

Charter Commission May Survey

Preliminary Summary
June 2, 2016

Survey goals: “Food for thought” vs. exact science

Goal #1: to get initial feedback from people about what they might be looking for/looking to avoid in Charter

Goal #2: provide an opportunity for people to share thoughts with the commission in open-ended way

Goal #3: Give people an easy way to sign up for electronic communication

Number of caveats from the process/design make this far closer to “**food for thought**” than exact science.



Image courtesy of Park Slope Civic Council

Survey Basics

Posted online, publicized in newspaper/other media and on FPS main web site

Publicized via Charter Commission Facebook pages, Framgov, and several other Facebook groups

About 320 English responses, vast majority electronic

Little/no Spanish and Portuguese responses

Look before you leap: Some big caveats

Small # of responses as a percentage of voters

Can't guarantee there weren't some multiple entries/out of town responses.

Those who did respond likely to have a stronger set of opinions than public at large vs. a true demographically representative sample

Participation from all precincts, but some more heavily than others

Some questions might have benefitted from background information to help voters understand choices

The priorities ranking question drew complaints that "all were important"

How do you feel about Framingham's current government? Do you think that Framingham's government is generally heading in the right direction or do you feel that things are generally on the wrong track?

21% Right track
58% Wrong Track
21% Unsure

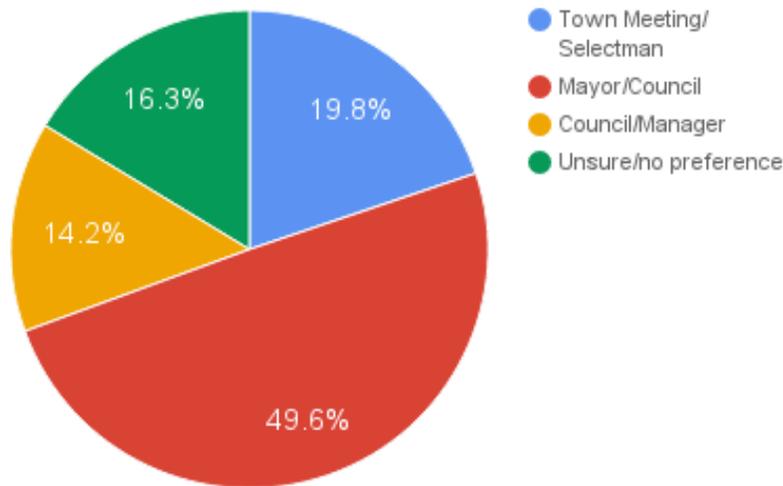
Data: as of 6/1

Caveats:

- no space connect to this specific question to explain exactly why
- Cannot indicate depth of feelings, ie. how far on/off track one feels the government is or how strongly one feels this statement

Based on what you think right now, which of these basic forms of municipal government should Framingham have?

Form of Government



Caveats:

Council/Manager might be least known to public, which might have influenced score

There are details to each not described in question that might affect choices

Comparison to other communities might have helped and hurt

Top Priorities for government: Rank 8 factors in government structure from most important to least important

- Make decisions quickly
- Geographic regions represented equally
- Clear leader to represent community
- Power and Responsibility Spread
- Many ways for residents to participate in government
- Decisions made openly and with transparency
- Residents can bring decisions they are unhappy with directly to voters
- Leaders are accountable to community

How many people put a factor in their top three in terms of importance?

2 Factors had strongest support:

Decisions are made openly and transparently: 65% (25% had it #1)

Leaders are held accountable: 60% (24% had it #1)

2 Factors had less support:

Bring decisions unhappy with directly to voters: 14% (35% had it as last priority)

Many ways for residents to participate in gov: 31%

Others were all in 43-49% range

Caveats and Take Aways from this question

Caveats:

- All 8 could be important, even if ranked lower
- Words like accountability and participation can mean different things to different people, so have to be careful not to jump too far

Take Aways:

- “Clear Leadership” response fascinating. People either #1, or not that high at all
- Charter committee might think about **what makes a government transparent** and how to explain to voters how any proposed charter encourages this
- Charter committee might think about **what makes leaders accountable** and how to explain to voters how any proposed charter encourages this

Open Response

- About 150 responses
- Some as short as one sentence, some are a page long
- Categories of responses:
 - Do's/don'ts for new gov. Structure
 - Some specific issues people have with current depts.
 - Criticism of charter commission process
 - Support for/against a city/town meeting system
- As expected, variety of opinions on power of a mayor, mayor-school committee relationship, best ways to design a council etc.

Next Steps

Keep this survey up?

When is Survey #2 best timed?

Use surveys more as a chance to educate voters via background info?

Brainstorm how to get responses, especially from Portuguese and Spanish speaking members of the community?

Is it worth it to pay \$300 for year for Survey Monkey for future surveys to get an easier way to prevent the same person from answering one question several times?