Space Committee - comments on Charter Review

To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Charter Review Committee,

Please find attached the file with comments on the Town Charter compiled from the most recent Open Space Committee meeting.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kelly Reiss, Open Space Committee Chair

Charter Review Committee feedback

1. Title 8 Public Works Chapter 1 Department of Public Works 8-1-2 Powers and Duties. The Open Space Committee proposes that

language be amended to include trail establishment and maintenance under the “functions and services” for which the Department of Public Works is responsible

2. Title 11 Conservation and Other Boards and Commissions. a. The Open Space Committee recommends that the title be amended to state “Boards, Commissions, and Committees.” b. Chapter 1 Establishment and Powers 11-1-2. The Open Space Committee proposes that standing boards, commissions, and committees be mentioned by name in the Town Charter, to include the Open Space Committee. If each board, commission, and committee is named and the intent is stated, include the following: “The Open Space Committee is charged with the implementation of the Town’s Open Space Plan and the open space provisions of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. The Committee shall make recommendations for future acquisitions of open space parcels and recommend guidelines and priorities for the use, improvement and management of open space throughout town, including environmentally sensitive conservation areas, farmland, trails and passive recreation areas within parks.”
3. The Open Space Committee was unclear where this comment applies, but we propose a conveyance tax on property sales be collected in accordance with RI state law (R.I. Gen. Laws § 44-25).
 - a. The Open Space Committee proposes that part of the collections be dedicated to the acquisition, upkeep, and improvements of open spaces in Town. For example, 3% of the tax could be held for open space projects.
 - b. Real Estate Conveyance Tax from
<https://tax.ri.gov/tax-sections/sales-excise-taxes/real-estate-co>

Conveyance Tax

The tax is two dollars and thirty cents (\$2.30) for each \$500 (or fraction thereof), which is paid in consideration, including any liens or encumbrances remaining at the time of sale, for the conveyance of the property or the interest in an acquired real estate company.

For mobile or manufactured homes, tax is one dollar and forty cents (\$1.40) per \$500 (or fractional part thereof) paid for the mobile or manufactured home, including any liens or encumbrances remaining at the time of sale. This does not include modular homes outside of a mobile and/or manufactured home park.

Beginning 01/01/2022: There is an additional tax of two dollars and thirty cents (\$2.30) for each \$500 (or fraction thereof), for the amount of the consideration paid, including any liens or encumbrances remaining at the time of sale, greater than \$800,000.

c. Acquired Real Estate Tax

A tax imposed pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §44-25-1, et seq.

The tax is \$2.30 for each \$500, or fractional part thereof, which is paid in consideration for the conveyance of the property or the interest in an acquired real estate company.

Consideration includes the amount listed in the deed, instrument, or writing as the purchase price paid and the value

of any lien or encumbrance remaining at the time of the conveyance. In the case of an acquired real estate company, consideration includes a percentage of the value of any lien or encumbrance remaining at the time of the conveyance equal to the percentage interest in the acquired real estate company being conveyed. For example, regardless of the type of conveyance, consideration includes the pay off of any lien, encumbrance or mortgage at the time of the conveyance.

Barrington Charter Review Commission

Public Comments Received via Email from Individual Residents

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Shelli Edgar** <shelliedgar55@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2023 at 3:32 PM
Subject: Charter Review
To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Hello All,

My name is Shelli Edgar and I am a resident of Barrington. First, thank you for your willingness to serve on this committee! I have filled out the survey but wanted to add an additional comment after having filled it out. Given that I have already submitted it, I decided to write to the commission directly with my feedback on these particular items. Thanks in advance for your consideration of this feedback.

- 1) FTM - I believe that the FTM should be expanded to allow for all residents to vote without being present at the meeting. I see no reason why amendments can't be filed in advance so that all voters are aware of the amendments and given the opportunity to vote without having to be in attendance at the FTM.
- 2) School Committee Elections - I support having school committee elections be nonpartisan (like many other towns in RI and elsewhere). As a Democrat, I am concerned that nominees are decided by a tiny group of gatekeepers. Candidates should be running based on local issues that affect our schools, rather than national party affiliation. Elections should not be decided by 20-30 people who determine party nominations, given that there is no primary election. I believe the current system reduces the likelihood of moderate candidates running and supports extremes from both parties.
- 3) Recall - I think the charter should have a path forward for recalling elected officials if there is groundswell support for the removal of a candidate. A recall bylaw ensures a higher level of accountability in elected officials and achieves a higher level of democratic process.

Thanks again for your time and service on the committee!
Shelli Edgar

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <bpetersonri@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Dec 3, 2023 at 1:44 PM
Subject: Comments Concerning Modifying the Financial Town Meeting
To: <barringtoncharterreview2023@gmail.com>

Members of the Charter Review Commission- Thank you for your time and efforts while working on this important committee.

Both myself and the people I have spoken to feel very strongly that the Financial Town Meeting should not be eliminated, but rather modified to provide taxpayers with greater access to information and to facilitate taxpayer participation. Given that the current process was designed prior to the technological tools that are now readily available, it is understandable that the model is outdated and can be improved.

The FTM, however flawed, is an essential part of Barrington's town governance. The FTM:

- provides a level of control over municipal budgets and the resulting tax burden by those people actually paying the taxes.
- places a reasonable burden on the Town Council, School Committee, and Town Manager to be able to publicly explain/justify expenditures.
- provides necessary checks and balances over municipal spending, rather than more money being spent without due consideration because Barrington is a "wealthy community" that should be able to afford additional expenditures.
- given that members of the volunteer Town Council and department heads rarely have any appreciable financial backgrounds and may have agendas which include spending on projects without sufficient cost/benefit analysis or consideration of the priorities of the Town's residents as a whole, the FTM provides taxpayers to have a voice on these fiscal matters.

As you aware, problems with the FTM as it is currently structured include:

- poor attendance, and thereby poor representation, caused by the timing and length of the meeting, which creates issues for older citizens, parents with younger children, people with work and other scheduling conflicts, etc.
- the ability of special interest groups to "pack the meeting", giving them a disproportionate voice in the financial decisions of the Town.
- intimidation of persons objecting to budget items during the discussion and voting process- particularly those issues supported by the vocal special interest groups
- limited time for people to study the issues and to consider the implications of decisions before votes (as was demonstrated by the first FTM Monastery vote where there was

limited information disseminated prior to the meeting and most residents were unaware it was to be voted upon).

Assuming that all parties agree that transparency, full disclosure, taxpayer access/participation, and informed voters are worthwhile goals, there are several FTM formats that could meet these objectives.

One relatively simple plan would involve a two-phase meeting:

- providing budget and amendment materials to voters a week in advance of the meeting on the Town's website (with hard copies available at the town hall).
- Phase 1 of the FTM which would include presentations by the various departments/town officials and persons wishing to comment or propose amendments item made in a meeting hall, with the presentations being available for those not able to attend in-person that evening and the following day on cable TV or via streaming. These presentations and discussions would be similar to the current meeting format (absent the voting) to allow voices to be heard and issues debated.
- Phase 2 would be the voting phase which could occur several days later to give time for people to study issues. The ballots could be prepared in advance of Phase 1, since all materials, including any proposed amendments, are available prior to Phase 1. Voting machines could be utilized with polls open after school hours so as not to impact the school calendar.
- The FTM guidelines/bylaws could be modified so that the final calculation of the tax rate is not subject to a vote, but rather the calculation is certified by the Town Treasurer and an outside CPA based upon the poll results.

There would certainly be some logistical challenges to this particular plan, but none appear to be significant enough to abandon the FTM.

I believe that most taxpayers feel the Charter Review Committee should utilize this as an opportunity to create a better Financial Town Meeting format. Eliminating the FTM would not serve the interests of the taxpayers or the Town.

Thank you for consideration of the points I have raised.

Bob Peterson

*Bob Peterson
3 Cranberry Court
Barrington RI 02806
bpetersonri@gmail.com
401-339-4575 (cell)*

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lisa Daft** <lisadaftdmd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2023 1:43 PM
To: Merrie DeSisto <MDeSisto@barrington.ri.gov>
Subject: Re: Confirming email

Proposal 4-1-2

All School Committee elections in the Town of Barrington , whether primary, general, or special election , shall be non- partisan. There shall be no party mark or designation upon any declaration of candidacy, nomination, petition, or list of candidates.

Proposals for 4-1-3

Election Recall

An elected official holding town office,having been in office at least 6 months, may be removed from office by a recall petition prepared and approved by the voters of the town in the manner hereinafter provided for recall procedure

Upon application by a registered voter, the Town Clerk shall issue the recall petition blanks, which shall be dated , which shall demand the removal of the designated elected official, and which shall state the cause upon which the removal is sought. The petition is to be filed with the Town a clerk within 30 days after the issuance to be in order for the certification process.

The signature to a recall petition need not all be appended to one paper but each signer shall add the signers signature, as it appears on the Board of Canvassers records, and the signers place of residence, giving the street and number or other sufficient designation if there be no street and number. One of the signers shall take an oath before on officer competent to administer oaths that the statement therein made is true, as the signer believes , and that each signature to the paper appended is the genuine signature of the person whose name it purports to be.

The recall petition, as it pertains to a town- wide office holder, shall be signed by at least 20% of the voter turnout based on the previous election.

The petition is to be submitted by the Town Clerk to the Board of Canvassers for certification forthwith. If the petition shall be found and certified by the Board of Canvassers to be sufficient, within 10 days the board shall submit the same with its certificate to the Town a council without delay; the Town Council shall order an election to be held on a Tuesday fixed by it not more than 75 days after the date by the Board of Canvassers certificate that a sufficient petition is filed. However, if any other town election is to occur within 120 days after the date of the certificate, the Town Council shall postpone the holding of the recall election to the date of such other election.

Policy: Use of Flagpoles on Town Property

1. Application. This policy applies to all flagpoles that are, and from time to time may be, in use on real property belonging to the Town of Barrington (the “Town”).
2. American Flag. Except during inclement weather, the flag of the United States shall regularly be flown during daylight hours from at least one flagpole at each Town facility that has one or more flagpoles. It shall not be flown at night except when illuminated. It shall be flown at half-staff whenever ordered by the President of the United States, the Governor of Rhode Island or the Town Manager of the Town to honor the death of a public officer. No flag or banner may be displayed above the flag of the United States, and no flag other than the POW-MIA flag shall be displayed below the American flag, on any Town flagpole. The flag of the United States shall be flown in accordance with all applicable laws, including 4 U.S.C. §§ 1 – 10. In the event of any inconsistency between such laws and this policy, such laws shall take precedence.
3. POW-MIA Flag. The POW-MIA flag shall regularly be flown during daylight hours from a flagpole on the grounds of all Town facilities.