

# 2024 Framingham Charter Review Committee Suggested Charter Changes: What, Where, Why?

**Updated as of 5/10, after the Charter Review’s final meeting before our public hearing on 5/23:** Note that final recommendations will likely change to some extent based on that feedback, as well as feedback from the city solicitor.

**Process Note:** The chart below is the result of a number of months of work from the Charter Review Committee soliciting feedback from the community and closely studying the language of the current charter. Our final report with recommendations goes to the City Council by the end of June for their consideration. While we didn’t rank or prioritize the recommendations for charter changes, when one looks at them as a whole, they generally reflect 5 themes:

- Efficiency– is there a quicker way to reach our goals as a government?
- Transparency- is there a more open way to reach our goals?
- Democracy- is there a more democratic process to use to reach our goals?
- Clarity- is there a more clear way to describe our processes in the charter language?
- Community Priorities- there are priorities in the community that need to be better addressed

This document is best used paired with a red lined copy of the specific language changes proposed in the Charter, which is also available online.

Lastly, note that at the end of this document is a chart of “non-binding recommendations”. Like the original charter report, we plan to make some recommendations for the Mayor, City Council, and perhaps the next Charter Review Committee for topics to explore.

## Article I: Definitions

	What	Where in Article?	Why
A	Clarified that non binding resolutions don’t need mayoral approval		Clarity–there was confusion noted by original City Solicitor
B	Added definition of “elected position within municipal government”		Need to define that phrase we used in limiting people from being being elected to two positions at once in Articles below

## Article II: Legislative Branch

	What	Where in Article?	Why
A	Changed starting day of term to second business day, not January 1	2.1.b	To match change elsewhere moving Inauguration Day
B	Named specific council subcommittees alluded to elsewhere in charter rather than refer to subcommittees more generally	2.2.c	To clarify that those are required standing committees per charter  Note: Also changed “special” committees to “temporary” for clarity
C	Prevents City Council members from also being elected members of other City boards	2.3.a	Create more opportunities for others, balance power  Note: Tried to write it to not to preclude a state position like State Rep
D	Tweak wording for Auditor TBD	2.8.a	Note: Waiting on Finance Sub feedback
E	Created a process for employees hired by City Council to have a process to challenge suspensions/removals	2.8.e	To mirror process for all other employees (those hired by Mayor)  Note: Modeled off of Beverly Charter with minimal tweaks
F	Has Mayoral appointments going directly to appointments subcommittee rather than needing referral from full board	2.10.a	Improves efficiency of appointments process
G	Add City Solicitor to list of positions needing Council approval	2.10.a	This is an important position who works on behalf of the entire municipality, so deserves some Council role in initial hiring process
H	Clarifies that division heads need council approval for initial hires, <u>but not</u> for reappointments	2.10.a	Clarified a question for boards and employee that has come up  Note: Possible help with hiring and retention of employees in competitive market
I	Clarifies when appointments take effect	2.10.b 2.10.c	Response to some confusion in the first administration as noted in Petrini memo

J	Changes the Councilor at large vacancy process described from something that happens at 16 months to 18 months.	2.11.a	This matches the changes we made for district councilors and school committee  Note: Suggestion from the city solicitor's office
K	Changes process for replacement of district councilor who resigns in first 18 months to require special election vs having the second place winner take the post	2.11.b	Felt that special election was more democratic and sensible than going back to the second place results that could be a year old  Note: This may incur special election costs, but we felt this would be rare and worth the small costs

### Article III: Executive Branch

	What	Where in article?	Why
A	Changed starting day of term to second business day, not January 1	3.1.b	To match change elsewhere moving Inauguration Day
B	Clarified term limits to note that mayor cannot be <b>elected</b> more than 3 times in a row	3.1.f	Felt the word "hold" was unclear in a case where a Mayor resigned or took a leave in term 3 and then wanted to run again for term 4.  Note: Unlikely scenario but felt proper to tweak.
C	Deleted list of boards, committees, etc from charter and required them to be listed in ordinance	3.3.b	Charters can't be changed automatically, so lists currently in charter are inaccurate since some things have been added.
D	Add City Solicitor to list of positions needed Council approval	3.3e	This is an important position who works on behalf of the entire municipality, so deserves some Council role in initial hiring process  Note: Making consistent with Article 2.10.a
E	Added a new position required by Charter called "Chief Climate and Sustainability Officer"	3.3.f	Climate/sustainability planning will be more and important in next decade and deserves more focus at the policy level as well as project level

			Note: Meant to be a position that can set policy across departments, look for cost savings opportunities etc
F	Clarified that suspension/removal info in this section applies to positions appointed by the mayor, not the council	3.4.b	As noted above, process for council is handled in our proposed 2.8.e
G	Changed timing making report due by November 15 rather than 12 weeks after the start of the fiscal year.  Added more details/requirement about committee activity and charter compliance	3.6.a	Pushed deadline a bit later to account for bills needing to be paid for a few months into the fiscal year and clarified that boards and committees need reports for transparency  Note: Request for pushback based on discussion with PIO
H	Noted that Mayor need not sign non-binding resolutions, what to do if Mayor is absent exactly 10 days, and that delegation of power needs to be in writing	3.7 3.8 3.9	Clarity– 3.7 is about resolutions, 3.8 is about mayoral absences, and 3.9 is about delegation of authority.
I	Expanded goal/focus language in master plan to include climate and community equity	3.11.a	Important community goals–sends signal of what to keep in mind in terms  Note: Master plans mostly about land use and are created by planning board per MGL
J	Reduce Master plan timing from once every 20 years to 10, in years ending in 5.	3.11.a	Pace of change is fast and plans need to be connected to current situation
K	Changed name of strategic plan to “strategic blueprint” and added specific steps and outlines SIFOC role in blueprint process	3.11.b	Strategic blueprint process is new and needed fleshing out  Note: Most of this was based on suggestions from SIFOC

## Article IV: School Committee and other Elected Officials

	What	Where in article?	Why
A	Change term of office wording for school committee to match new inauguration day	4.1.b	Need all parts of charter to be consistent
B	Notes the new process for filling vacancy in school committee (See 4.1.i)	4.1.c	Create more opportunities for others, balance power
C	Prevents school committee members from also being elected members of other City boards	4.1.d	Create more opportunities for others, balance power. Consistent with council in 2.3.a  Note: Tried to write it to not to preclude a state position like State Rep
D	Noted School Committee role to do performance reviews of Supt. of Schools	4.1.h	Clarity, consistency with state law
E	Changes special election process for School Committee seats that become vacant in first 18 months to a special election.  Our current process has the council and school committee meeting to pick someone	4.1.i	Felt that having school committee (and council) pick their new member was awkward and didn't give the people in that district enough voice.  Note: This was a school committee priority
F	Clarified that if person is elected to fill vacancy, the person elected can start immediately rather than wait until January	4.1.j	Efficiency- no need for that person to wait to serve and for the district to have representation
G	Change term of office wording for library trustees to match new inauguration day	4.2.a	Need all parts of charter to be consistent
H	Prevents Library trustee members from also being elected members of other City boards	4.2.d	Create more opportunities for others, balance power. Consistent with council and school committee language above  Note: Tried to write it to not to preclude a

			state position like State Rep
I	Noted library trustee role to do periodic performance review of library director to be given to Mayor for consideration in Mayor's evaluation of Library director.	4.2.4	Clarity for role of Library trustees
J	Change term of office wording for cemetery trustees to match new inauguration day	4.3.b	Need all parts of charter to be consistent

## Article V: Administrative Organization

	What	Where in article?	Why
A	<p>Made several small changes to reorganization plan process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Removed the requirement that hearing notice be in the newspaper</li> <li>-While council holds hearing, required mayor attend to explain rationale</li> <li>-Notes that school committee also have power of approval for reorganizations that involve school departments/functions</li> </ul>	5.1	<p>Newspaper requirement felt costly, and possibly not productive.</p> <p>Note: We are considering reversing this change because we didn't make this change in other parts of the charter</p> <p>School Committee reference is for clarity and consistency with MGL</p>
B	Removed the language requiring technology services and media services to be in admin and finance division	5.3	<p>In the original charter, this was a very specific placement for departments without a clear rationale why.</p> <p>Removing it gives the Mayor flexibility for organizing these staff without triggering formal, time-consuming reorg plan.</p>
C	Allows the License Commission to pick their own chair. Vice-chair, clerk rather than Mayor.	5.5	It is typical practice for multi-member bodies to pick their chairs. We also recommended this change for SIFOC, so this is consistent.
D	Adds one more at-large community member to Traffic Commission	5.6.a	Request of board with Mayor's support to create odd numbered board (going from 8 to 9), having community voice slightly larger

			than staff voice (5-4 vs 4-4 now), and to have the added community member be at large to allow for flexibility in choice.
E	Noted that traffic commission has purview in bike lanes and pedestrian ways, not just car-based traffic	5.6.b	Clarity-Important to note as we have more bike lanes/paths, etc.
F	Clarified “petition” process for traffic regulation by putting that in a new, different subsection.	5.6.c	Clarity issue.

## Article VI: Finance and Fiscal Procedures

	What	Where	Why
A	Added Preamble with process goals for budget information	Start of 6	Felt it was important to stress need for transparency, collaboration and timely information especially with fiscal matters
B	Created a new requirement for a “pre budget” meeting 180 days before end of the fiscal year (Early January) with mayor and other key boards specifically geared to public input	6.1	Wanted to make sure public had time to influence budget thinking before budget was created  Note: Language notes role of soliciting public input
C	Added emergency language into budget submission timing	6.2.b	There was a lack of clarity during covid about whether timelines could be changed.
D	Added requirement for Mayor to have a budget hearing	6.3.a	Again, wanted a chance for public to weigh in to the initial proposal and not have to wait until later in the process.
E	Moved date for Mayor to give Council the budget from 120 days before end of fiscal year to 60 days. (Roughly from May 1 to March 1)	6.3.b	Wanted to give Council more time to study budget and take action. If the budget is voted earlier, that would also benefit FPS hiring.  Note: We kept the requirement that SC pass their budget 21 days earlier than that.
F	Strengthen language in the budget message to require information about how this budget aligns with the strategic blueprint.	6.4.a	
G	Shifted the budget’s public hearing requirement from finance	6.5.a 6.5.b	Budget decisions are one of the most important things Council does—important for

	subcommittee to whole council		whole Council to hear thoughts and for that to be at amore visible/expected time for the public
H	Requires the whole budget proposal to be placed online immediately and remain online in an easily accessible way.  Requires that the approved budget be posted online in an easily accessible way.	6.5.e	More transparency and ability of public to find key fiscal information
I	Deleted section on Allotments process	6.7 (deleted)	Collins Center consultants and the city's former CFO both noted that this feature is rarely found in Charters and can be cumbersome without great benefit.
J	Note the school committee role/responsibility in capital budget process	6.8.a	Clarity
K	Changed the Capital Budget process so that the capital improvement plan be approved by February 1 rather than within the operating budget in June	6.8.f	Both municipal and school dept suggest that this would help with locking in costs and starting work sooner, especially on school side with major work limited to summer
L	Noted the School Committee role in approval of contracts in their realm	6.10	Clarity
M	Added detail to SIFOC's role for capital projects, added their ability to name their own chair, and noted that they could be ad-hoc members of other committees	6.11	Much of this related to their suggestions. We wanted to further develop their role in government based on their suggestions as a new entity in Charter.

## Article VII: Elections and Election Related Matters

No changes

## Article VIII: Citizenship Participation Measures

	What	Where in article?	Why
A	Increased timed allow for signature gathering of initiative measures from 60 to 90 days	8.2.c	This process is meant to be a last resort, so it should be difficult, but did want to make it somewhat more possible if residents feel their voice is not being heard any other way.
B	Changed process so that if the council or school committee does not act on initiative in 30 days, it is considered <b><u>accepted, not rejected.</u></b>	8.2.d	This matches the process for appointments and is forces boards to react one way ro the other to resident demands. . Otherwise, a board to let an issue die simply by taking no action.

## Article IX:

	What	Where	Why
A	Notes that council can change Charter through defined MGL process	9.1	For clarity–this was a common confusion of the public and our committee during this process.
B	Changed Charter Review Process.  Clarifications to timing, who leads the first meeting, who can serve on it and more based on our experience.	9.5	Our hope is this allows the next Charter Review Committee to start their work and proceed from there smoothly  We also broadened who could serve on this committee in order to encourage more voices to participate in the process.
C	Added a list of transparency and accessibility language for Multi-Member bodies as well as Council and School Committee	9.7.e	Focus on public having an easier time finding info by having it one place, along with langage accessibility

D	Made the oath of office second business day in January	9.11	Based on a wide range of feedback about the challenges of Inauguration day on January 1.
E	Gave school committee ten days to organize after inauguration day.	9.11	Avoid Gov channel and clerk having to be at a City Council and SC meeting at the same time.
F	Noted the limit on holding 2 elected offices at once within Framingham's government	9.13	Matches references in other parts of the Charter in Articles II and IV
G	Requires an analysis of parts of the charter that are not being followed	9.14	Matches reference in Article III
H	Clarifies SC role in naming school property, requires a public hearing before doing it.	9.19	This is current SC policy, but deserves enshrinement here.

**Article X:** Recommended removal of almost all of this since transition to city has happened Waiting for recommendation for Collins Center and City Solicitor about what needs to/should be kept.

### Non Binding Recommendations:

The following is a chart of non-binding recommendation topics for inclusion in our final report. The exact wording of the recommendations will change, but we wanted the public to have an easy way to see and comment on these before the public hearing if they desired.

Recommendation	Aimed towards	Notes
Examine election results in terms of district representation, size, and composition of council	Next Charter Review Committee	This relates to the poll we had about different council set ups, with ideas for how it might be structured to make sure it is geographically representative and that there aren't huge barriers to running for office.
Look at election participation and for possible ways to increase turnout as well	Mayor/Administration and Council	This might include structures like preliminary elections thresholds

<p>as number of candidates</p>		<p>and signature requirements, but could also look at things like Ranked Choice voting.</p>
<p>Consider the feasibility as well as possible advantages and challenges of creating of a separate Traffic department</p>	<p>Mayor/Administration</p>	<p>This was a request of Police Chief that we didn't feel expert enough to strongly recommend but may be worth exploring more closely.</p>
<p>Write a simplified "Charter for Dummies" to explain different parts and rules for the government to the public.</p>	<p>Mayor/Administration</p>	<p>Part of the feedback from the public was that it is hard for an average person to know how government works. This is one way to help address this. There could also be brief "video explainers" in different languages.</p>
<p>Investigate the possibility and potential advantage of creating a "participatory budgeting process" for a set of funds.</p> <p>Participatory Budgeting is defined as, "a democratic process that empowers community members to decide how to spend part of a public budget"</p>	<p>Mayor/Administration City Council</p>	<p>This is an idea that has gained some traction in bigger cities recently to give residents much more direct power in choosing projects of importance to fund.</p> <p>Cambridge has the most experience with this. One can see information about their most recent version of the <a href="#">process here</a>.</p>
<p>The city should push aggressively to ensure that a much fiscal information is online and in as easy a manner for the public to access as possible</p> <p>This could happen several ways, including but not limited to:</p> <p>Creating an online transparency portal maintained on the city's website that has s information updated at least quarterly such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● payroll by employee including annual salary, regular and overtime payments year to date</li> <li>● vendor payments, and vendor contracts awarded</li> <li>● Tax credits awarded by recipient</li> <li>● retirement payments by retiree</li> </ul>	<p>Mayor/Administration</p>	<p>This is an area the city is already working towards with their efforts to use "open checkbook" or similar software to get information online. Nevertheless, we wish to stress its importance formally</p> <p>This is all important information for the community to have about how tax dollars are being spent as well as future issues facing Framingham that need attention/planning.</p>

<p>And these items updated at least yearly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the balance of unfunded liabilities, including pensions, and other post employment benefits</li> <li>● Collective bargaining and host community agreements</li> </ul> <p>City Council could revisit and strengthen any existing ordinances that deal with fiscal reporting online.</p> <p>Lastly, the Mayor and Council could consider forming a new “transparency committee” with this explicit charge, or putting this responsibility of SIFOC if that seemed best.</p> <p>The committee does note that while this work is complimentary to the work of the Finance Subcommittee, we believe that they already have a great deal of work to do, and that any such committee should have representatives appointed by the municipal and school sides of Framinghm</p>		
---	--	--



