

Charter Revision Questions With Explanations

Question #1

Shall the budget process be changed in accordance with Items 1 and 2 of the Final Report of the Charter Revision Commission and as approved by the Town Council?

Item 1. **Chapter VII Section 2:** Change the date of delivery of each department, office, or agency to the Mayor to January 31 (from February 10), the date of delivery from the Mayor to the Board of Finance to February 10 (from February 22) and the date of delivery of the Board of Education budget to the Board of Finance to February 15 (from February 28).

Chapter VII Section 3b: Change the time period to schedule a second budget referendum, if necessary, from 20 days to 20 business days.

The purpose of these changes is to give the Board of Finance more time to prepare the budget and more time to consider revisions in the event of defeat at the first referendum, while still having time to meet the deadline to set a mil rate.

Item 2. **Chapter VII Section 3b:** Change the sentence which reads "Council adjustments to the individual department budgets, excluding debt service, shall not exceed three (3) percent of the current year budget" to read "Council adjustments to the budget, excluding debt service, shall not exceed three (3) percent (plus or minus) of the original adopted current year's budget."

The purpose of this change is to allow the Council to vote on the bottom line budget and allow the Board of Finance to make the internal adjustments. This will eliminate confusion as to what constitutes a department and should eliminate most mid-year adjustments required because of the current limitations. It also allows the Council to concentrate on the overall budget requirements to allow the Board of Finance to set an acceptable mil rate in a timely fashion.

Question #2

Shall changes be made to clarify where Town employees may live and to permit them to engage in political activities and shall changes be made to various boards to comply with state law in accordance with Items 4, 5, 6 & 7 of the Final Report of the Charter Revision Commission and as approved by the Town Council?

Item 4. **Chapter VI Section 5b-1(a)**: Remove from the section the requirement that "All such officers and employees shall, within a reasonable time after appointment become residents of the town or a town, city or borough contiguous thereto."

The purpose of this change is to accept the reality that many of our police department employees do not meet this requirement and that it is unreasonable to require it.

Item 5. **Chapter VIII Section 3**: Delete this section in its entirety.

This section prohibits the political activity of any employees of the Town in the "classified service." The definition of political activity is very broad and the Charter Revision Commission believes that the restriction is not legally tenable now.

Item 6. **Chapter VI Section 5d-3**: Delete this section.

The Town of Plymouth has not had a Visiting Nurse Association for many years now and the Charter should reflect that fact.

Item 7. **Chapter VI Section 15**: Delete the first three (3) sentences:

"There shall be a housing authority as created by the board of selectman's resolution of April 22, 1965. The authority shall consist of five (5) members and two (2) alternates. Town council shall appoint members and alternates for three (3) year terms to succeed the member and alternates whose terms expire."

Said amended section to read as follows:

"There shall be a Housing Authority as created by the Board of Selectmen Resolution of April 26, 1965. The Authority shall be managed and have members and terms of membership in accordance with Connecticut State Statutes Section 8-40 et. seq. as may be amended from time to time by the Legislature."

The purpose of this change is to reflect the statutory requirements for membership and anticipate any changes without requiring revision of the Charter as State law changes.

Question #3

Shall the number of Council districts be reduced from two to one so that all council members are elected town-wide in accordance with Item 8 of the Final Report of the Charter Revision Commission and as approved by the Town Council?

Item 8. **Chapter II Section 1(b)**: Delete "... of which four (4) are to be elected by districts and one (1)...

Such that the second sentence of Section 1(b) shall read:

At such meeting there shall be elected a mayor, five (5) members of the town council to be elected town-wide at large and seven (7) constables and a treasurer, all for terms of two (2) years.

Delete "No political party shall nominate more than one (1) candidate for each district council seat."

Insert "No political party shall nominate more than five (5) candidates for a council election."

Chapter II Sections 3a and 3b: Eliminate both these sections and replace with the following:

Section 3. Voting Districts: All municipal elective offices shall be elected town-wide, including the Town Council and the Town shall be one voting district for the purpose of providing a polling place (or places). In the event that State elective offices are redistricted such that more than one polling place is required, the Registrars shall determine polling places in each district necessitated by such State action and the Council shall be authorized to establish such districts. The Mayor, Town Clerk, Registrars of Voters and all other officers of the Town shall perform the duties required of them by law with respect to elections in the voting districts. All action taken under the provisions of this section shall be in accordance with Sections 9-168 and 9-169 of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended.

The proposal is based on several factors. First, the Charter Revision Commission believes that all councilpersons should be elected at large and represent the entire Town. It feels that everyone's interests in good government are the same and the size of the Town of Plymouth does not warrant separate voting districts. Additionally, it is felt that the expense of maintaining multiple districts and polling places for elections places an unreasonable burden on Town finances and can be simplified and made more cost effective by this change. Finally, as with the Housing Authority above, the change gives the Council the ability to establish districts if required by State redistricting without the need for Charter Revision. This power is limited to State redistricting only.

Question #4

Shall the authority of the Board of Finance to approve special appropriations be increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in accordance with Item 3 of the Final Report of the Charter Revision Commission and as approved by the Town Council?

Item 3. **Chapter VII Section 3c (a)**: Change the Board of Finance's approval limit from \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00 for Special Appropriations.

Delete the following from Section 3c (a):

"The board of finance shall have the authority to approve appropriation requests in the amount not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000). No more than one (1) additional appropriation to a department's general fund original budget may be made in one (1) year without town meeting approval. If the amount required, or the amount required together with any other additional appropriations made by the board for the department in the same fiscal year exceeds fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), the request shall be subject to a special town meeting."

Said amended section to read as follows:

"The board of finance shall have the authority to approve appropriation requests in the amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). Any requests for more than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) must be approved by a special town meeting. No more than one (1) additional appropriation to a department's general fund original budget may be made in one (1) year without special town meeting approval."

The purpose of this change is merely to accept the economic reality that inflation has made the \$50,000 amount unrealistically low.