



January 5, 2024

Re: Statement in regards to H.518 Charter

Dear Members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. We are Town of Essex Selectboard Chair Andy Watts and Essex Town Manager Greg Duggan. Selectboard Vice Chair Tracey Delphia sends her regrets for being unable to attend today, and instead provided written testimony. The charter changes that you are considering were approved by Essex voters at Town Meeting in March 2023 after several months of public vetting.

The proposed changes originated from a Charter Review Committee, which the Selectboard created in the summer of 2022. The Charter Review Committee worked diligently, meeting weekly throughout the fall to review the existing Essex Town Charter. The Committee eventually recommended a number of amendments. While all of the committee's recommendations remain under consideration, the Selectboard decided in 2022 to focus on five recommendations for 2023 Town Meeting:

- A reorganization of the charter
- The ability to adopt and enforce ordinances to set license fees
- The ability to adopt a just cause eviction ordinance
- The ability to recall Selectboard members
- Creating a Development Review Board to replace the Zoning Board of Adjustment

Following some adjustments by the Selectboard, the five changes were presented on the Town Meeting ballot, and voters overwhelmingly approved all of the changes. Ms. Delphia's written testimony provides more details about each of the approved charter changes. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

On behalf of the Town of Essex, we thank you for your consideration of the proposed charter changes and hope you recommend approval to the full legislature.

Sincerely,

Andy Watts, Essex Selectboard Chair

Greg Duggan, Essex Town Manager