

To: Senate Government Operations Committee
From: Carol Dawes, Barre City TIF Administrator and former Clerk/Treasurer
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Re: H.10 Barre City charter changes
Date: April 1, 2025

Please allow me to provide comments on H.10, Barre City's proposed charter changes, as approved by the voters at the May 14, 2024 annual meeting elections.

The charter changes fall into three categories:

1. **Permanently move the annual town meeting from Town Meeting Day in March to the second Tuesday in May.** This change is being made to facilitate building the budget by allowing additional time for the current fiscal year's revenues and expenses to accumulate, better informing the budget building process.
2. **Separate the clerk and treasurer positions, and make the treasurer an appointed position rather than elected.** Barre City has a robust finance department which handles most of the day-to-day financial management. During my tenure as clerk/treasurer, the majority of my time was spent doing clerk work, and removing the treasurer duties from the clerk/treasurer position will allow the person who is elected as clerk to concentrate their time and energies on the important work associated with that role including serving as custodian of the land records and all other city records, overseeing elections, coordinating the work of the Board of Civil Authority and the Board of Abatement, managing the staff in the clerk's office, and interfacing with the City Council. The new appointed treasurer will be responsible for banking and investments, and coordinating financial oversight with the Finance Department. This separation of duties in conjunction with a robust finance department has become a common model in larger communities, and was adopted recently by our neighbor, Barre Town.
3. **Remove all school-related references in the charter.** Barre City voters approved the Barre Unified Union School District articles of agreement in 2019, thereby nullifying the school-related sections of the charter, which dealt with a number of things including election of school board members, presentation of the budget, and hiring a superintendent. These sections of the charter directly contradict the BUUSD articles of agreement, which is now the ruling document with regards to all things school related, so removing these sections from the charter will eliminate any confusion or conflicts of interpretation.

With regards to moving the annual meeting to May, the ballot language missed two references to March in the current charter. The House Government Operations & Military Affairs Committee corrected the omissions by adding the following language to the changes to the version of the bill they approved last week:

Sec. 207. Voting on requests of the city manager.

- (a) Annually, on the ~~first Tuesday in March~~ **second Tuesday in May** the legal voters of the city shall meet to vote on the requests of the city manager.
- (b) If, at the annual ~~March~~ **May** meeting, the voters disapprove the request

of the City Manager, the Mayor, or in his or her absence or disability, the City Clerk shall warn a general meeting of the legal voters to consider the article disapproved by the voters, and to authorize a specific sum of money therefor. The meeting shall be in accordance with 17 V.S.A. §§ 2630 - 2689 and shall be held at the same location as the previous meeting with the polls open for the same hours as the previous meeting. If the voters continue to disapprove any portion of the request, similar meetings shall be held in the same manner.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please let me know if there are any questions.