

*City of Taunton
Office of the Mayor*



For Immediate Press Release: 05/21/2021

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O’Connell Takes Initiative to Update City Charter

Taunton, MA... Today Mayor O’Connell announces the City of Taunton is updating the City Charter for the first time since 1909.

O’Connell has prioritized the City Charter update as one of the goals of her administration. “The updated Charter delivers a 21st century form of government that is accountable, provides checks and balances, institutes sound financial management, and empowers the people of Taunton,” said O’Connell.

The City of Taunton Charter was originally established in 1864. Other than special acts of the legislature, the last major amendment to the Charter occurred in 1909. A Charter Advisory Committee appointed by the Mayor, with Council President Chris Coute serving as the Chair, has reviewed and updated the Charter with recommendations designed to increase accountability and responsiveness and ensure the needs of the community are currently being met and will continue to be met in the future.

“It is difficult to believe the City Charter hasn't been substantially changed in over 100 years. I am proud to have chaired this huge initiative to bring an updated charter forward that will return power to the people. I applaud Mayor O’Connell for making this charter update a priority,” said Council President Chris Coute.

The Charter update provides for a full-time elected Mayor serving a four-year term (limited to three consecutive terms in office) and an elected nine-member Municipal Council serving three-year staggered terms (limited to four consecutive terms in office).

Several important citizen safeguard provisions allow residents to petition for measures through an initiative process, to repeal measures passed by the Municipal Council through referendum, to remove the Mayor from office, and to recall elected office holders in the City through a recall election.

A number of provisions will help institute sound financial management, including the establishment of an Audit Committee to oversee an annual audit of the City’s financial records, investigative authority granted to the Municipal Council, and veto power vested in the Mayor with the Municipal Council having authority to override the veto by a 2/3 vote. In addition, the Charter establishes a Capital Improvement Program which will require regular reporting and planning for public facilities that require repair or replacement.

The Charter update calls for an automatic and periodic review of the Charter to ensure that it remains updated and responsive to the current needs of the community.

The Advisory Committee includes the following members: Christopher Coute, Willits Mendonca, Carolyn Basler, David Pottier, Daniel Barbour, Barry Amaral, Phillip Duarte, Joshua Borden, and Mark Gould. Mayor O’Connell is pleased with the final result. “I am thankful for the efforts of the Committee Chair, Council President Chris Coute, and all of the members of the Advisory Committee. They did an excellent job of recommending changes which will empower the people of Taunton by increasing transparency, accountability and responsiveness. These principles should be the bedrock of our city government.”

The next steps in the process will include a review of the proposed Charter by the Municipal Council, approval by the state legislature and a vote by the residents of Taunton at the municipal election.

Opportunities for public input will be provided to all city residents. A dedicated email address has been created for the community to utilize: CityCharter@taunton-ma.gov. In addition, a hearing will be scheduled with the opportunity for residents to attend in person.

For regular updates, please refer to the city website, taunton-ma.gov. A copy of the proposed updated Charter is available on the website located under City Government (Mayor’s Office).

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