

Amesbury

Mayor Cassandra Gove

Office of the Mayor
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February 1, 2021

Matt Einson, President
Amesbury City Council
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

RE: Order 2021-023 -- An Order Authorizing Submission of a Home Rule Petition by the Mayor to the Governor and General Court Seeking Approval of Changes to the City's Home Rule Charter

Dear President Einson and Members of the Amesbury City Council:

Every 10 years we are tasked with doing a review of our City Charter to ensure it reflects our community, our practices and our policies as best as possible. The Charter Review Commission was supposed to be appointed and meet in 2018, but as this never happened, I re-established the Commission, accepted volunteer applications and appointed seven members in April 2020.

The Commission met on fourteen separate occasions between June and December 2020, and with support from the Collins Center at UMass Boston and my Chief of Staff, Paul Fahey, reviewed the Charter in detail. They conducted a community survey and held a public hearing to receive feedback about possible changes. I want to offer my congratulations and thanks to the members of the Charter Review Commission for their hard work in the last year.

Their final report, included in Order 2021-023, provides you with recommendations for consideration to be presented to the Massachusetts Legislature and Governor, and ultimately to the voters of Amesbury for approval. As you review their recommended changes, I would appreciate the opportunity to provide my feedback for consideration as well.

I am in support of the vast majority of changes being proposed. The Commission utilized regional and state data as well as community feedback to make these recommendations, and I believe that our community will benefit from them. As an example, I agree with the Commission's recommendations to change the term of the office of Mayor from two (2) to four (4) years, which would take effect in November 2023 if approved by the voters in November 2021. A four-year term for Mayor is typical for a majority of Massachusetts cities, and allows time to make real, positive change for a community, and ensure a more effective, efficient, and responsive government in the long term.

I respectfully disagree with one change the Commission has proposed; I believe strongly that the Mayor should remain Chair of the School Committee. This link between the municipal and

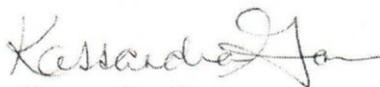
school sides of City government is essential to ensure some degree of continuity between the two. Given that the Superintendent does not report to the Mayor, having a solid working relationship between the two roles and with the School Committee is even more important to ensure strong communication and collaboration between the School Department and the City. Speaking from personal experience, I know how important this connection was in 2020 as Amesbury faced a pandemic (and the associated challenges to the School Department), a fiscal crisis, and the departure of the Superintendent of Schools.

One change which the Commission considered and did not recommend is to change the Planning Board from an elected to an appointed board. I strongly believe that this change should be made. Oftentimes, as elected officials and with no accountability to City government or visioning, the Planning Board feels disconnected. One of the reasons I ran for office was to create a clear and transparent process for development in Amesbury. We have been told by business owners and developers that our community is not as business-friendly as it should be, and we have work to do to ensure we are moving forward together with one plan. As appointed officials, the Planning Board can continue to bring a diverse set of experiences and skills, while also working together and with City leadership to make progress. For example, we should be working together on diversifying our tax base, with more commercial and industrial development, in order to reduce the tax burden on our residential property owners. I would like to see the Planning Board welcome the same level of cooperation and collaboration with City staff that our other appointed boards have, and make more of a positive impact on our community as a whole.

The City Charter is just one document which helps us govern effectively for our community, and I believe these necessary updates will continue to move us in the right direction, but it cannot contain all of our guiding principles and policies. One issue that I would like to see addressed separately is our work on encouraging diversity and inclusiveness at all City levels. While not appropriate for the City Charter, I would like to work with you to make progress on this item, particularly on encouraging diversity and equity training for elected and appointed officials. I believe that creating a culture of training and growth, which includes staff, elected and appointed officials, would be beneficial for all involved with the City, and our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration on the recommendations made and feedback given for our City Charter. I would like to thank again the members of the Charter Review Commission for their time spent on this endeavor, and I look forward to working with you in 2021 to complete this process.

Sincerely,



Kassandra Gove

Mayor



Amesbury

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02/01/2021

Dear City Council Members:

Below is a brief description of the changes being proposed for the Amesbury City Charter as part of City Council Bill 2021-023. These changes have come as a result of extensive deliberation and review by the Amesbury Charter Review Commission (at approximately 14 public meetings occurring from June through December of 2020, as well as hours of professional consultation with the Collins Center at UMass Boston). Please note: the list below is intended simply as a high-level overview/ executive summary; it is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Proposed Formatting Changes/Corrections

- Fixed spelling errors throughout;
- Modified references from “Town” -> “City” as applicable;
- Modified references from “municipal” -> “city” as applicable;
- Changed sections from “Parts” to “Articles”
- Fixed capitalization, plurality and tense errors in several locations;
- Renamed the document and all references to it to “City of Amesbury Home Rule Charter” for consistency purposes;
- Increased the number of definitions under section 9-4.

Proposed Policy Changes

- Increase term of mayor from 2 -> 4 years;
- Removed prohibition on school committee member stipends;
- Removes the requirement that the mayor automatically serve as the chair of the School Committee/allows the committee to decide (mayor would remain a member of the SC regardless);
- Standardizes the time by which appointments automatically take effect (21 days after submission), and also allows the council to approve sooner (if they so choose);
- Created waiver process to allow municipal employees to serve on unpaid, volunteer boards (only with explicit approval of Mayor and Council). similar language also added with respect to residency requirements for appointed boards, and adding a waiver process;
- Makes Housing Authority an appointed board rather than elected, in accordance with state law;

- Updated Citizen Participation Mechanism process, in particular with respect to the procedure used for Citizen Initiative Measures;
- Removed the Capital Improvements Program from the list of items precluded from the Citizen Initiative or Referendum process;

Note: two additional changes are also anticipated to be submitted separately as a result of subsequent discussions with the Collins Center after submission of the final Charter Review Commission recommendation. The applicable language is in relation to the liquor license commission and the Housing Authority.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Thank You,

Nicholas Wheeler
Chair – Amesbury Charter Review Commission

Housing Authority

Amend Section 2-3 as follows:

The mayor shall appoint all city officers, department heads, **4 members of the housing authority**, and members of boards, commissions, and committees for whom no other method of appointment or selection is provided by the charter, excepting only officials serving under the city council and school committee and persons appointed by state officials.

Include in special act:

Members of the housing authority in office at the time this act takes effect will complete the terms to which they were elected unless there is a sooner vacating of the office. Upon the completion of the term or a sooner vacating of office of the Housing Authority members elected in 2019, the mayor shall make 2 appointments to the Authority; the mayor shall subsequently appoint such members having the qualifications and serving for the terms as the general laws provide upon the completion of the terms of the remaining elected members or upon a sooner vacating of office by such members.

Amend Section 6-4 as follows: **Liquor Licensing Commission**

There shall be a board of **liquor** license commissioners which shall have the power to issue licenses for innholders or common victuallers, the powers of a licensing board appointed under General Laws chapter 138, section 4, and shall be the licensing authority for the purposes of General Laws chapters 138 and 140. The board shall have all powers with respect to other licenses for which the municipality has statutory and regulatory authority unless otherwise assigned to another municipal office or officer by general law, charter or ordinance. The board of licensing commissioners may grant licenses relating to alcoholic beverages under General Laws chapter 138 and those licenses under General Laws chapter 140 which are not, by the provisions of said chapter, placed within the jurisdiction of another municipal officer or agency by charter or ordinance. The board of license commissioners shall consist of five (5) residents appointed by the mayor. Such appointed members shall serve for three (3) year terms. No person while a member of the board of license commissioners shall have any financial interest, direct or indirect, in the sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages in any form. The city clerk, the inspector of buildings, the director of public health, the fire chief and the police chief (or persons performing similar duties under any other title) shall be advisory to the board of license commissioners. The mayor shall designate a chair, vice-chair and clerk from among the members. **The provisions of Section 3-9 of this charter shall not apply to the Liquor Licensing Commission.**



AMESBURY

CITY HALL
62 Friend Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

February 16, 2021

Council President Einson,

Thank you for accepting suggestions from the Council toward the City Council Bill 2021-023, "An Order authorizing submission of a Home Rule Petition by the Mayor to the Governor and General Court seeking approval of changes to the City's Home Rule Charter."

I recommend a change to Section 9-5 Board, Committee or Commission; Composition; Term of Office; In General. Where the current language states; "Except subcommittees of the city council and as otherwise provided by law or this charter, all boards, commissions and subcommittees shall consist of three or more members appointed by the mayor for term or three years each, so arranged that the term of one-third of the members, or as nearly the number as may be possible, shall expire each year." I propose the sentence end with, "...shall expire each year on February 28."

Together, the Mayor and City Council should make around 75 appointments each year, if all Boards, Committees and Commissions are full. I would like to plant a seed in the City Charter that the Mayor and Council could, after a Special Council meeting specifically held for appointments in February of each year, host a joint reception of appointees where various new and returning volunteer members of the community could have the opportunity to meet each other and Amesbury's elected officials and foster a culture of inclusion and relation within the whole. If it were convenient, the Oath of Office could be taken at such time as well.

There are other structural benefits to having all appointments expire on the same day each year which are self-evident; filling vacancies and tracking term expirations would be notably improved, and outreach efforts to attract new membership could be consolidated to a single season, instead of a year-round process.

I welcome your thoughts and feedback, thank you for your time.

Regards,

Adrienne Lennon
15 Belmont Street
Councilor-at-Large

Amesbury



City Councilor

Steven Stanganelli
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February 16, 2021

Proposed Change to the Charter to Provide for City Council review of Bond Measures

New Section Proposed

Section 5-3 Confirmation of Bond

Before the City encumbers a bond in excess of \$5 million, the Mayor shall submit to the City Council the details of the proposed bond for review. The Bond Indenture shall be effective twenty-days following the filing with the City Clerk unless the City Council, by a vote of two-thirds of its full membership, shall not approve the measure.

The bond limit shall be revised biannually to increase by an inflation adjustment and rounded up to the nearest whole multiple of \$100,000.