

Public Comments November 13th, 2016

It is not clear to me how council members will be elected. Are they all elected at large, or does each district have a council member elected by just that district?

I am concerned that all elections not be at large as that would have a detrimental effect on broad representation across Framingham, based on the data from the Lowell area. Further, Newton has been well served by its Ward councilors for decades, as they have always provided a strong local voice from each ward and guaranteed that power is spread to some degree across that City.

Their Charter Commission is headed towards making all councilors elected at large, which would be a big mistake and result in further concentration of power in the hands of the rich and well organized, with each at large race needing around \$10,000 for an effective campaign. Locally elected representation is critical in my view.

Could you clarify what the current plan is, or point me to a web link which provides clear information on this matter?

Thanks!
Geoffrey N Epstein

I live in what is presently precinct 3. on the new district map it looks like the charter commission plans to combine precinct 3 and 5. The State Rep for Precinct 3 is different than any other precinct in Framingham. My precinct is lumped in with parts of Wayland and Sudbury. How will the new district be split to accommodate this representation? is it legal to split a voting district to be represented by different State Reps?

Andrea Carr- Evans

I strongly oppose any change from the current form of Town government. The recent changes to Town meeting adequately addresses previous concerns.

James Koningisor

Charter Commission Members:

The proposed charter Article VII, Section 11 on page 36 describes the number of signatures required for a recall affidavit and recall petition.

I read this to be the following:

At-Large elected position holders may be recalled after an affidavit with 800 signatures from voters with 100 signatures from voters per district is obtained; and then with signatures on a petition from 15% of the all voters (~5400) with 1% of the voters per district (~40) required to place issue on a ballot

District elected position holders may be recalled after an affidavit with 300 signatures from voters in the district is obtained and then with signatures on a petition from 15% of the voters in the district (~600) required to place issue on a ballot

The numbers for At-Large elected positions do not make sense to me. The numbers on an affidavit should be 15 per district and the number on the petition should be 10% (~3600) from all districts.

Please let me know what you think of my suggestion.

Joel Winnett

Commissioners-

Thank you again for contributing your time and expertise to benefit Framingham. A special thanks to Dennis Giombetti for responding to my previous email regarding the mayor vs. manager topic. While I still prefer a manager/council form of government, Dennis persuaded me to trust his judgment that a mayor would work best in Framingham. I respect his knowledge of town government, and he convinced me that a competent manager's effectiveness can be greatly reduced by reporting to a council with a variety of opinions. Now that I am on board with a mayor as executive, I would like you to consider revising six sections of the current draft.

1. Council Approval of Mayoral Appointments - A simple majority of the council rather than supermajority of 2/3 should be able to reject the mayor's appointment of division heads and department directors. If the mayor cannot convince half of the council that the candidate is qualified, I question the hire.

2. Chief of Staff and Chief Financial Officer - These two positions appear to have significant responsibility, are among the most important positions in town, and require considerable professional knowledge and experience. Consequently, I would like the council to have the same simple majority consent for these positions.

3. Term Limits - Neither mayor nor councilors may serve for more than eight consecutive years.

4. Council Supermajority for Development - A 2/3 supermajority of the council should be required for master plan, zoning and planning ordinances, and special permits.

5. Two-Year Terms for All Councilors - At-large councilors should also have two-year terms. I understand a town wide campaign requires more effort, but I think you still will have interested candidates.

6. Council Size - Make the council 18 precinct members plus one or three at-large members. I understand it will be more difficult to manage a large council, but I think the diversity of Framingham deserves more direct representation from neighborhoods than nine districts provides. Keep in mind we will be reducing the legislative body by approximately 90% and executive branch by 80%.

I am very interested in Framingham replacing Town Meeting and moving towards a more effective government structure. The 10/24 draft of the charter would not receive my support because I think it places far too much power in just the mayor plus six councilors. However, the amendments suggested above would address my concern and result in a " yes" vote for the charter.

You probably have an informed opinion on what the odds of success are for the 10/24 draft charter. Unless you are extremely confident of it passing, I think it would be prudent to make modifications to increase the chance of success. If the primary objective of improving municipal government is to replace BOS/Town

Meeting with a mayor/council, why jeopardize a " yes" vote by holding out for your preferred set of details? There are four votes in my household and they are all " no " votes on the current charter version. If the above revisions are adopted, the votes swing to 3 " yes" and 1 " maybe". I believe there are many other voters in town with a balanced view of this city vs. town question. Unlike Tuesday's presidential election, I think there are a large number of undecided and swing voters on the charter question. Why not bring more to the " yes" side before sending the charter to the AG's office?

Thanks for your consideration.

Steve Phalen

Thanks for all of the good work you are doing on the development of a new charter for Framingham. I'd like to encourage you to consider the following:

- 1 The central decision voters will be considering is whether to remain with a form of government that accentuates resident participation or to move to a new form that will accentuate representation. Frankly, I'm still ambivalent. I want the greater accountability that you're headed toward with a mayor and city council, but I'm worried about having access to decision making move too far from regular citizens. For this reason, I would like to see Framingham retain its 18 district format, having one council member elected from each. This would increase the chances that residents will actually know their rep, and will make it easier for people to run for the council. And I think if you can provide that level of access, it will help voters make the leap to a new form of government.
- 2 I would like the council to have actual approval power (majority vote) for the selection of town commission members (e.g., Historic District Commission, Conservation Committee, etc.) rather than having them appointed solely by a mayor. The latter would concentrate too much decision making influence in one person and I'm *very* uncomfortable making that leap.
- 3 I support the FACT group's position on council term lengths and limits. This will help maintain a higher level of citizen participation in town government.
- 4 I generally like the idea of a strong mayor and a city council chair, both for the accountability it provides and the chance to provide a stronger vision

for Framingham. But I would like the council to have final approval over all senior executive staff hires.

- 5 I also agree with the FACT position on having council approval of all key development decisions. This will ensure in-depth consideration while still enabling the mayor and senior staff to offer vision and a case for support of their recommendations.
- 6 I think School Committee members should remain elected by city-wide vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Steve Greeley

To: Charter Commissioners

From: John Stasik

Re: Proposed changes to the Draft Charter

I am writing to request The Charter Commission amend their published draft Charter proposal by **maintaining Framingham's existing 18 precinct structure** in the city charter and require each precinct to choose one representative to perform the legislative duties on the City Council **There is no compelling need to merge 18 precincts** into nine voting districts. However, there is a dire need to significantly reduce the size of the legislative body currently found in our existing Town Meeting. Reducing the number of legislative representatives from 216 to 18 (plus one at-large councilor, as some have suggested) is a significant change for our first move to a city format. If, in addition, the number of precincts is also reduced, access to city government becomes more competitive and creates a sense of loss of influence among residents in the legislative process.

As proposed in the DRAFT, merging 18 precincts into 9 voting districts with one representative per voting district **places the legislative power to too few individuals** and does not insure equal representation to all Framingham neighborhoods. Similarly, a quorum of 50 % in an 11 member council is 6 members and a majority of 4 votes would be sufficient to enact a piece of legislation, which is again too few individuals having too much legislative power. However, a council of 19 members requires a quorum of 10 and a majority of 6 to enact legislation. This is still a relative small number of votes to pass legislation but is more democratic than the proposed majority of 4 in the Commission's DRAFT City Charter proposal.

Another undesirable consequence of creating 9 merged voting districts from 18 precincts is that the merging process will **create a needless confrontation at the very outset** of the newly formed Government—i.e. deciding which precinct will represent the merged voting district at the legislative table.

Representative candidates campaigning in their own precinct among people they know will create an intensely personal “one-on-one” campaign, most likely by knocking on every door in the precinct. This type of campaigning is inexpensive but very time consuming. However, by merging two precincts into one voting district requires candidates to cover at least twice the campaign area and twice the number of knocked-on doors. This structure sets up a confrontation between competing neighboring precincts within each voting district and **will increasingly politicize the campaign** because candidates campaigning in a new precinct will be less familiar with the individuals and the unique issues in the new precinct. Therefore voting will be based more on name recognition and “home turf” than on substance, issues and competence. Leaving the precinct structure as it is will remove this confrontation.

The most important, immediate task for town leaders, when Framingham becomes a City, is to insure that every precinct is actively engaged in the process of choosing their legislative representative. One rep from each precinct will insure that **all neighborhoods in Framingham are equally represented** in the legislative process.

walter siggins here. i will not be able to attend, family matters. i want you to know that i am firmly behind you and plan to lobby for your cause. i just can't see to wrap my head around only 9 precincts. i can't help but think this would be so much better for 'our' cause. a little down today but if someone could please acknowledge this post i would appreciate it.

Recommended Changes to the Proposed City Charter - Term Limits

Joel Winett for FACT 11-10-16

Eight-year term limits for the mayor and council to increase the number of competitive elections and provide voters with meaningful choices

The Commission’s own advisors – **the Collins Center** – point to term limits as an answer to motivating competitive elections. They wrote:

- Term limits allow for turn-over of elected officials potentially increasing new ideas, nurturing new leaders and community involvement
- Term limits encourage more people to run because open seats more often draw multiple candidates
- Term limits enable more opportunities for women and minorities.

The **Charter Commission Survey** of July 21, 2016 summarized the responses to the question about term limits as follows:

Yes for term limits:	76.3%	Number of years: 2 or 3	68.5%
No for term limits	16.7%	Number of years: 2, 3, or 4	83.4%
Unsure about term limits	7.0%		

Term limits have been considered by previous Charter Commissions.

Term limits could be included in a later revision of the charter but it is better to include term limits now and, if desired, it could be later repealed.

Incumbents won't support the introduction of term limits so it is better to include this in the current charter.

This is an issue that the Charter Commission should include in the charter without conflicting with basic principles.

For some, if this is not include NOW as a check on the council and mayor from becoming entrenched then they would reject this charter.

FACT believes that it is important to include Term Limits in the charter now.

Charter Commission:

On page 27 of the 10-24-2016 charter section 5 a) there is a reference to council's committee on Finance and also to Finance committee. But in section 5 b) the reference is to the Council Finance sub-committee. There are many other references to Finance sub-committee. It is confusing to call this a sub-committee and not a committee.

Other council committees are:

Standing Committee of the Council to recommend appointments to the council (page 8)

Strategic Initiatives and Financial Oversight Committee (SIFOC) (page 29)

There is no mention of how many members there are of these committees and who can be members of these committee.

Also, for the committees appointed by the mayor listed on page 12 and page 13 there is no mention of how many members there are, who can be members of

these committee, and what is the term of membership. I note that Capital Improvement Committee is a new committee.

I would appreciate a reply to the above issues.

Respectfully,
Joel Winett

Commissioners-

Thanks again for your enormous contribution of time and expertise to the community. I attended the public forum at Brophy last night (11/10) and came away with the impression that eight members of the board are very supportive of the 10/24/16 draft of the charter. Although Mr. Blumer intends to present a motion on term limits, several other members strongly oppose them; therefore, it appears the charter draft will move forward without modifications and the vast majority of the board is extremely confident the voters will approve it next year.

As I have said before, I would like a charter to succeed because the municipality can be more effectively managed under an alternative structure. Please consider amending the current draft with the three recommendations below.

Term Limits

Include term limits for mayor, city council, and school committee. The proposal presented by several citizens last night of no more than eight consecutive years for the same position seems very reasonable. Mr. Smith opposes term limits and cites Charlie Sisitsky as an example of why term limits would be harmful. I concur that Framingham benefits greatly from Mr. Sisitsky's expertise and many years of public service. However, does Mr. Smith honestly believe that Framingham's municipal management will suffer significantly if someone like Mr. Sisitsky is required to take a two-year break between eight-year stints as a councilor? One of my concerns about the mayor form of executive branch was that Framingham could have a dearth of capable individuals willing to run for mayor. Mr. Giombetti and other commissioners assured me that is not a risk, and I deferred to their superior knowledge of local officials and residents. Well,

both arguments cannot be correct. If we have a wealth of capable residents who will compete for mayor, the municipality will not fall apart if a mayor or councilor is required to sit out a term every eight years. The board has also spoken over the last year about a desire to encourage talented residents with a variety of perspectives to get involved and run for elected office. Those comments are inconsistent with your opposition to term limits and support for a structure that allows incumbents to stay in office indefinitely by using their advantage to discourage new candidates.

Council Approval of Mayoral Appointments

Simple majority rather than 2/3 of council should be able to reject appointment.

If a mayor cannot persuade six councilors to support a nominee, it is either a poor hire/appointment or the council and mayor are having a serious disagreement. If there is a profound difference of opinion between the mayor and council, I want our government structure to side with the wisdom of an 11-member body rather than one individual.

Two-year Terms For All Councilors

All councilors should have two-year terms. At-large councilors should be responsive to the voters with terms equal to other legislators. Creating two more powerful councilors could lead to unwelcome and protracted collusion or battles with the mayor.

I understand you have spent the year discussing and deliberating issues including those above, and you hold a different opinion than mine. With the possible exception of considering the failed logic of your term limits argument, I expect we will simply agree to disagree. However, I still appeal to you to make the requested changes, because there are at least dozens (and possibly thousands) of residents that share my view. Given that the charter proposes moving to an elected legislative body 95% smaller than town meeting and an executive branch 80% smaller than the BOS, many residents are a bit fearful of this concentration of municipal power. Despite your conviction that you have arrived at the best solution through your countless hours of deliberation and you are completely confident that the voters will approve the charter, why not throw some of us a few more bones to make us feel better that our rational arguments were heard and adopted? You won your commissioner seats with your ideas and campaign efforts, and I understand you are fairly and professionally performing your duties as a charter commission. However, some are concerned that this charter creation process may foreshadow the decision

making process of a mayor and 11-member council. Reasonable and rational recommendations by a minority of councilors or residents will be dismissed by a mayor and six (or four in the case of approving appointments) councilors because they are able to win low turnout elections. Why not compromise slightly more with well-intentioned citizens making rational arguments? The goodwill you earn by ceding a few issues will give you more support to win the most important challenges.

Steve Phalen

#63 - Last night Adam Blumer said opponents to the city charter have it all wrong when it comes to taxpayer reimbursement of actual and necessary EXPENSES incurred in the performance with the duties of the Mayor, City Council, School Committee, Library Trustees and Board of Cemetery Trustees. He said reimbursements are for things like \$75 conference fees. After the hearing I asked him when he last paid \$75 for a conference fee. 1964? Of course, registration fees are more like \$600+. He failed to address the expenses of air travel, hotel, car rentals, meals, etc. resulting from attending conferences outside of Massachusetts. The charter merely requires "appropriation" and "prior authorization" before the spending starts.

Attached is a PDF copy of flyer (some people couldn't open the last attachment) for the upcoming public Q&A discussion on Tuesday, November 15th about city and town governments.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deb Butler

Charter Commission Members:

A number of years ago I researched the MGL Special Acts to obtain a list of the special acts for Framingham.

This list updated to 2006 has been posted on the web.

I have added a column labeled 'Charter' to the list of Framingham Acts that I maintain and entered the word Repealed or Retained for those special acts mentioned in the proposed charter Chapter IX, Section 8. See the attached file.

I note the following:

1. Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1987 is listed in both Section (a) Acts Repealed and in Section (c) Act Retained.
2. There are no special Acts listed in section (b) Certain Special Laws Recognized and Retained, in part
3. The file attached list all the Act for Framingham that I am aware of and includes those listed in the charter Article IX but I do not have titles for many of the Acts listed in the charter. Please provide a list of the titles for the acts referenced in the charter.
4. As can be noted from the attached file there are many Special Acts for Framingham that are not listed in the repealed list (a) or retained list (c) in the Article IX Section 8 of the charter. What were the criteria for listing some Acts for Framingham and not the others?

I would appreciate it if you would respond to the above issues.

Thank you,
Joel Winett

Greetings:

Thank you for your service to our community. You have worked long and hard, and with a seriousness of purpose. I remain hopeful that the process will bring positive change to Framingham.

Accountability. Full and fair representation. Competitive elections. These have all been prominent themes of the Commission's discussion these past seven months because they are so essential to a government serving a thriving community. There are enhancements to the current draft that the Commission could adopt to better serve those principles.

I have commented previously on the value of keeping our current 18 precincts and the

benefits that term limits could bring, so I won't repeat myself. My view on council terms has changed over the course of attending Commission meetings, so I include that here.

Two-Year Terms for All Councilors

At a meeting last month, a commissioner argued very persuasively for two-year school committee terms. His argument could just as well support two-year terms for all of the city council, including the at-large seats.

The commissioner said, "a shorter term means there is more accountability...Do we want more accountability...or do we want less accountability because we want to foster incumbency and status quo...If you're not doing the job, the longer term means that it's longer and more difficult for the voters to get rid of you."

The rationale for four-year terms for at-large seats is that it is a harder, more expensive, race to run than a district election and, therefore, at-large councilors should be "rewarded" with a longer term, given an "incentive" to run at large. I don't find that persuasive. And it sets up a strange two-tiered structure in the council.

Thank you for including this in the public record.

Beth Greeley

Charter Commission,

1. The mayor is required to present the State of the City to the Council and other town officials each January. There is no mention of communicating this presentation to the public.

Can you elaborate on public access to this presentation; e.g., must it be televised? printed and disseminated to the public? available on-line?, etc.

2. How many members on the Zoning Board of Appeals?

3. How many members on Planning Board?

Thanks,

Ted Grenham

A Statement from FACT: (Framingham Alliance for Civic Transparency)

Throughout the charter development process, FACT has supported, and continues to support, a governance model that lays the foundation both for strong professional management and for policy decisions made with the input and involvement of neighborhood representatives. We have significant reservations about the strong Mayor/Council form of government, the path to which the Charter Commission is committed.

As proposed, the draft city charter has inadequate checks and balances, insufficient protection of and voice for neighborhood interests, and no mitigation of the fundraising advantages associated with incumbency, reducing the likelihood of competitive elections. As it currently stands, we have significant misgivings about the draft city charter and are pessimistic that the remedy is worse than the problems it seeks to solve.

However, we remain optimistic that changes could be made within a Mayor/Council governance structure that would address many of our key concerns about the imbalance of power within the structure, the impact of planning, zoning and development decisions on neighborhoods, and the impact of campaign financing on competitive elections.

We would propose the inclusion of the following changes to address these concerns and to provide a more inclusive and participatory government than that which is currently being proposed:

1. One representative from each of our current 18 Precincts on the Council to support fair and full representation for all of our neighborhoods and to encourage grassroots campaigns
2. Two-year terms for all Council members to improve accountability and responsiveness to citizens
3. Eight-year term limits for the mayor and council to increase the number of competitive elections and provide voters with meaningful choices
4. Majority Council approval of all high-level managers to support a high-quality, professional executive branch and to reduce the risk of appointing marginally-qualified but politically-connected managers

The current language in the charter allows the council to reject mayoral division head candidates with a 2/3 vote. We believe that this is an insufficient check on the mayor's powers, and numerous other city charters require majority approval of such appointments. We request that this language be substituted into the current charter in Article II Section 10:

*Appointments made by the mayor for division heads shall become effective on the thirtieth day after the date on which notice of the proposed appointment was filed with the clerk of the council **unless approved or rejected by the city council**. The question on rejection of any appointment made by the mayor shall not be subject to the procedure of charter objection provided in article VII.*

5. Super-majority approval for key development decisions to balance the interests of developers, commercial property owners and residential neighborhoods

Based on comments made at the Charter Commission Hearing on November 10, 2016, the Commission appeared to be unaware of ongoing efforts in the legislature to amend the requirements for a super-majority for granting special permits. One such measure has passed the Senate in the current legislative session.

We request that the following language be inserted into the charter:

"A special permit issued by a special permit granting authority, including the council, shall require a two-thirds vote of bodies with more than five members, a vote of at least four members of a five-member body, and a unanimous vote of a three-member body unless otherwise mandated by state law."

Multi-pronged efforts at the state-wide level make us feel less certain about the sanctity of the state's 2/3 requirement for approval of zoning ordinance changes. We therefore request that language be added to the charter that would require a 2/3 vote for approval of zoning ordinances unless otherwise mandated by state law.

6. A requirement that delegation of special permit granting and zoning authority be limited to multiple-member bodies, not an individual

The members of the Charter Commission seemed to be unaware of state law that allows the ZBA to delegate some of its authority to a Zoning Administrator, Chapter 41 Section 13 of Massachusetts General Laws says otherwise. We believe that special permits decisions should be subject to open meeting laws,

and not made in the office of an administrator who is not accountable to the public.

7. A residency requirement for members of the Planning Board & Zoning Board of Appeals which make legally-binding decisions that impact residents and neighborhoods

We were unable to find residency requirements for Zoning and Planning Board members under M.G.L. 41 and M.G.L. 41A, which specify requirements for membership for each of these boards. Unless the Commission has identified requirements in other sections of state law, we request that residency requirements specifically be included in the charter for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members. The work of these boards should not be done by non-residents who do not have to live with the impacts of those decisions.

We would appreciate a response on each of these requests detailing the actions you've taken in the final draft which will be submitted to the Attorney General for approval

**Suggested Edits to the Proposed Charter
Prepared by Joel Winett as of 11-10-16**

1. Number of members for the following committees is not specified.

Police Advisory Committee () (page 13)

Capital Improvement Committee (page 13)

Finance sub-committee of the Council (page 27)

Also known the committee on Finance or the Finance Committee

Standing Committee of the Council (to recommend appointments to the council)

2. The Charter should not state that the Council or School Committee can ignore any petitioner.

Individual Petitions to the Council or School Committee action is discretionary

3. The number of signature required for the following is too high.

Group Petitions to the Council or School Committee with 100 signatures action is required and a hearing shall be held and action shall be taken within 3 months after the petition is filed

Citizen Initiative Measure to the Council or to the School Committee requires 500 signatures from voters with 25 signatures from each district then approved by 10% of the voters (~3600)

Votes of the Council may be challenged by voters (referendum) with signatures from 10% of the voters (~3600) and if not rescinded a vote by of the voters is held and maybe be rescinded by a majority of the voters

4. The number of signature required for the following does not make sense.

At-Large elected position holders may be recalled after an affidavit with 800 signatures from voters with 100 signatures [should be 15] from voters per district is obtained; and then with signatures on a petition from 15% of the all voters (~5400) [should be 10% or 3600] with 1% of the voters per district (~40) required to place issue on a ballot

District elected position holders may be recalled after an affidavit with 300 signatures (should be 100) from voters in the district is obtained and then with signatures on a petition from 15% of the voters in the district (~600) required to place issue on a ballot (should be 10% or 400)

Zoning Changes are now approved by Town Meeting by a 2/3 vote and should be voted by the Council with a 2/3 vote

Special Permits are now given by the Planning Board by a 4/5 vote should be voted by the Council with a 4/5 vote since the Planning Board is appointed

Special Permits and Variances now given by the Zoning Board of Appeals require a unanimous vote should be stated in the charter as a unanimous vote

5. The use of the term 'head' and 'director' is not consistent

From page 3

“Department director”: any official responsible for running a department or division of the municipality who reports to a Division Head.

“Division head”: any official who manages department directors or that reports directly to the mayor.

From page 12

Mayor shall only appoint the **library director** and **cemetery director** on the recommendation of their respective boards of trustees in accordance with Article IV; provided further, that any appointment of a **division head** in the last year of the term for which the mayor was elected shall require a two-thirds vote of the council to be effective.

These library and cemetery directors should be stated as Division Heads

From page 25

The following divisions operating at the time the charter is adopted, to the extent not altered by this charter shall be recognized as divisions for the purpose of this charter:

parks,
recreation & culture;
fire; police;
human resources;
inspectional services;
public health;
capital projects & facilities management;
public works;
library; and
cemetery.

Page 13

Is the legal department the legal division?

Page 23

Is Planning, Community and Economic Development a department or a division?

Page 12

Constable should not be listed with committees. They are appointed individuals.

Page 12

Note that some committees/commissions function under statutory requirements. These include:

Cultural Council
Park and Recreation Commission

Note: The following are a collection of emails Deborah Bulter requested be included in the list of public comments. They are all forwards of emails sent to a local listserv sent from July 4th, 2016 through November 11th.

#99 - Issues of trust and honesty are plastered across the headlines when it comes to our political candidates. With a city charter that's likely to propose a small city council of only 13 powerful members can we rest assured that those elected - especially those with titanium ties to developers will vote for the interests of the little guy? After all they will control the \$250 million dollar budget and will re-write every single law and policy in Framingham. Yikes!

Currently, at full capacity Town Meeting has 216 decision makers and most commonly has an average of 135 members present at a Town Meeting.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#98 - Framingham First Committee, largely financed by commercial interests, spearheaded the charter effort and led voters to believe that the Charter Commission would study ways to improve the Town government as well as viable city options. The vast majority, with ties to Framingham First, who won seats on the Charter Commission, however, immediately rejected ANY discussions regarding town government. Some believe this was a bait and switch which doesn't bode well when issues of trust came to play.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#95 - Running for a seat on city council can be very expensive leaving access to a voice in managing a city to the wealthy and/or connected candidates.

Currently, those wishing to have a meaningful input in town government can do so with write in votes. This is what democracy looks like.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

#94 - A majority of the Charter Commission favor a small city council of a mere thirteen (13) members representing 68,000 residents despite complaints that the average number of attendees at a Town Meeting is 135. There's even talk about merging precincts. Currently, Framingham has 18 precincts each of which afford 12 individuals the opportunity to serve on Town Meeting. I take 135 voices over 13 any day. This is what

democracy looks like.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#91 - The vast majority of those on the Charter Commission ran on their own personal agendas that Framingham should be a city. Most pledged to pursue that goal if elected. The average number of votes each member of the Charter Commission received as a mere 1,600 out of 37,000 registered voters. They've already reject ways to preserve a town government option even if it is in the best interests of the residents.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#90 - EVERY bylaw in place in Framingham will be voided once a city charter is in place leaving as few as thirteen individuals to redraft every new law including a new Zoning ordinance. If those elected have strong ties to special interests, ordinances will most likely favor expedited permitting, etc. for such interests. There may a ten (10) story apartment complex coming to your neighborhood soon.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#89 - Sixty (60) percent of Framingham's operating budget comes from residential taxpayers. This fact alone makes clear that the interests of residential taxpayers deserve as much consideration as commercial interests. The Charter Commission has yet to respond when asked how conflicts between the two will be resolved.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#87 - In April 2017 Framingham voters will vote to keep Framingham as a town or urbanize it as a city so a powerful few can bestow special permits to begin erecting ten (10) story buildings, creating traffic nightmares, committing tax dollars to paying 13 city counselors WHATEVER they want to pay themselves (plus benefits perhaps) and allowing this elite group to appoint all their cronies to positions of power. Wow what a bargain!

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#83 - Framingham is 316 years old and was founded prior to the Revolutionary War. So why exactly are some willing to urbanize it into a overdeveloped city? Oh yes it's to give political appointments to croonies, drive up taxes, generate salaries to those who "serve" on city council and develop every inch of Framingham with special permits to all. Yikes!

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#81 - Last night I was proud to assemble with dozens of Framingham residents to discuss the pros and cons of purchasing the Millwood Golf property. Today I read the posts from precinct chairs seeking new voices on Town Meeting. Next week 80+ elected town meeting members will gather to decide what is best for our town. This is how democracy works in one of the largest towns in the United States. The efforts by some to end such a democracy that has existed for over 300 years inspires me to take advantage of every opportunity to defeat the charter proposal to make Framingham a city.

Vote "NO" for a city charter.

Deborah Butler

#79 - Yesterday's Letter to the Editor (8/28/16) from the Charter Commission revealed multiple holes in their argument as to why Framingham should become a city. For starters the claim that "ordinary residents will have more input in the decision-making process" fails to pass the straight face test. Since when does eliminating the Citizen Petition process and 216 opportunities for residents interested in serving on Town Meeting by replacing them with 13 individuals provided more input for residents? Yikes! BTW Framingham residents aren't "ordinary."

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78 - While the Millwood vote at Town Meeting didn't go my way last night it shows that our Town democratic system works. The live broadcast and rebroadcast allows residents at home to watch from the comfort of their homes. This factor has its drawbacks, however, because much like watching how sausage is made, voters critique what they don't like about the process. Perhaps this is why several on the Charter Commission favor of eliminating ALL video recordings of the deliberations of the proposed city council. Yikes! So much for transparency.

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#77 If the claim that "conflict of interest" has run a muck in Town Meeting proceedings how will it be any different in a 13 member city council? BTW conflict of interest includes what a reasonable person would construe as an appearance of conflict of interest NOT an opinion from your Cousin Vinny. Yikes!

#76 While reading the recent 46 page proposed charter issued for discussion purposes by the Charter Commission, I was shocked to learn that the mayor's powers are defined by Mass general law and ordinances. Just so happens that council issues ordinances.

Equally shocking are the following provisions in the proposal: 1) all of the appointments made by the mayor (including to the planning board) must be approved by city council; 2) city council can override the mayor's vote with a two thirds vote; and 3) the mayor's replacement comes from city council if the mayor vacates his/her seat in the fourth year his/her term. Yikes! Talk about a weak mayor.

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#73 For the record – again I stand by my posts in this thread and am undaunted in sharing my concerns regarding the flawed city charter with every registered Framingham voter I can reach. When appropriate I will cite the page of the section of the DRAFT copy of the charter proposal. For example, at page 32 all citizen petitions "shall be signed by at least 500 voters comprised of at least 1% of the voters" from EACH district. At nine new districts that's 4,500 signatures!!! Yikes! So much for any claim the charter commission can make that citizens' participation in government is welcome.

#71 - On October 17, 2016 the Charter Commission unanimously decided that there will be NO preference for Framingham residents in the following proposed provision:

2. MERIT PRINCIPLE All appointments and promotions of municipal officers and employees shall be made on the basis of merit and fitness demonstrated by education, examination, past performance, or by other evidence of competence and suitability.

Sad. Where's the incentive for Framingham voters to vote for this?

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#70 - While reading the Framingham Revised Draft Charter Version 10.05.16 (page 11 attached) I was struck to see that not only will the eleven (11) city council members receive SALARIES but also reimbursement for EXPENSES. Could that mean, for example, reimbursement for attending conferences/conventions that require flights, hotel stays, meals, etc.? Yikes! I'm curious to see how that goes over with voters.

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