

SENATE No. 1965

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Robert L. Hedlund

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act revising the charter of the town of Norwell.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Robert L. Hedlund

5th Plymouth

Rhonda Nyman

SENATE No. 1965

By Mr. Hedlund, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1965) of Robert L. Hedlund and Rhonda Nyman (by vote of the town) for legislation to revise the charter of the town of Norwell. [Local Approval Received.] Municipalities and Regional Government.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

—————
In the Year Two Thousand Eleven
—————

An Act revising the charter of the town of Norwell.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1: The charter of the town of Norwell, which is on file in the office
2 of the archivist of the commonwealth, as provided in section 12 of chapter 43B of the General
3 Laws is hereby revised as follows:

4 ARTICLE 3: Article 3 is hereby revised by striking out Section 3-1 in its entirety, and
5 inserting in place Sections 3 -1 and 3- 2 as provided herein:

6 Section 3 -1 Composition: There shall be a board of selectmen consisting of five (5)
7 members elected for terms of three (3) years each, so arranged that the term of office of as nearly
8 an equal number of members as is possible shall expire each year.

9 Section 3 -2 Powers and Duties:

10 (a) The executive powers of the town shall be vested in the board of selectmen, which
11 shall serve as the chief policy-making board of the town.

12 (b) The board of selectmen shall have the powers and duties given to boards of selectmen
13 under the Massachusetts Constitution and Massachusetts General Laws, except those powers and
14 duties assigned by this Act to the town administrator, and shall have such additional powers and
15 duties as may be authorized by this charter, by town by-laws, or by vote of town meeting. The
16 board of selectmen shall be authorized to enter into intergovernmental and other agreements on
17 such terms it deems beneficial to the citizens of Norwell, subject to the Massachusetts General
18 Laws, this Act, town charter and by-laws or by vote of town meeting.

19 (c) The board of selectmen shall be responsible for the formulation and promulgation of
20 policy directives and guidelines to be followed by all town departments serving under it, and in
21 conjunction, with other elected town officials and multiple member bodies, to develop and
22 promulgate policy guidelines designed to bring the operation of all town agencies into harmony,
23 provided however, nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize any member of the
24 board of selectmen, nor a majority of such members, to become involved in the day-to-day
25 administration of any town agency. It is the intention of this provision that the board of
26 selectmen shall act only through the adoption of broad policy guidelines and long-term plans or
27 programs, which are to be implemented by officials and employees serving under it.

28 (d) The board of selectmen shall communicate periodically with all town agencies,
29 departments, committees, and boards, including meeting with representatives of volunteer
30 committees and boards, and shall consider the concerns and plans of all such agencies,
31 departments, committees, and boards when formulating policy and long-term plans or programs.

32 (e) The board of selectmen shall cause the by-laws and rules and regulations for the
33 government of the town to be enforced and shall cause an up-to-date record of all its official acts
34 to be kept.

35 (f) The board of selectmen shall appoint the town administrator, a town counsel, and a
36 town auditor by a majority vote of the board.

37 (g) The board of selectmen shall appoint such other offices, boards, committees, and
38 commissions, by a majority vote of the board, as may be provided by the Massachusetts General
39 Laws or by vote of the town. In the event of a vacancy in any of said offices, boards,
40 committees, and commissions, the board of selectmen shall act to fill said vacancy within ninety
41 (90) days from notice by the affected board to the board of selectmen of any vacancy.

42 This subsection shall not apply to the appointment or approval of any paid full or part-
43 time employees, said appointments or approvals already provided for under Section 5-2(b)(2) of
44 this charter.

45 (h) The board of selectmen shall be the licensing board of the town and shall have the
46 power to issue licenses, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, to make all necessary
47 rules and regulations regarding the issuance of such licenses and to attach such conditions and
48 restrictions thereto as it deems to be in the public interest, and to enforce the laws relating to all
49 businesses for which it issues licenses.

50 (i) The board of selectmen shall be responsible for ensuring that timely audits are
51 conducted as required by law. The audits shall be performed by a certified public accountant, or
52 firm of such accountants, who have no personal interests, direct or indirect, in the fiscal affairs of
53 the town government or any of its officials.

54 Article 3, Section 3-4 is hereby repealed by striking out present text.

55 The remaining provisions of Article 3 shall be renumbered sequentially.

56 ARTICLE 4: Article 4 is hereby revised as follows:

57 Sections 4-1 (a), 4-1 (g), and 4-1 (h) are hereby repealed by striking out the text
58 appearing in each clause therein in its entirety. The remaining provisions of Section 4-1 shall be
59 reordered sequentially.

60 Section 4-3 is revised as follows:

61 Section 4 -3 Advisory Board

62 (a) Composition: There shall be an advisory board consisting of nine (9) members with
63 three (3) members appointed each year for a term of three (3) years each. Members shall hold no
64 other elective or appointed office in town government while on the advisory board, unless
65 otherwise provided by this charter, town by-laws, or by vote of town meeting, and shall serve
66 without pay. Members of the board shall choose from among its membership a chair, a vice-
67 chair, and a clerk.

68 (b) Nomination Process for Advisory Board: Members of the advisory board shall be
69 appointed by a majority vote of a nominating committee consisting of three (3) members, each
70 duly authorized to represent their respective board or office: the town moderator, who shall serve
71 as chair; one (1) member of the board of selectmen; and one (1) member of the advisory board,
72 except that no member of the advisory board shall serve on a nominating committee if said
73 member seeks re-appointment to the advisory board and said re-appointment would be the
74 subject of that nominating committee. The nominating committee shall consider only the

75 education, skills and experience of individual candidates as they relate to the function of the
76 advisory board.

77 (c) Responsibilities of the Advisory Board: The Advisory Board shall investigate and
78 consider all articles in the warrant to be brought before the town and shall report and advise on
79 such articles at town meeting. The Advisory Board shall consider short and long-range financial
80 impacts including both revenue and expenses to ensure financial stability.

81 Section 4-4 is added to Article 4 of the charter to address Term of Office of Appointed
82 Officials

83 ARTICLE 5: Article 5 is hereby revised as follows:

84 ARTICLE 5 shall be replaced in its entirety by striking the present Article 5 and inserting
85 in place thereof Article 5 as provided herein:

86 ARTICLE 5: Town Administrator

87 Section 5 – 1: Appointment, Qualifications, and Term of Service

88 (a) Appointment: The board of selectmen shall appoint a town administrator for a term
89 not to exceed three (3) years, as the board may determine, and said town administrator may be
90 appointed for successive terms of office.

91 (b) Qualifications: The town administrator shall be a person of demonstrated ability with
92 administrative experience in public management or business administration and who is qualified
93 by reason of education, skills and experience. The board of selectmen may from time to time
94 establish additional qualifications for the office of town administrator. To the extent permitted
95 by law, the terms of the town administrator’s employment may be the subject of a written

96 agreement between the parties setting forth the length of service, compensation and other terms
97 that are customarily included in an employment contract.

98 (c) General Terms: The town administrator shall devote full time to the duties of said
99 office and shall not engage in any other business or occupation during the term of his or her
100 employment by the town without the written approval of the board of selectmen. The town
101 administrator shall hold no elective office in the town during his or her tenure as town
102 administrator, but the board of selectmen may appoint the town administrator to any appointed
103 office or position consistent with the responsibilities of the town administrator. Before entering
104 upon his or her duties, the town administrator shall be sworn to the faithful and impartial
105 performance thereof by the town clerk. The town administrator shall not have served in an
106 elected office for the town of Norwell for at least twenty-four (24) months prior to his or her
107 appointment.

108 (d) Compensation: The board of selectmen shall set the compensation of the town
109 administrator, not to exceed the amount appropriated by the town meeting.

110 (e) Performance Evaluation: The board of selectmen shall conduct an annual
111 performance review of the town administrator. Annual performance reviews shall be based on
112 the town administrator's accomplishments pursuant to the powers and duties specified under
113 Section 5 -2 and of this charter, and the successful completion of any additional goals set by the
114 board of selectmen the preceding year.

115 Section 5 -2 Powers and Duties of the Town Administrator

116 (a) In General: The town administrator shall be the chief administrative officer of the
117 town. The town administrator shall be responsible to the board of selectmen for the effective

118 management of all town affairs placed in the town administrator's charge by this charter, the
119 board of selectmen, or vote of the town meeting. The town administrator shall be responsible for
120 the implementation of town policies and the coordination of operational and strategic planning
121 for the town. The town administrator shall facilitate communication between all town
122 departments and officials and communication between all town departments and officials and the
123 public. The functions and duties of the town administrator shall include, but not be limited to,
124 the following:

125 (b) Appointment Authority:

126 (1) The town administrator shall appoint and may remove a treasurer, and accountant.

127 The town administrator shall consult with the board of selectmen prior to making any
128 appointment or removal under this subsection. Unless otherwise provided under law, said
129 appointments or removals shall become effective on the twentieth day following the day notice
130 of said appointments or removals is filed with the board of selectmen, unless the board of
131 selectmen shall within said twenty (20) days reject, or sooner approve, said appointments or
132 removals by a majority vote of the board.

133 (2) The town administrator shall appoint and may remove all other department heads that
134 serve with any appointed board, commission or committee, other employees for whom no other
135 method is provided under this charter, and shall approve the appointment and removal of all
136 other employees, except employees of the school department, fire department and officers of the
137 police department, pursuant to the Massachusetts General Laws or this charter. The town
138 administrator shall consult with, and obtain the approval of, the appropriate appointed board,
139 commission, or committee prior to making any appointment or removal under this subsection.

140 Unless otherwise provided under law, said appointments or removals shall become effective on
141 the twentieth day following the day notice of said appointments or removals is filed with the
142 board of selectmen, unless the board of selectmen shall within said twenty (20) days reject, or
143 sooner approve, said appointments or removals by a majority vote of board members present and
144 voting.

145 This subsection shall not apply to any department heads that serve with
146 elected boards, commissions, or committees.

147 (3) The town administrator shall appoint and may remove all other department heads that
148 serve with any elected board, commission, or committee, except employees of the school
149 department, provided that the town administrator shall consult with, and obtain the approval of,
150 said elected bodies prior to making any appointment or removal under this subsection, unless
151 otherwise provided under the Massachusetts General Laws or this charter.

152 (4) Department heads shall, subject to the approval of the town administrator under
153 Article 5, section 5-2 (b) appoint and may remove assistant department heads, subordinates, and
154 employees, except employees of the school department, the fire department, and officers of the
155 police department; the department head seeking to make said appointments shall consult with the
156 appropriate elected or appointed board, commission, committee or official prior to making said
157 appointments or removals, unless otherwise provided under the Massachusetts General Laws or
158 this charter.

159 (5) The town administrator, in consultation with department heads and the affected board,
160 as applicable, may transfer personnel between departments as needed. Such transfer is presumed

161 to be temporary, and requires the approval of the affected board. This subsection shall not apply
162 to personnel of the school department.

163 (6) All appointments shall be based on education, skills and experience alone.

164 (7) Copies of notices of board and commission vacancies, job vacancies, and
165 opportunities and requests for volunteers shall be conspicuously posted in town hall and on the
166 town's official website. The town administrator may also advertise such vacancies and
167 opportunities in local newspapers or other media at a cost not to exceed the amount appropriated
168 by the town meeting.

169 (c) Administrative Responsibilities:

170 (1) Supervise the general activities and direct the operations of all town departments,
171 unless otherwise provided under the Massachusetts General Laws, this charter, or town by-laws.
172 This section shall not apply to the activities and operations of the school department and to the
173 statutory responsibilities and functions of the school committee.

174 (2) Supervise and be responsible for all town employees unless otherwise provided under
175 the Massachusetts General Laws, this charter, or town by-laws. This section shall not apply to
176 employees of the school department and to the statutory responsibilities and functions of the
177 school committee.

178 (3) Reorganize, consolidate, and establish departments under the town administrator's
179 supervision and the jurisdiction of the board of selectmen, subject to the Massachusetts General
180 Laws, this charter, town by-laws, or by vote of town meeting. Prior to taking any action under
181 this subsection, the town administrator shall notify and obtain the approval of the board of

182 selectmen. The board of selectmen shall hold a public hearing and shall have thirty (30) days
183 following said public hearing to approve any proposal under this subsection. With the approval
184 of both the board of selectmen and advisory board, the town administrator may transfer all or
185 part of any unexpended appropriation of a reorganized or consolidated department, board, or
186 office to any other town department, board or office.

187 (4) Administer, either directly or through a person appointed by him, all provisions of
188 general and special laws applicable to the town, and by-laws and votes of the town within the
189 scope of his or her duty, and all policy rules and regulations made by the board of selectmen,
190 provided, however, that any delegation shall be considered an act of the town administrator.

191 (5) Establish control and data systems appropriate for monitoring expenditures by town
192 boards and departments to enable the town administrator to make periodic reports to the board of
193 selectmen and the advisory board on the status of the town's finances.

194 (6) Develop and administer a personnel management system, including but not limited to,
195 the creation of job descriptions, a reporting structure, determination of rates of pay, the
196 development and implementation of an ongoing training program, evaluation process, personnel
197 management and hiring policies, practices, and regulations relating to town employment.

198 (7) Manage and maintain all town buildings, properties and facilities, excluding those of
199 the school department, pursuant to the town administrator's authority under this charter, town
200 by-laws, or by vote of town meeting. The town administrator may maintain and repair other
201 buildings, properties and facilities if and to the extent departments, agencies, boards, committees
202 and commissions request and authorize such maintenance and repair activities, unless otherwise
203 prohibited by the Massachusetts General Laws, this charter, town by-laws, or by vote of town

204 meeting. The town administrator shall keep and annually update a full and complete inventory
205 of all town property, both real and personal.

206 (8) Attend and participate in all regular and special meetings of the board of selectmen
207 and town meetings, unless excused therefrom by the board of selectmen.

208 (9) Cause full and complete records of meetings from the board of selectmen to be taken
209 and maintained, and compile reports of the meetings as requested by the board of selectmen.

210 (10) Act as the liaison to, and represent the board of selectmen before, state, federal and
211 regional authorities.

212 (11) Subject to policy established by the board of selectmen, approve all warrants and
213 vouchers, including payroll warrants, for payment of town funds submitted by the town
214 accountant. Any warrants generated by the town administrator shall be signed by the board of
215 selectmen.

216 (12) In consultation with the board of selectmen, identify and submit applications for
217 state and federal grants for which the town is eligible. Approve all grant applications submitted
218 by other boards, commissions, and departments of the town on behalf of the town, or as a
219 member of a proposed or active regional agreement, consortium, or similar partnership.

220 (13) Perform any other duties consistent with his or her office as may be required by by-
221 law or vote of the town or by vote of the board of selectmen.

222 (d) Financial Management and Reporting: Budget Preparation

223 (1) Prepare and submit at a public meeting to the board of selectmen and the advisory
224 board not less than ninety (90) days prior to the annual town meeting a proposed written budget
225 for town government, excluding the school committee, for the ensuing fiscal year.

226 (2) Detail in said proposed budget all estimated revenues from all sources and all
227 expenditures, including debt service, in each case for the previous, current, and ensuing years.

228 (3) Include in said proposed budget free cash, stabilization funds, and other funds
229 available for appropriation for the ensuing fiscal year, including estimated balances in special
230 accounts.

231 (4) Provide additional financial reports as established by town by-law and vote of town
232 meeting.

233 (5) All departments, boards, officials, and committees of the town, including the school
234 committee, shall, within the timeframe reasonably requested by the town administrator, furnish
235 all relevant information in their possession and submit to the town administrator, the board of
236 selectmen, and the advisory board, in writing, a reasonable estimate of the appropriations
237 required and any other funds expected to be available. The town administrator shall cooperate
238 and share information with all departments, boards, officials, and committees of the town,
239 including the school committee, in preparation of said budget.

240 (6) Assist the board of selectmen to develop a long-range financial plan for the town,
241 including preparation of a multi-year forecast of expected revenues and expenditures.

242 (e) Labor Relations

243 (1) Negotiate collective bargaining contracts on behalf of the board of selectmen, which
244 contracts shall be subject to approval, ratification and execution by the board of selectmen. The
245 board of selectmen may authorize use of special counsel to assist the town administrator in the
246 negotiations at its discretion.

247 (2) Administer and ensure adherence to collective bargaining agreements.

248 (f) Procurement: Act as the chief procurement officer under the provisions of Chapter
249 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws, responsible for the purchasing of all supplies, materials,
250 and equipment for the town, including the bidding and awarding of all contracts, except for the
251 school department.

252 Section 5 - 3 Vacancy in the Position of Town Administrator

253 (a) Permanent Vacancy: The board of selectmen shall fill any permanent vacancy in the
254 office of the town administrator as soon as feasible in accordance with Article 5, Section 5-1 of
255 this charter. Pending the appointment of a town administrator, the board of selectmen shall,
256 within a reasonable period of time appoint some other capable person to temporarily perform the
257 duties of the town administrator until a permanent replacement is appointed.

258 (b) Temporary Absence or Disability:

259 (1) The board of selectmen shall designate a capable officer of the town to perform the
260 duties of town administrator during a temporary absence or disability. If the person so
261 designated is unable to serve, the board of selectmen may designate some other capable person to
262 perform the duties of town administrator.

263 (2) Powers and Duties of Acting Administrator – The powers and duties of the acting
264 town administrator under section 5.B.1 shall be limited to matters not permitting of delay and
265 shall include authority to make temporary, emergency appointments or designations to town
266 office or employment, but not to make permanent appointments or designations unless
267 authorized by the board of selectmen.

268 Section 5 – 4: Removal and Suspension Proceedings

269 The board of selectmen may remove or suspend the town administrator from office after
270 first applying the following procedures, unless otherwise provided under an employment contract
271 or Massachusetts General Laws:

272 (a) Notice: By the affirmative vote of at least 3 of its members, the board of selectmen
273 may adopt a preliminary resolution of removal setting forth in reasonable detail the reason or
274 reasons for the proposed removal. The preliminary resolution may suspend the town
275 administrator for a period not to exceed 45 days. A copy of the resolution shall be delivered to
276 the town administrator immediately following adoption and a copy shall be filed with the town
277 clerk.

278 (b) Public Hearing: Within 5 days after the delivery of the preliminary resolution of
279 removal, the town administrator may request a public hearing on the reasons cited for removal by
280 filing a written request with the board of selectmen. The board shall convene said hearing not
281 less than 20 but not more than 30 days after a request is filed. The board of selectmen shall give
282 the town administrator not less than 5 days written notice of the date, time, and location of said
283 hearing. The town administrator may waive, in writing, such time limits. The town
284 administrator may file a written statement with the board of selectmen responding to the reasons

285 cited for the proposed removal. The board of selectmen shall receive said statement not less than
286 48 hours prior to the time set for said hearing. The town administrator may be represented at the
287 hearing by his or her own counsel. The town administrator shall be entitled to present evidence,
288 call witnesses, and, personally or through counsel, question any witness appearing at the hearing.

289 (c) Removal: The board of selectmen may, by the affirmative vote of at least 3 of its
290 members, adopt a final resolution of removal that shall be effective upon adoption, as follows:

291 (1) If the town administrator does not request a public hearing, then upon the expiration
292 of 10 days from the date of delivery to him or her of the preliminary resolution of removal, the
293 selectmen may act as stated above.

294 (2) If the town administrator does request a public hearing, then 5 days from the
295 completion of the public hearing, or 45 days from the date of the adoption of the preliminary
296 resolution, whichever occurs later, the board of selectmen may act as stated above.

297 Failure to adopt a final resolution of removal within the time limitations provided in this
298 section shall nullify the preliminary resolution of removal. This section vests all authority and
299 fixes all responsibility for such suspension or removal in the board of selectmen. The action of
300 the board of selectmen in removing the town administrator shall be final. The town
301 administrator shall continue to receive his or her salary until a final resolution of removal has
302 become effective.

303 Article 6 of the charter is hereby added as provided herein:

304 ARTICLE 6 GENERAL PROVISIONS

305 Section 6 -1: Severability

306 If any of the provisions of the charter are held to be unconstitutional or invalid, the
307 remaining provisions of the charter shall not be affected thereby. If the application of the charter
308 or any of its provisions to any person or circumstance is held to be invalid, the application of this
309 charter and its provisions to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

310 Section 6 -2: Continuation of Existing Government

311 (a) Continuation of existing laws, bylaws: The town’s charter, all special acts, by-laws,
312 rules and regulations which are in force on the effective date of this Act that are not inconsistent
313 with the provisions of this Act shall continue in full force until amended or repealed and elected
314 and appointed officials, boards, commissions, and committees shall have all of the powers, duties
315 and responsibilities, which are in force on the effective date of this Act that are not inconsistent
316 with this Act, which are given to the respective boards, officials and agencies by law, this Act,
317 town by-law or by vote of town meeting.

318 (b) Continuation of personnel: Any office or position in the administrative service of the
319 town or incumbents in such offices, shall continue to function as they did previously until a
320 change in those offices, positions or incumbents is effected in accordance with the provisions of
321 this charter.

322 Article 7 of the charter is hereby added as provided herein:

323 ARTICLE 7: Transitional Provisions

324 Section 7-1: Increasing the Membership of the Board of Selectmen

325 At the annual election following the acceptance of this charter revision by the voters of
326 the town of Norwell, two (2) additional selectmen shall be elected one (1) to a term expiring at

327 the town election in the third year following the election of said selectman and one (1) to a term
328 expiring at the town election in the second year following the election of said selectman. The
329 candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected to the three-year term, and the
330 candidate receiving the next highest number of votes shall be elected to the two-year term.
331 Thereafter, as the terms of selectmen expire, successors shall be elected for terms of three (3)
332 years.

333 SECTION 2: Effective Date

334 This Act shall take effect upon its passage by the general court and, if approved by the
335 voters of Norwell, shall take effect as this act so provides, but not otherwise.

336 SECTION 3: Acceptance at Town Election

337 This charter revision shall be submitted for acceptance to the voters of the town of
338 Norwell at an annual town election held following its approval in the form of the following
339 question which shall be placed on the official ballot to be used at said election: Shall an act
340 entitled “AN ACT REVISING THE CHARTER OF THE TOWN OF NORWELL” be accepted?
341 A summary prepared by the town counsel noting in summary form the major changes proposed
342 in the charter by this act shall appear on the ballot. - - - - -

343 and to authorize the board of selectmen to act on behalf of the town relative to any
344 inquiries and minor changes made by the general court concerning the proposed Act or take any
345 other action relative thereto.”