

Report on the June 2 Member Meeting

Date: June 13, 2024

On June 2 the LWVA held a Zoom meeting to review the Amherst Home Rule Charter Committee's recommendations. An interesting and productive discussion ensued, and the members agreed to support 16 of the Task Force's 20 recommendations, in some cases with minor revisions to wording. Below are the recommendations supported by the membership. All recommendations are based on advancement of one or more of the League's Good Government Principles.

CHARTER PREAMBLE

Develop and add a Preamble to the Amherst Home Rule Charter, outlining the Town's goals for good government, and including a mission and values statement. Such a statement, as appears in Charters of some other Massachusetts municipalities, could address Town goals on issues such as (but not limited to) affordable housing, racial equity, and climate change.

TOWN COUNCIL (ARTICLE 2)

1. Shorten the current period between election and inauguration of councilors to be no more than 3 weeks.
2. Lengthen and stagger terms for elected offices.
3. Provide each town councilor with an equal opportunity to have a voice and vote on Standing Council Committees.
4. Provide the Town Council with the power to hire its own legal counsel or analyst.
5. Require a second in order for a counselor to postpone discussion under Section 2.1

TOWN MANAGER (ARTICLE 3)

1. Delineate more clearly the powers of the Town Manager.
2. Require applications for seats on town committees and boards overseen by the Town Manager to be public records, with the consent of the applicant.

FINANCES (ARTICLE 7)

1. Require that resident members of the Finance Committee be granted the right to vote on committee decisions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ARTICLE 8)

1. Provide, at minimum, a period of public comment at the beginning of all regular Council, Standing Council Committees and multiple member bodies.

TRANSITION PROVISIONS (ARTICLE 10)

1. Include a recommitment to implement the 5 programs listed in Article 10, including with robust state legislative advocacy
 - a. Ranked Choice Voting
 - b. Participatory Budgeting
 - c. Creating a position of Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator
 - d. Permitting non-citizens to vote in town elections and to hold town elective office
 - e. Lowering the voting age for town elections

Consider new advocacy for:

2. Local elections in even numbered years to coincide with national elections.
3. Continued hybrid Council and virtual Council Committee meetings.
4. Allow, advocate for electronic signatures on all types of resident petitions under Section 8.

The LWVA'S "Good Government" Principles

1. **Widespread and inclusive** participation
2. **Diversity** in the community reflected in government
3. **Openness** and full disclosure
4. **Checks and balances** of power among the executive, legislative and administrative branches of government and the electorate
5. **Honesty and non-corruptibility** in all decision-making
6. **Efficiency**, based on professional management and timely decision making
7. **Accountability** for political and fiscal decisions