

Town of Stoughton
Charter Review Committee

Date: Monday, January 12, 2026 Time 7:45 p.m.

This meeting will be held in-person in the Fitzpatrick Room on the 1st floor of Stoughton Town Hall with a remote option. The Google Meet Link is available below. If available this meeting may be recorded for future re-broadcast via SMAC.

Charter Review Committee Google Meet Link:

<https://meet.google.com/muk-oxqb-dmb>, PIN: 222 487 177#

Agenda

Meeting agendas and minutes will be available through the Town's website at: [Stoughton.org](https://stoughton.org) and on the Charter Review Committee page at: <https://stoughton.org/409/Charter-Review-Committee>.

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Review of Charter Review Committee Minutes for the November 17, 2025 Meeting – Appendix A
4. Review of Charter Review Committee Minutes for the December 1, 2025 Meeting – Appendix B
5. Citizen Requests/Comments (2 minutes per person)
6. Committee Members Comments
7. Discussion of Town Counsel's response to proposed ballot instructions, if any
8. Discussion of need for Quorum definition in Charter
9. Discussion of §C8-2 Preliminary elections – Appendix C
10. Adjourn

APPENDIX A

Town of Stoughton
Charter Review Committee Meeting
November 17 2025, 7:30pm

Role	Name	Attendance
Pct 1 Rep	Sandra Sousa	<i>Absent</i>
Pct 2 Rep	Larry Sauer	Present
Pct 3 Rep	Liz Leiber	<i>Absent</i>
Pct 4 Rep	Amy Puliafico	Present
Pct 5 Rep	Lindsay Weber	<i>Absent</i>
Pct 7 Rep	Robin Zoll	Present
Pct 8 Rep	Micheal Hardman	Present
Deputy Moderator	Carmel Drewes	Present
Moderator Appointee	John Perry	Present
Muni Regs Rep	<i>Vacant</i>	n/a

- **Non-committee members attending:** David Lurie

Committee Reorganization:

The following people were voted in unanimously for the coming year:

- Chair: Amy Puliafico
- Vice-Chair: Larry Sauer
- Clerk: Carmel Drewes

Citizen Comment: David Lurie

- David suggested changing text in Chapters 7–14 Town Meeting Standing Committees, specifically Section B1, Paragraph 5: Committee on finance and Taxation. Suggested changing “may” to “shall” regarding the committee appointing sub-committees.
- David stated that this allows for review of town departments and prepares future leaders for how to run meetings, e.g. becoming familiar with open meeting law. David wants to

restore the tradition of having subcommittees (which was in place before 2020 but stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic).

- Amy asked for examples of what the sub committees did. David stated that there was standard list of 8 sub committees, including: Joint/Shared Expenses, School, Police, Fire, Dept. of Public Works.
- When asked about why the sub-committees haven't resumed, David reported a sense that people are not wanting to do the extra work (both on the town side and Finance Committee side). He expressed an opinion that Fin Com is not doing deep work without the sub committees. He stated that it is difficult to do the deeper work within the larger Fin Com meetings.
- Amy clarified that the people who would be affected need to attend a Charter Review Committee meeting to discuss. Committee members discussed and agreed to invite the Finance Committee members, with strong suggestion that the FinCom Chair and Vice-chair attend.
- David provided his email address to be kept apprised of future Charter Review Committee meetings that will address this issue: Dave.m.lurie@gmail.com
- David also noted that meeting agendas and minutes for the Charter Review Committee have been difficult to find. Amy informed everyone that she submitted a years worth of meeting minutes recently.
- David requests that more information about proposed charter changes be shared and that public hearings be held to learn about them.

New Topics to Address this Year:

- Carmel: Suggests returning to the quorum issue that was brought up last year, too late to be considered for the proposed charter changes at Annual Town Meeting 2025. The issue is that there has been some confusion in practice because the charter doesn't explicitly specify whether quorum (for Town Meeting or committee meetings) is based on the number of possible seats, or the number of filled seats. i.e. there are 168 potential Town Meeting seats. If only 160 of them are filled in a given year, is quorum count based on 168 or 160?
- Robin: Suggests considering getting rid of the preliminary election clause in the charter in order to not have the signature deadlines so early. Amy stated that anything with elections has to be done by a Charter Commission not Charter Review. Robin stated that this change was previously proposed to Town Meeting but was voted down. She stated that the current practice presents a barrier to voting. Amy will check with Town Council about whether this is something this committee can review. John read through the text of section: Chapter 8, Section 2, which addresses this. Larry stated that the last time this section was amended (2009) there wasn't a Charter Commission. Amy will look for old Town Meeting warrants at library.

March 10, 2025 Minutes: Approved

- Larry: yes
- Amy: yes
- Robin: abstain
- Michael: yes

- Carmel: yes
- John: yes

Review the proposed ballot instructions for charter changes (to appear on the spring 2026 municipal ballot)

- Proposed to add language “to remove the Town Manager if not under contract” bullet point #1.
- John expressed concern that voters may be overwhelmed by all the language in the description of the yes vote. He noted that people may be concerned about making changes to the charter if they aren’t familiar with the context. Carmel suggested perhaps adding language in the introduction that clarifies that these are not massive changes to how things function, they are to clarify and bring things to match current practices. Amy suggested adding language to note that the changes were approved by Annual Town Meeting 2025, noting that they are to add clarification to the charter.
- Proposed language: “A yes vote would make changes to the Stoughton Town Charter as approved by the 2025 Town Meeting. The goal of these changes is to update the charter to current practices and add clarification including but not limited to.... “
- Larry moved to send the bolded changes above to Town Council, John seconded
- Voice Votes:
 - Larry: yes
 - Amy: yes
 - Robin: yes
 - Michael: yes
 - Carmel: yes
 - John: yes

Next Meeting date: Monday December 1, 8:00pm, in person with online option

Carmel move to adjourn, Larry second, in favor: all, no opposed

APPENDIX B

Town of Stoughton

Charter Review Committee Minutes

Monday, December 1, 2025 8:00 p.m.

Charter Review Committee Google Meet Link:

<https://meet.google.com/mqb-rurr-dwq> PIN: 140 020 180#

Agenda

Meeting agendas and minutes will be available through the Town's website at: [Stoughton.org](https://stoughton.org) and on the Charter Review Committee page at: <https://stoughton.org/409/Charter-Review-Committee>.

1. Call to order

Role	Name	Attendance
Pct 1 Rep	Sandra Sousa	Present
Pct 2 Rep	Larry Sauer	Present
Pct 3 Rep	Liz Leiber	<i>Absent</i>
Pct 4 Rep	Amy Puliafico	Present
Pct 5 Rep	Lindsay Weber	<i>Absent</i>
Pct 7 Rep	Robin Zoll	Present
Pct 8 Rep	Micheal Hardman	Present
Deputy Moderator	Carmel Drewes	Present
Moderator Appointee	John Perry	Present
Muni Regs Rep	<i>Vacant</i>	n/a

- **Non-Committee Members Present:** Carolyn Campbell (Finance Committee Chair), Rebecca Markson (Finance Committee Vice-Chair), David Laurie

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Citizen Requests/Comments (2 minutes per person)

- All non-committee members present are here to speak on the proposed change in section 6.

4. Committee Members Comments

- Robin found the 2009 Town of Stoughton Warrant Article adding §C8-2 on Preliminary Elections. Amy will provide it with the next Agenda to be discussed at the next meeting.

5. Discussion of Town Counsel's response to proposed ballot instructions, if any

- Amy reported that no response has been received from Town Council yet.

6. Review of Article 7-14(B)(1) Committee on Finance and Taxation– Appendix A

- Amy provided the list of six sub-committees that used to exist: (1) Joint Town / Education Services; (2) Public Works / Water-Sewer Enterprise Accounts; (3) General Government; (4) Human Services, Culture, and Recreation; (5) Public Safety; (6) Education and Regional Schools.
- Carolyn expressed concern that making this a requirement would take away the discretion of each Finance Committee. She also noted that there are many changes that have happened within municipal government that have made the sub-committees obsolete. She noted that the financial budgeting process is now presented by the Select Board and the Town Manager, rather than by the department heads, as had been practiced in the past. Additionally, she noted that with modernization of information and records, it is easier for Fin Com members to access information needed to understand the components of the budget. She expressed concern about the amount of time that this would add to Finance Committee members and to town employees. She noted that the regular Finance Committee meetings take much of the month of March, sub committees would add even more time. Carolyn advocated for each Finance Committee chair to have the discretion to decide which sub-committees are important in any given year,
- Carmel asked if sub-committees have been discussed within the committee during the past few years when there weren't sub-committees. Carolyn stated that it hasn't been a topic of formal committee discussion in the past couple years, but suggested that informal conversations about them have happened amongst some members. She noted again that in the time she has recently been on the committee, she has not found there to be a lack of information provided during standard Finance Committee meetings/hearings.
- Amy asked about the schedule and timeline for Fin Com reviewing the budget and other articles. Carolyn stated that they expect to have the budget by the middle or end of January, then start public hearings at the end of February. She noted that they have to abide by meeting laws to inform the public of hearings, and also that they avoid February school vacation week. She stated that they have space reserved Monday, Wednesday, Thursday through the end of March for Standing Committee meetings, with Finance Committee planning to be Wednesday and Thursday. She reported that the Fin Com report has to be provided to Town Meeting members at least two weeks before the first day of Annual Town Meeting (first Monday in May).
- Michael asked for clarification regarding how the sub-committees became obsolete and whether that was because the Town Manager took over creating and submitting the departmental budgets. Carolyn reiterated that this was one component, and also the

greater access to information. She noted that there is no longer internal argument between department heads as to how the budget should be allocated since it is more centralized through the Town Manager now.

- Amy asked whether all Fin Com members were required to be on sub-committees in the past. Carolyn stated that when she was on Fin Com in the past (approximately 20 years ago), every member was on a sub-committee, except the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- David stated that he brought forward this proposed change to the charter. He stated that the sub-committees are only about the budget, not about other articles. He stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was the reason the sub-committees stopped. David noted that since there are only the general Fin Com meetings, the department chairs have to attend the general meetings when, in theory, they wouldn't have to if they had met in sub-committee meetings. Amy asked whether that was standard when the sub-committees existed; David stated that no, they still attended the general meetings, but they theoretically wouldn't have to. David spoke about how the sub-committees contribute to checks and balances within town government. He stated that the sub-committees help Fin Com members understand the departments better, which helps prevent rubber-stamping the budget. David spoke about the importance of training for new Fin Com members and how the sub-committees contributed to that. He spoke about the complexity of the school budget and how difficult that is to understand without the sub-committee's depth of understanding.
- Amy expressed concern about micromanaging one committee via the Town Charter. She expressed concern for this setting a precedent for Town Meeting dictating how other committees run their meetings. David responded that how the sub-committees would be organized would be at the discretion of the Fin Com chair and argued that it is not that much work to have sub-committees because they often met only once with their department or topic area.
- Larry asked whether this change would mandate certain sub-committees. David stated that the specific sub-committees would be up to the Fin Com chair. He noted that the list of previous committees isn't mandated, it is what has happened in the past.
- Carolyn expressed concern that it has been suggested that the Finance Committee is rubber-stamping things. She noted that if the Fin Com chair is mandated to have sub-committees but there is no mandate for how those committees are structured, it is not helpful and is micromanaging something that may not even be an issue in certain years. She stated that even with sub-committees, department heads and school representatives would still be expected to attend public hearings in order to answer questions from the committee. She noted that that would still be expected even if sub-committees had met. She reiterated that her biggest concern about this is taking away the discretion of the Fin Com chair. She noted that there should be discretion about how to educate new members of the committee. She stated that she has not planned to have sub-committees this year and that if current Fin Com members are interested in them, that is something they would discuss within the committee. She advocated that the decisions remain within the committee, not be mandated by the charter. She noted that the charter does not require the Selectboard or School Committee to have sub-committees.
- David clarified that he doesn't have any problem with the department chairs attending public hearings. He expressed concern that Finance Committee members don't understand the content in the public hearings due to lack of sub-committees.

- Carolyn noted that the Selectboard requested last year that questions from Fin Com be directed through the Committee Chair to the Town Manager because there had been some problematic issues with Fin Com members directly approaching department heads. David stated that he agrees with that practice, but sub-committees would give even more information. Carolyn again expressed concern about sub-committees being mandated rather than being at the discretion of the chair and the committee members. She noted that if not all members are able to participate, then the value of the sub-committees diminishes.
- Amy checked in with the online attendees as to whether they had any questions or comments. John stated that he has no additional questions or comments. Sandra expressed concern about micromanaging any boards or committees via the Town Charter.
- Robin expressed concern that sub-committees could lead to people having a preference for the department or budget they had reviewed, and then not being as open to the budgets from other departments.
- Carmel expressed support for the Fin Com chair and members to have discretion over sub-committees. She noted that mandated sub-committee participation could present a barrier to participation in Fin Com. She stated that as long as sub-committees are possible, there doesn't seem to be a need for them to be mandated.
- Amy noted that since no other committees are required to have sub-committees, it doesn't seem appropriate to mandate them for Fin Com. She also expressed concern that if it is mandated but the sub-committees aren't specified, that allows for confusion.
- Larry asked whether anyone wants to make a motion that we propose this change. No one proposed this motion. Amy thanked Carolyn, Rebecca, and David for attending to speak on this issue.

7. Review of Quorum definition in Article 7

- Members of the committee discussed the confusion about this issue and whether or not the definition of quorum should be stated in the charter.
- Amy stated that she could find information about what constitutes a quorum in Black's Law Dictionary.
- The committee clarified the issues in question:
 - Are vacant seats included in the number of members? (e.g. If there are 10 seats on a committee but only 8 seats are filled, is half 5 or 4?)
 - Is quorum "half" or "half plus one"? (e.g. If there are 10 committee members, is quorum 5 to 6?)
 - How are odd numbers handled? (e.g. If there are 11 committee members, half is 5.5. In real people, is that 5 or 6?)
- Carmel suggested asking Town Council whether this is something we need to define in the charter or whether there is a standard definition that exists somewhere that we need to find and use. Larry stated that he searched Robert's Rules of Order and it doesn't have a clear definition.
- There was a question of whether we would be defining quorum for Town Meeting only, or all boards and committees in town. It was agreed upon that all boards and committees should follow the same protocol for defining quorum in order to reduce confusion.

- Amy will invite the Town Moderator, Town Clerk, Town Manager, and Selectboard to the next meeting. She will ask the Selectboard Chair whether she can contact Town Council to inquire about whether quorum should be defined in the charter.
- Larry suggested we check Town Meeting time for any definition of quorum. Carmel will do that.

8. Adjourn: Larry Moved, Robin seconded

Next meeting date Monday January 12, 7:45pm, in person and online.

With the remaining sections in Article 8 renumbered in sequence, or take any other action relative thereto, or take any other action relative thereto.

Current language:

APPENDIX C

§ C8-2. Preliminary elections.

Except for the election of Town Meeting Representatives, in the event that there are more than two candidates for each office to be filled, a preliminary election will be held twenty-eight days before the regular Town elections. The two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes will be eligible to run for that office and will be placed on the ballot for Town officers at the regular election. No preliminary election will be required for Town Meeting Representatives.

Estimated Savings: \$20,000.00

Petitioner: Board of Selectmen, 10 Pearl Street, Stoughton, MA
July 28, 2009
Requested by Town Clerk Cheryl A. Mooney

Article # _____ ID #3 Change of polling location - § C8-3. Polling places.

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Stoughton Town Charter, § C8-3, or take any other action relative thereto. Polling Places as it now reads:

§ C8-3. Polling places.

A polling place shall be made available in each of the precincts for all elections.

And substituting in its place the following:

§ C8-3. Polling place.

All voting for all precincts shall take place at the Stoughton High School.

Summary: Voting in one location will save setup costs of setting up all the polling locations as well as police details needed to be at each location. This also is a safety measure to protect the children of Stoughton. Voting for all precincts will take place at Stoughton High School. Senior/Council on Aging van will be available for voters to call for ride to polls at least 5 days before each election. State will be redistricting soon and some voters will be in different precincts. This will allow voters to stay in one place, but go to the correct precinct.

Estimated savings \$2,000.00

Petitioner: Board of Selectmen, 10 Pearl Street, Stoughton, MA
July 28, 2009
Requested by Town Clerk Cheryl A. Mooney

Article # _____ ID #4 Delete § C8-4. Nomination Papers; time of filing; signatures.

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Stoughton Town Charter, § C8-4. Nomination Papers; time of filing; signatures. as it now reads:

§ C8-4. Nomination Papers; time of filing; signatures.

Nomination papers for elected Town offices other than Town Meeting Representatives must be filed with the Board of Registrars thirty-five days prior to the date of the preliminary Town election and with the Town Clerk twenty-eight days prior to the date of the preliminary Town election and shall be signed by not less than one hundred registered voters of the Town, increased by one-fifth thereof. Nomination papers for the office of Town Meeting Representative must be filed with the Board of Registrars thirty-five days prior to the annual Town election and with the Town Clerk twenty-eight days prior to the annual Town election. Incumbents seeking re-election may designate only the word "re-election" on their nomination papers and on the ballot.

And substituting in its place the following:

§ C8-4. Nomination Papers; time of filing; signatures.

Nomination papers for elected Town offices other than Town Meeting Representatives must be filed with the Board of Registrars **and Town Clerk** ~~thirty-five~~ **forty-nine** days prior to the ~~date of the preliminary~~ **Annual** Town election ~~and with the Town Clerk twenty-eight days prior to the date of the preliminary Town election~~ and shall be signed by not less than one hundred registered voters of the Town, increased by one-fifth thereof. Nomination papers for the office of Town Meeting Representative must be filed with the Board of Registrars **and Town Clerk** ~~thirty-five~~ **forty-nine** days prior to the Annual Town election ~~and with the Town Clerk twenty-eight days prior to the annual Town election~~. Incumbents seeking re-election may designate only the word "re-election" on their nomination papers and on the ballot.

So it shall read as follows:

Nomination papers for elected Town offices other than Town Meeting Representatives must be filed with the Board of Registrars and Town Clerk forty-nine days prior to the Annual Town Election and shall be signed by not less than one hundred registered voters of the Town, increased by one-fifth thereof. Nomination papers for the office of Town Meeting Representative must be filed with the Board of Registrars and Town Clerk forty-nine days prior to the Annual Town Election. Incumbents seeking re-election may designate only the word "re-election" on their nomination papers and on the ballot.

Or take any other action relative thereto.

Petitioner: Board of Selectmen, 10 Pearl Street, Stoughton, MA
July 28, 2009
Requested by Town Clerk Cheryl A. Mooney

ARTICLE 59 ID 53

ON A STANDING COUNTED VOTE YES 93 NO 8 the town voted to **amend Article 8, Section 8-8 of the Charter** of the Town of Stoughton to **reduce the number of signatures required on nomination papers** for Town Meeting Representative and further to **establish a minimum number of write-in votes** required to elect a person to the office of Town Meeting Representative to read as follows (Proposed changed text underlined):

Section 1: Article 8, Section 8-8. Election of Town Meeting Representatives.

Nomination of candidates for town meeting representatives shall be from among the registered voters of the precinct. Nomination papers shall bear no political designation, and shall be signed by not less than fifteen qualified registered voters of the precinct in which the candidate resides to have the candidate's name to be placed on the ballot. No nomination papers will be valid in respect to any candidate to which this section applies, unless written acceptance is endorsed thereon or attached thereto. No person shall be elected to the office of town meeting representative by write-in votes, unless having received a minimum of twelve votes; and has signed, and returned within three days of issuance, an acceptance of notification of election issued by the Town Clerk or by the Board of Registrars of Voters.

Section 2: This amendment shall become effective 60 days after receiving a majority vote of approval by the voters of the town as set forth by the provisions of Mass. General Law, Chapter 43B, Sections 10 and 11.

Motion by Charles Large, Precinct 1 to adjourn the May 21, 2007 session of the Annual Town Meeting at 10:57 p.m. and reconvene on Wednesday, May 23, 2007 at the Stoughton High School Auditorium was seconded and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

2007 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SESSION OF MAY 23, 2007

Town Moderator Howard Hansen asked the Precinct Chairman to take a quorum count. With 95 Town Meeting Representatives present at the Stoughton High School Auditorium at 7:38 P.M., Moderator Hansen declared a quorum present and this session of the Adjourned Annual Town Meeting open.