

TOWN OF EAST LYME
EXPLANATORY INFORMATION ON
PROPOSED TOWN CHARTER REVISION BALLOT QUESTIONS
REFERENDUM DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2023

September, 2023

This explanatory text was prepared by the East Lyme Town Clerk and Town Attorney pursuant to Sec. 9-369b of the Connecticut General Statutes. As required by law, the text specifies the intent and purpose of each ballot question but does not advocate for either the approval or disapproval of any ballot question.

To East Lyme residents,

In 2022, the Board of Selectmen established the 2022 Charter Revision Commission, which has completed the work with which it was charged.

This explanatory text provides information on the proposed Charter revisions under consideration in a series of eleven (11) questions to be voted on at a public referendum to be held in conjunction with the municipal election on November 7. The ballot questions reflect the recommendations of the 2022 Charter Revision Commission which were approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Full copies of the Charter as revised with red-lined proposed changes are available at the Town Clerk's office and on the Town's website at: <https://eltownhall.com>.

The proposed Charter revisions are not final unless they are approved by the East Lyme voters on November 7. Each ballot question will be counted and implemented separately.

Below are the ballot questions and an explanation of the proposed changes. Each question will have a yes/no vote on the ballot.

1. Shall the town charter be amended to increase the First Selectman's term of office from two to four years?

The intent is to reduce campaigning time and increase time dedicated to the duties of the First Selectman.

2. Shall the town charter be amended to stagger and increase the Board of Selectmen terms of office from two to four years?

The intent of the increase in the Selectmen's term is the same as for the First Selectman. The intent of the "staggered board", whereby there would be no more than three open selectmen positions at any election, is to preserve institutional knowledge on the Board of Selectmen. After a transition, all Selectmen would be elected to four year terms.

3. Shall the town charter be amended so that the offices of Town Clerk and Tax Collector become hired administrative officers rather than elected officers?

The intent of this amendment is to reflect that certain professional credentials are required of both positions, to ensure compliance with those credential requirements by making them conditions of employment. The positions would become hired at the end of the current terms of office (December 1, 2025 unless a vacancy occurs sooner).

4. Shall the town charter be amended so that an appointee to a vacancy in an elective office serves the remainder of the term that was filled?

The intent of this amendment is to fill vacancies in a manner consistent with Secretary of the State's guidance and the majority of other towns.

5. Shall the town charter be amended to increase the price of real estate that may be purchased or sold upon the Board of Selectmen's authority and without town meeting approval, from \$10,000 to \$100,000?

The intent of the amendment is to reflect the present day value of the threshold set in 2009, when last revised. Approval by the Board of Finance is still required in all instances.

6. Shall the town charter be amended to provide for automatic approval of requests for special appropriations or transfers of funds if the Board of Finance fails to act on such requests within 30 days?

The intent of the amendment is to increase efficiency and the ability to act on urgent Town funding by eliminating delays if the Board of Finance fails to act within the required period.

7. Shall the town charter be amended to not require Board of Finance or Town Meeting approval of projects funded entirely by state, federal, or private grants that do not require an appropriation of town funds, unless acceptance of such grant would have an adverse impact on future operating budgets?

The intent of the amendment is to streamline the ability of the town to spend grant funds when appropriation of Town funds is not required.

8. Shall the town charter be amended to increase the Board of Selectmen's authority to make special appropriations, with Board of Finance approval, from \$10,000 to an aggregate of \$100,000 per town department in each fiscal year?

The intent of the amendment is to reflect the present day value of the threshold that was set in 1965. Approval by the Board of Finance is still required in all instances.

9. Shall the town charter be amended to substitute electronic and town website publication for newspaper publication as allowed by law?

The intent of the amendment is to anticipate future changes to the law on required publications which would have significant cost-savings for the town.

10. Shall all other proposed revisions be made to the town charter to update and be consistent with the remainder of the town charter, long-standing town practices, and Connecticut law?

The intent is to generally update and provide consistency across the charter. The proposed amendments include new sections on gender neutral terms and the purpose of the charter, reorganizing sections to provide greater clarity, updating Board and Agency names and duties and deleting abolished entities. The proposed amendments also reflect the long-standing practice of the Tax Assessor settling appeals resulting in payment to the Town of less than \$40,000, and deleting residency requirement for the Town Counsel, Dog Warden (now shared with Waterford and called Animal Control Officer) Building Official, Building Inspector (now regulated by state statute), and Fire Marshal.

11. Shall the town charter be amended to provide for the Board of Selectmen to consider charter review at intervals of a minimum of every ten years?

The intent of the amendment is to ensure periodic review of the charter and consideration of the need for charter revisions.