

ORLEANS CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS FOR TOWN OFFICIALS March 2021

The Orleans Home Rule Charter can be found on the www.town.orleans.ma.us website on the left-hand column and on the Charter Review Committee page under Boards and Committees. We are interested in whatever affects your work or life in Orleans. Please send written answers, using the section letters and numbers to gailmeyerslavin@gmail.com. It's fine to skip sections, not answer, or raise additional points.

If you are planning to attend a meeting or respond in writing to discuss the Charter, here are the questions we would like you to think about and/or answer:

A. YOUR GROUP'S NAME OR YOUR TITLE:

1. What are your duties and responsibilities?
2. What is your legal basis?
3. Who is responsible to you?
4. For whom are you responsible?
5. With whom do you coordinate? Federal/State/County/Region/Town/Private

B. THE CHARTER

1. Do you use the Orleans Charter in your work?
2. Are there any issues or requirements in the Charter that hinder or prevent you from doing your job as a Town Official, Town Employee or Volunteer? If yes, is this a Charter problem or a process problem that can be solved by Town Policies or By-Laws, and/or better communication? How might things be improved?
3. Is the Orleans Charter too general/too specific?
4. What section could be changed in the Charter to make your work easier?
5. Should the Charter include more references to substantive topics like health, economic growth, climate change?
6. Should any other new or existing multi-member bodies be added to the Charter, such as Affordable Housing and Trust, Recreation, Climate Change, OR any committee with regulatory authority not already included?

C. TOWN MEETING:

1. Are the warrant timeline dates still appropriate - dates for submission for ATM and STM?
2. How should the public learn of these dates? Please suggest. Is a 14-day publication date prior to the meeting still viable or is 7 days OK as stated in MGL?
3. If print media is too cumbersome and deadline specific, what other platforms could be considered to improve efficiency?
4. Can warrant articles and signatures be processed electronically?
5. Should we re-evaluate the date/time/location for ATM and STM?
6. How would you suggest that Town Meetings become more efficient and user friendly (day care, time of meeting, reading aloud what is printed in the warrant, remote participation, other)?
7. Is electronic voting at Town Meeting a Select Board or Moderator policy? Is it authorized under MGL or a By-law?

D. TOWN GOVERNMENT/ADMINISTRATION

1. Do you think the Select Board has found the right balance between goal setting and policy making, oversight and management?
2. Does the current multi-member body structure effectively cover the important issues facing the town? Are issues lost? Are issues over-covered? Is there redundancy? Is there good coordination on shared interests? How could it work better?

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3. Do we have the right departments, staffing and delegations/mandates to officials to get what needs to be done?
4. Are the Board and town administration doing a good job of enforcing rules and regulations?
5. What do you know about the emergency planning process in Town? What would you want to know in case of an emergency?
6. What is the role of the Town Administrator in strategic planning?

E. SELECT BOARD:

1. Should the Town Administrator be changed to a Town Manager? By title? By responsibilities?
2. What powers, duties and responsibilities would be different in such a change, and how would these differences enhance the operations of the Town going forward?
3. Does the Select Board have too many specific powers? (i.e. licensing, etc.)
4. What specific powers does the Select Board have that might be distributed – and why?
5. How does the Select Board review and enforce the Charter and By-laws?
6. Currently the Charter in 3-5-3 states that any contract or intermunicipal agreement requiring ... “an appropriation of Town funds in excess of \$500,000 or entails a commitment by the Town in excess of five years, shall require the approval of Town Meeting.” Should we raise the threshold or delete the section?
7. The Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners has asked to increase to 5 regular members, 2 associate members and 1 Planning Board Rep and 1 Board of Health Rep due to additional responsibilities with the new sewer system.

F. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

1. What do you know about the emergency planning process in town? What would you want to know in case of an emergency?
2. How well are Town activities and issues communicated to the community? Can website and other forms of communication be better utilized?
3. What would we need to do to better engage our citizens remotely?

G. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES:

1. Is the budget cycle and process working well?

H. PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT:

1. Should there be more in the sections in this chapter to address Economic Development and Climate Change?

I. ANY OTHER THOUGHTS OR SUGGESTIONS?