

Framingham Charter Commission June 2016 Legislative Branch Guiding Questions

Background: The Charter Commission is starting the process of drafting a charter. Charters are generally designed in similar ways, with the main features split up into parts called **Articles**. In charters, **Article I** is typically introductory, while **Article II** begins to define the shape and function of the Legislative Branch.

In our work plan approved in April, the Charter Commission decided to start work on **Article II** during June and July. Our work will be based on our own research, data gathered by our consultants at the Collins Center, and from public feedback. There are public hearings devoted mainly to community input on **Tuesday, June 7th** and **Wednesday July 6th**. The public is also welcome to attend and comment at our regular weekly meetings. We expect to use a similar process As we draft other Articles of the charter.

Note: It is critical to state that while Article II is the first Article we are drafting, no decision made will be considered final until the very end of the process when a final vote on the charter as a whole is taken. We fully expect that as we develop other articles, we will need to revisit previous work to make sure the document is coherent as a whole.

Guiding Questions for the Legislative Branch: These are designed to help the public and the commission to think about what we want our Legislative Branch to look like and how it should function. While this list in not exhaustive, we have attempted to list some of the most pressing questions. Public input on these questions is valuable and welcome at public hearings or in any other format:

Structural Questions: (Thanks to the Newton Charter Commission for some of these)

1. If Framingham has a council, how big/small should it be? What are the advantages/ disadvantages of a bigger council? of a smaller one?
2. Should all members of a council be elected from neighborhood districts? Should all be elected from community wide elections (called "at large" elections)? Should there be a mixture of neighborhood and at-large representatives?
3. What council make-up best serves Framingham's geographically and economically diverse population?
4. How long a term should councilors serve for? Should all the terms start and end at the same time or should they be staggered?
5. Should there be term limits on councilors? Why or why not?
6. Should councilors get compensation (payment) for serving on the Council? Why or Why not? How might that impact who is able to run and/or who chooses to run?

7. Would a council structured in certain ways encourage more contested races or better voter turnout?
8. What should the role of subcommittees and/or advisory committees be in the Legislative Branch?

Council Function Questions (Again, thanks to Newton for some of these)

1. What should the main functions of the council be?
2. How can we make sure councilors are accountable to the voters? What are ways community members can influence what the council discusses or acts on?
3. What kind of power do we want councilors to have over executive branch appointments?
4. How can a council be structured to balance power between legislative branch and executive branch in the best way possible?
5. What officials, if any, should the council be able to appoint, such as the clerk, an auditor, etc?
6. What appointments made by the executive (mayor/manager), if any, should the council get approve?

Resources for the Public:

To help the public and the commission, we have compiled information about how other communities have answered some of these questions. Each of these documents are available on the Framingham Charter Commission home page as well.

[Collins Center Overview of Legislative Branch in typical Charters](#)

[Collins Center Comparison of size/structure of different MA councils](#)

Lastly, Newton is going through the same charter process as Framingham, but started several months earlier. As such, they have a number of useful resources on their webpage. This [document](#) is one they created when they were discussing Article II. While not all of it pertains to Framingham, the charts and definition p. 5 and 6 are quite helpful.

All of these documents can also be found separately in the documents sections of the Framingham Charter Commission which can be found here:

<http://www.framinghamma.gov/2067/Charter-Commission>

Thanks,

Framingham Charter Commission

