

Town of Natick - Town Governance Study Committee
Approved meeting minutes
April 10, 2023 7:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting – Dlott Meeting Room and Zoom

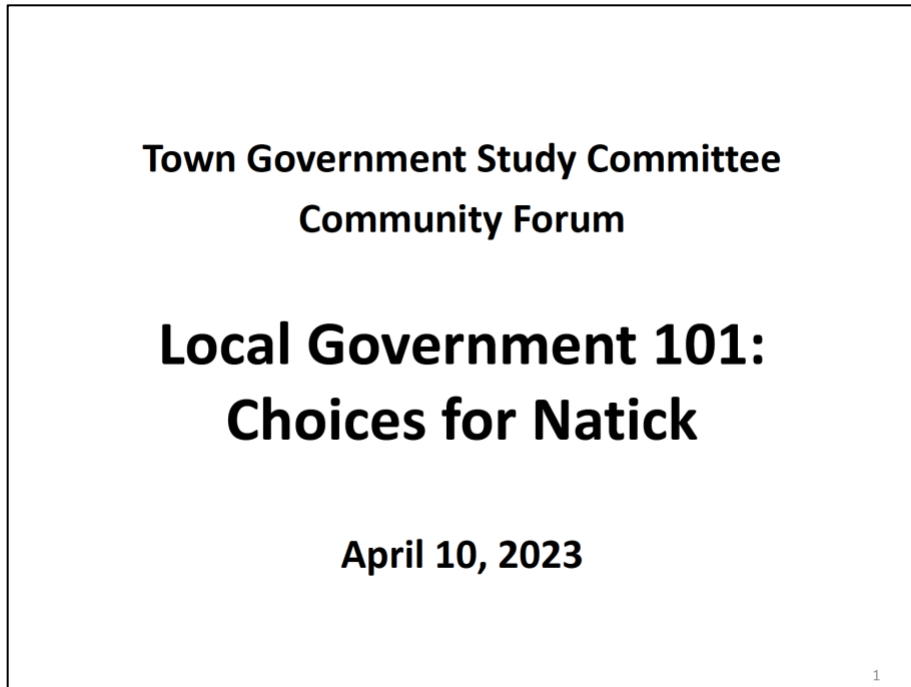
Members present: Carol Gloff (Chair), Linda Wollschlager, Hillary Truslow (remote), Michael Avitzur, Joshua Ostroff (Clerk), Dan Sullivan

Also present: Carl Valente, Bernie Lynch and John Petrin, all of Community Paradigm; members of the public and several town officials.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Gloff at 7:00 PM with reference to the regulations applicable to hybrid public meetings, followed by a roll call.

Public Forum

Carol introduced the topic of the forum. The presenters proceeded to deliver the presentation.



Carol described Natick’s current form of government.

Natick's Form of Government

Executive Branch

- Select Board + Town Administrator

Legislative Branch

- Representative Town Meeting

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Carol described the Charter and Bylaw Review Committee.

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](#)

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Matt then spoke about the Study Committee's charge.

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.

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Matt spoke about the committee's work to date.

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**

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Matt referenced the committee's [web page](#) and the information available thereon.

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

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Bernie went through a presentation on forms of government, local charters and the process by which they are amended.

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

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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)

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**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

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**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

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Elements of Government Form

- Legislative Function
- Executive Function

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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 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

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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

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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

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The diagram illustrates the structure of a Council - Mayor Form. It features a central title 'Council - Mayor Form' and three main functional areas: '44 Communities', 'Legislative Function', and 'Executive Function'. Each area is enclosed in a colored box with a corresponding border. The '44 Communities' box is red, the 'Legislative Function' box is brown, and the 'Executive Function' box is green. The 'Legislative Function' and 'Executive Function' boxes contain bulleted lists of details. In the top left corner, there are four small boxes representing different meeting formats: 'Open Town Meeting with Board of Selectmen and Professional Management' (red), 'Representative Town Meeting with Board of Selectmen and Professional Management' (brown), 'Elected Council with Professional Management' (green), and 'Elected Council with Elected Mayor' (yellow).

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

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The diagram illustrates the characteristics of Local Government Charters. It features a central title 'Local Government Charters' and a bulleted list of key points. The title is enclosed in a white box with a grey border. The list items are enclosed in a white box with a grey border. The background of the slide is white with a grey curved line on the left side.

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.

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Mike then described the committee's learning from our stakeholder interviews and survey.

What Have We Learned?

- Stakeholder interviews
- TM member/staff/volunteer survey

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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

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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

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Josh then led a Q&A session, which included public comment and questions about the committee's work and process.

Questions and Comments

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Josh then spoke to the committee's upcoming work, including a community survey due by March 5. Carol mentioned that the survey was available in paper at the Select Board office.

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

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[Town Government Study Committee](#)

Thank You!

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Several slides were prepared, but not used in the presentation. They are included for the public record.

Town Government Study Committee

Local Government 101: Choices for Natick
Supplemental Slides

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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

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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

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Matt moved to adjourn, seconded by Dan and unanimously voted by roll call at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Joshua Ostroff, Clerk