

## MEMORANDUM

To: Natick Select Board  
From: Carol Gloff, Chair, Town Governance Study Committee  
Re: Study Committee Report  
Date: July 19, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the first quarterly update to the Select Board, appointing authority for the Town Governance Study Committee (“TGSC”).

The TGSC has met on April 4, April 11, May 4, May 16, May 23, June 9 and July 13. At its first meeting the committee elected Carol Gloff as Chair, Matt Brand as Vice Chair, and Joshua Ostroff as Clerk. The committee has created a web page at <https://sites.google.com/natickma.org/tgsc> (which provides basic information about the committee, including agendas and meeting minutes, and will be built out in the coming months) and an email address at [naticktowngovernance@gmail.com](mailto:naticktowngovernance@gmail.com).

Early in our process, we sought the perspective of the Collins Center at UMass-Boston to gain insight into the municipal process of considering, and potentially changing forms of local government. Michael Ward of the Collins Center provided helpful perspective, and from that discussion the TGSC decided to undertake stakeholder interviews to better understand what specific problems Natick is seeking to solve in our governance structure or process, prior to considering solutions.

Subsequently, committee members have conducted over 30 interviews, seeking answers to these questions:

1. Do you have experience working/serving in other communities? If yes, how many and what was your role in each?
2. In your opinion, what aspects of our form of town government and governance work well?
3. What aspects of our form of town government structure and governance are not working well or could be improved? (Our committee has not been asked to focus on budget or staff limitations.)

4. Are these problems/limitations related to authorities of personnel/boards, are they due to inefficiencies, or are there other reasons?
5. What are your ideas for how could these could be improved/reformed? What changes would you propose?
6. What do you feel strongly should NOT be changed?
7. Are there other areas that you think the study committee should specifically address (even if you don't have solutions in mind)?
8. What else does the committee need to know?

While additional stakeholder interviews are ongoing, we are now in the process of looking for themes and unique viewpoints among the responses, after which we will be in a better position to consider potential next steps.

In addition, we provided an insert (attached for reference) with recent tax bills to alert residents to the TGSC, and to offer interested residents the opportunity to connect with the committee so that we can engage with them when we get into concerted public outreach. As of July 18, 27 residents have expressed interest in connecting with the committee. We are also planning outreach to Town Meeting members, likely through a survey.

One helpful piece of advice offered by Mr. Ward concerned the two processes through which a municipality can change its charter (exclusive of the amendment process through which Natick periodically makes technical charter changes). The following summary of these processes is excerpted from the committee's meeting minutes of May 4, 2022:

*The first uses a charter commission under Chapter 43B requiring signatures of 15% of voters, leading to an election to create a charter commission, and of 9 people to serve. The commission has 16 months to produce a preliminary report, then another 2 months for a final report. The Attorney General will review the report between months 16 and 17, and may require adjustments. They must hold two (or more) public forums, then their proposal goes on the next municipal election ballot.*

*The second option is to use a Special Act. A committee could draft a new or revised charter, on any timeframe, and ask the Select Board to submit it to Town Meeting as a Home Rule petition, which if*

*approved by a majority of Town Meeting would then be filed with the legislature, and once enacted it goes to the voters for approval.*

The second alternative could use a committee such as the TGSC, if there was a consensus to undertake a charter change (which is not to represent the views of any committee members). This is a more expeditious path to voter approval, but comes with its own challenges.

It is the committee's understanding that we may have access to consulting services, whether through the Collins Center or elsewhere. We are likely to request the use of such consulting services as we move from identifying the problems to finding possible solutions.

We look forward to continuing our work and will update the Select Board as we move forward. We are aware of the target end-of-calendar-year completion date and although we may not be able to complete our work by then, at this time we are not asking for a formal extension.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Town.

Submitted on behalf of TGSC members:

Carol Gloff, Chair  
Matt Brand, Vice Chair  
Josh Ostroff, Clerk  
Sue Salamoff, Ex-Officio  
Michael Avitzur  
Tony Lista  
Daniel Sullivan  
Lisa Tabenkin  
Hillary Truslow  
Linda Wollschlager

Attachment:

- July 2022 tax bill insert



# Important Messages from the Town of Natick

## NATICK TOWN GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE

The Natick Select Board recently appointed the Natick Town Governance Study Committee (TGSC).

**WHY?** Natick adopted its current charter in 1980 and much has changed since then. The Select Board recently decided it's time to take a fresh look at our local governing documents, and the structure and processes we follow for decision-making, responsibility and accountability, particularly considering the challenges and opportunities Natick is likely to encounter in the years to come. And so, the Natick TGSC was created, and members appointed earlier in 2022.

**WHAT IS BEING DONE?** The committee has begun interviewing town staff and committee leaders. We are also developing a website for the public to learn more about our work. You may view the website at <https://sites.google.com/natickma.org/tgsc>.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?** One of the responsibilities of the TGSC is to identify strengths and weaknesses in Natick's current government. What is working well? What could be improved?

If you are interested in providing feedback to the committee, we look forward to talking with you! Please let us know if you would like to provide input, so that we can make sure to reach out to you in the near future.

Please provide your name, address, phone number and email address by one of the following methods.

- Send an email to [naticktowngovernance@gmail.com](mailto:naticktowngovernance@gmail.com);
- Or, send a letter to:  

Town Governance Study Committee  
c/o Town Administrator's Office  
Natick Town Hall  
13 East Central Street  
Natick, MA 01760;
- Or, call 508-960-9339 and leave a message (this phone number is for voice mail only).

Thank you in advance for your interest in our town government.

### The Natick Town Governance Study Committee

Michael Avitzur  
Matt Brand, Vice Chair  
Carol Gloff, Chair  
Tony Lista

Josh Ostroff, Clerk  
Sue Salamoff, ex officio  
Dan Sullivan

Lisa Tabenkin  
Hillary Truslow  
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