

**Town Government Study Committee
Community Forum**

**Local Government 101:
Choices for Natick**

April 10, 2023

Natick's Form of Government

Executive Branch

- Select Board + Town Administrator

Legislative Branch

- Representative Town Meeting

Town Governance Study Committee and Charter & By-law Review Committee – Why Two Committees?

Town Governance Study Committee

- Appointed by Select Board, Natick's Executive Branch
- Studying Natick's government and governance and providing recommendations to Select Board

Charter & By-law Review Committee

- Required periodically under Town Charter
- Committee of Legislative Branch, appointed by Town Moderator
- Reviews Charter and By-laws in detail and proposes changes to Town Meeting
- [Charter & By-law Review Committee page on Town website](#)

Town Governance Study Committee

Established by the Select Board in 2022

- Review the efficacy of the town's current organizational structure, including the form of government and by-laws and provide recommendations to the Select Board. The committee shall:
 - Study the town's form of government and governance
 - Examine models of government in comparable communities
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses in Natick's current government, and recommend any amendments to the charter, bylaws, and governing practices so as to improve the town's form of government and governance
- 👉 Facilitate public engagement on, and the public's discussion of the committee's work.

Committee Activities

1. **Interviews** with stakeholders most involved in Town government
2. **Survey** of Town Meeting members, staff, committee volunteers
3. Procurement of **consultant**
4. **Research** local government structure
5. Discussion of **structural/operational issues**
6. **Reports** to the Select Board
7. **Community forum and obtain public input**
8. **Final report/recommendations**

Town Governance Study Committee Web Site

- <https://sites.google.com/natickma.org/tgsc/>
- Committee charge and background
- Information resources
- Agendas, minutes, recordings
- Committee work product

Massachusetts Forms of Government and Procedures for Modifying Local Charters

Natick Town Governance Study Committee

Community Forum

April 10, 2023



COMMUNITY PARADIGM ASSOCIATES, LLC



Presentation Overview

Recap Forms of Government in Massachusetts

- General terminology
- Four Basic Forms
- Review of trends and current status

Methods for Charter Changes

Evolution of Massachusetts Municipal Government

- 351 Cities and Towns
- Subdivisions of the Commonwealth
- City of Boston (1821)
- Representative Town Meeting (1915 and 1934)
- Increased Complexities and Responsibilities
 - Elected Boards and Commissions (Long Ballot)
- Professionalized Government and Short Ballot
- Special Acts of Legislature and Plans
- Home Rule Amendment to MA Constitution (1966)

Professional Municipal Management

- 100+ Year History
- 75% of communities nationally have a chief appointed official
- Norwood 1st in Massachusetts (1915)
- Basic Principles
 - Non-political
 - Experience and education
 - Code of Ethics

Professional Municipal Management

- Scope of Responsibility Varies by Community
 - Hiring and Employee Relations
 - Budget Development
 - Re-organization
 - Day-to-day Direction
- Different Titles:
 - City Manager or Town Manager
 - Town Administrator
 - Town Coordinator
 - General Manager
 - Executive Director

Elements of Government Form

- Legislative Function
- Executive Function

Four Basic Forms

Open Town Meeting
with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Representative Town
Meeting with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Elected Mayor

Open Town Meeting
with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Representative Town
Meeting with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Elected Mayor

Open Town Meeting with Select Board and Professional Management

Legislative Function

- Town Meeting open to all registered voters

Executive Function

- Select Board: 3 or 5 Members
- In most cases a municipal administrator/manager
 - 38 communities operate without a municipal professional. Usually very small and likely Open Town Meeting
- Diffused authority in these communities

Open Town Meeting
with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Representative Town
Meeting with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Elected Mayor

Representative Town Meeting with Select Board and Professional Management

32 Communities

Legislative Function

- Town Meeting Representatives elected by voters
- 50-432 Members

Executive Function

- Select Board: 3, 5 or 7* Members
 - Generally clear policy-making role
- A professional municipal administrator/manager
 - Varying levels of authority and responsibility

Open Town Meeting
with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Representative Town
Meeting with Board of
Selectmen and
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Professional
Management

Elected Council with
Elected Mayor

Council - Manager Form

15 Communities

- Most common form in US (48.2%)
- Uncommon in New England

Legislative Function

- Town/City Council
 - 7-13 Members
 - District and/or At-Large

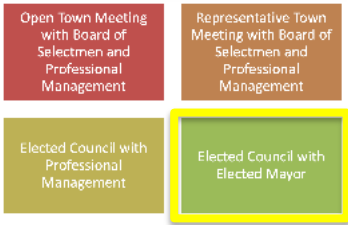
Executive Function

- Professional Town or City Manager
- Authority/responsibility varies in communities
 - Appointment authority
 - Budget authority
 - Day-to-day administration

Town/City Council (12 municipalities)

Home Rule or Special Act Charters

Council-Manager	Adopted	Pop.	CEO Title	Council Size
North Attleborough	2019	28,712	Town Manager	9
Amherst	2018	37,819	Town Manager	13
East Longmeadow	2016	15,720	Town Manager	7
Bridgewater	2011	26,563	Town Manager	9
Randolph	2009	32,112	Town Manager	9
Winthrop	2005	17,497	Town Manager	9
Palmer	2004	12,140	Town Manager	7
Chelsea	1994	35,177	City Manager	11
Barnstable	1989	45,193	Town Manager	13
Watertown	1980	31,915	City Manager	9
Franklin	1978	31,634	Town Administrator	9
Southbridge	1974	16,719	Town Manager	9



Council - Mayor Form

44 Communities

Legislative Function

- City Council
 - 9-24 Members
 - District and at-Large

Executive Function

- Politically elected Mayor
- Authority/responsibility varies in communities
 - Appointment authority
 - Budget authority

Local Government Charters

- Designed to establish greater home rule
 - Meet local needs and values
- Not static documents but evolve with changing needs
- Three methods of change
 - Elected Charter Commission and local election vote
 - More minor changes can be done through 2/3rds vote of Town Meeting- Public Hearing and local election vote. Must be approved by Attorney General.
 - Special Act by Legislature after Town Meeting vote
- Natick's current Charter -- created by elected Charter Commission and approved by voters in 1980; relatively minor changes since then.

What Have We Learned?

- Stakeholder interviews
- TM member/staff/volunteer survey

Most Common Likes

- Town Meeting
 - Opportunity for all to be heard
 - Efficiency is much improved recently
- Quality and breadth of services
- Engagement, communication and transparency
- Cross-board and inter-department collaboration
- Professional staff knowledgeable and good at what they do
- Select Board members accessible

Most Common Dislikes

- Town Meeting
 - Needs improved efficiency
 - Too large, lacks diversity
 - Members do not represent their precincts
 - TM members should be better informed & more engaged
- Government slow and inefficient
- Communication (to public, among dept. heads/staff)
- Financial management/budget process
- Senior staff authority too limited, not well defined

Questions and Comments

What's Next?

- [Public Survey](#)
 - Tell us what you think about our form of government!
 - What are your questions, ideas and concerns?
 - Participate by May 5, 2023
- Ongoing committee work to develop recommendations to the Select Board
- Final Committee Report

Town Government Study Committee

Thank You!

Town Government Study Committee

Local Government 101: Choices for Natick *Supplemental Slides*

City Council/City Manager (3 municipalities) Massachusetts Plan E Form

Council/Manager	Adopted	Population	CEO Title	Council Size
Cambridge	1942	105,162	City Manager	9
Lowell	1944	106,519	City Manager	11
Worcester	1950	181,045	City Manager	11

Recent Council-Mayor Form (9 municipalities)

Council-Mayor	Year	Pop.	Council Size
Framingham	2017	70,856	13
Braintree	2008	37,414	9
Greenfield	2003	17,521	13
West Springfield	2000	28,624	13
Weymouth	1999	55,747	11
Amesbury	1996	17,294	9
Easthampton	1996	16,054	9
Methuen	1994	49,205	9
Agawam	1989	28,728	11