

To: Seth Gardner, Selectboard Chair
From: Edie Miller, Charter Committee Chair
Date: December 22, 2016

Re: Charter Recommendation

The Charter Committee has completed its work. As requested, we have researched the appointment of the offices of town clerk and collector of delinquent taxes and have drafted a charter that reflects these two changes. In adopting these changes, committee members interviewed public officials from other towns that both elect and appoint the two positions. In addition, we spoke to East Montpelier officials who have held the positions and other officials who have worked closely with those in the two positions. We have also examined charters of other towns, some of which appoint and others which elect the positions in questions. As a result of our research, we feel that giving the Selectboard the ability to appoint these two positions will help assure a well-functioning office with officers working to accomplish common goals in an accountable fashion. The formation of a town committee comprised of other officers and townspeople responsible for evaluating candidates and recommending qualified candidate(s) to the Selectboard, will help to assure the involvement of East Montpelier citizens in the selection of these officers as they will no longer be elected by the citizenry.

Our recommendation is that these positions be appointed for terms of one year thus giving the Selectboard flexibility in reappointing qualified candidates. The proposed charter also directs that the positions are subject to the town's personnel policies. It is important that the policies outline clearly a process for dismissing an officer for cause.

We recommend, also, that those holding the offices of town clerk and collector of delinquent taxes at the time this charter is approved be allowed to complete their elected terms prior to the Selectboard making appointments under the revised charter. We did not add "transitional language" on this topic; we assume the Legislative Council attorneys will do so (as they did last time) when they put the charter in bill format.

The original charge from the Selectboard asked the committee to consider, also, including in the charter the basic property tax guidelines now voted annually at Town Meeting. As we researched this area, we became aware that a number of other towns have modified the ways they motivate taxpayers to submit taxes on time as well as how they encourage and enable them to pay overdue taxes as early as possible. Thus, the committee suggested earlier that our current tax policies not be enshrined in the charter at this time. Further it recommends that the Selectboard commission a group of citizens to examine, in depth, all aspects of our tax collection policies with an eye to motivating and supporting taxpayers in discharging their responsibilities in a way that is efficient and beneficial to town finances.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate in this important work on behalf of the town.