

—Slug:.....COMM-0849.bratt.charter_changes
—Contributor.....Virginia Ray
—Contributor email.....ginnypray@gmail.com
—For section.....News
—Format.....News - byline and dateline
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....42941

[REDACTED]

Notes from editor (not for publication):

[REDACTED]

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 Public hearings to address proposed charter changes

#####END HED#####

#####BEGIN SUBHED#####

2 Hearings to be held Jan. 27 and Feb. 5 before town

3 meeting vote on petition articles

#####END SUBHED#####

4 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

5 Public hearings regarding changes to the town charter
6 that have come to the Selectboard via petition will be held
7 Tuesday, Jan. 27, in the Municipal Center and via Zoom, and
8 Thursday, Feb. 5 at 6:15 p.m. in the Selectboard meeting room.

9 State law requires that the Selectboard hold at least two
10 public hearings prior to voter consideration of the charter
11 proposal.

12 The town has received two petitions signed by 5% of
13 voters to amend the town charter. The petitions were received
14 Aug. 4, 2025, and Sept. 9, 2025, and the requisite number of
15 signatures was verified by Town Clerk Hilary Francis.

16 The board will open each public hearing to hear all
17 comment on the proposed charter amendments, and the agenda
18 for the Jan. 27 meeting calls for “presentations by the charter
19 petitioners.”

20 Because the charter amendment was brought by petition,
21 the Selectboard has no authority to make changes to its wording,
22 according to a [post](#) on the Brattleboro municipal website.

23 The matter will be submitted to voters at the 2026 annual
24 Town Meeting because that is the “next annual meeting, primary,
25 or general election” before which the appropriate warnings can
26 be made and for which early voting can be accommodated,
27 according to the post.

28 Petition 1 includes two articles. The first asks voters if the
29 representative form of the Annual Town Meeting should be
30 discontinued, and the second asks — if voters approve the first
31 article — whether voting should take place by Australian ballot at
32 any annual or special Town Meeting to elect officers, approve the
33 annual general fund budget, authorize major bonding/borrowing,
34 all public questions, and charter amendments.

35 Petition 2 asks whether, if Representative Town Meeting
36 (RTM) is discontinued, votes should then be by open Town
37 Meeting. The Australian ballot would be used to elect town
38 officers, as well as for decisions that legally require a vote on
39 paper from the whole electorate.

40 What is the difference between Representative Town
41 Meeting, open Town Meeting, and the Australian ballot?

42 Registered voters in each of three districts elect
43 candidates to vote on the floor of Representative Town Meeting.
44 This is intended to ensure fair geographic representation and
45 “promote a seriousness and diligence on the part of the elected
46 RTM members,” according to the town website.

47 Brattleboro has used this system since 1960 and is the
48 only town in Vermont that does so.

49 In an open Town Meeting, any registered voter may
50 participate and vote.

51 With an Australian ballot, some or all Town Meeting
52 decisions are made by paper ballot, a process open to any
53 registered voter.

54 When deciding matters by Australian ballot, an
55 informational meeting sometimes precedes the vote, but not all
56 voters are required to participate in or even observe the pre-vote
57 discussion.

58 All questions to be voted on that ballot have been
59 determined in advance.

#####END TEXT#####

BIO/COATTAIL:

#####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL#####

60

#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

#####BEGIN MAXISSUE#####

61 0

#####END MAXISSUE#####

LINKS:

#####BEGIN LINKS#####

62

#####END LINKS#####

VIDEO:

#####BEGIN VIDEO#####

63

#####END VIDEO#####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

#####BEGIN LOGLINE#####

64

#####END LOGLINE#####