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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Public hearings to address proposed charter changes

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

Hearings to be held Jan. 27 and Feb. 5 before town  
meeting vote on petition articles

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

Public hearings regarding changes to the town charter  
that have come to the Selectboard via petition will be held  
Tuesday, Jan. 27, in the Municipal Center and via Zoom, and  
Thursday, Feb. 5 at 6:15 p.m. in the Selectboard meeting room.  
State law requires that the Selectboard hold at least two  
public hearings prior to voter consideration of the charter  
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:

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