

# Massachusetts House of Representatives

## Bill Summary

**Bill #:** H.4501

**Title:** An Act amending the town charter of the town of Plymouth

**Sponsor:** Rep. Kathleen LaNatra and Rep. Michelle Badger

**Committee:** Municipalities and Regional Government

**Hearing Date:** September 23 through September 30, 2025 written testimony hearing

**Current Law:** The current town charter was adopted January 5, 2021. It consists of the following chapters:  
Chapter 1. Powers of the town  
Chapter 2. The Legislative branch: Representative Town Meeting  
Chapter 3. The Executive branch: The Select Board, Town Manager and Planning Board  
Chapter 4. Elected town boards and officers  
Chapter 5. Elections  
Chapter 6. Town boards, commissions, committees, department heads  
Chapter 7. General provisions

**Summary:** Broad overview of proposed charter amendments:

- Amends scope of town powers: clarifies that the town shall be subject to all restrictions under the constitution and laws of the Commonwealth.
- Definition of "emergency" amended to include an occurrence, event or condition which requires immediate action.
- Adds definition of "Town Meeting" to mean any meeting of the full body of Representative Town Meeting Members called for under the Charter.
- Clarifies the role of the town clerk as it relates to town meetings by having the clerk simply keep a detailed journal of all town meeting proceedings.
- Adds language prohibiting a town meeting member from holding another elected town office other than the charter commission.
- Deletes assigned seating for town meeting members.
- Deletes language requiring town meeting members to receive a printed copy of certain reports unless they indicate otherwise.
- Streamlines language concerning the powers and duties of town meeting.
- Inserts language concerning the select board's authority to call special town meetings with at least 14 days' advance notice and requires the select board to call a special town meeting upon written request of 200 voters, with such meeting to be held not later than 45 days after receipt of such request.
- Streamlines procedure and circumstances under which a roll call vote is required for all motions before town meeting. Also amends provision governing the circumstances under which the term of a town meeting member who changes voter registration and moves to another precinct ends. A person deemed ineligible to vote would cease to be a member.
- Allows all town officials, elected or appointed, to have the privileges of town meeting members, except the power to vote, unless they are also an elected town meeting member.
- Clarifies procedures for filling vacancies for town meeting members.

- Clarifies language concerning holding town meeting precinct caucuses.
- Amends language concerning the composition, method of appointment and filling of vacancies on the 15-member advisory and finance committee. Also allows town meeting the option to consider a warrant article even if the committee has not considered and issued a recommendation on that article.
- Deletes unnecessary language concerning the powers and duties exercised by the conservation commission and zoning board of appeals.
- Establishes a Land Use and Acquisition Committee comprised of 7 members to advise the select board concerning acquisition of real estate by the town; 2 of whom appointed by the select board, 2 by the planning board, 2 by the conservation commission and 1 by the open space committee.
- Amends charter by clarifying the procedure by which the names of candidates will appear on the local election ballots.
- Reduces from 30 to 20 days the time in which newly elected town meeting members must report to the town clerk to take the oath of office. Deletes language related to nomination of candidates for election to representative town meeting in favor of the procedure prescribed in MGL Chapter 43A:6.
- Reduces the number of registered voters needed to file a recall petition for an elected office holder from 500 to 250, and amends language that must be included on each recall petition form; increases time allowed to return petitions to the town clerk and gives the town clerk more time to review voter signatures, and adjusts timeline for the incumbent to resign. Recall elections would require a simple majority vote of registered voters to take effect.
- Town boards, commissions and committees would have 30 days to organize after the annual election.
- Amends charter language concerning attendance requirements for multiple member town bodies.
- Appointing authority may remove an appointee for cause by majority vote.
- The legislation also renumbers sections and makes non-substantial changes of form and style in various chapters of the town charter.

**Notes:**

The home rule petition language was adopted at two separate meetings:

April 5, 2025 Spring Annual Town Meeting; Article 24 (land use acquisition committee) approved by a vote of 126 yes, 17 no, with 1 abstention.

October 19, 2024 Fall Annual Town Meeting; Article 20 (powers of town) approved 108-15-3; Article 22 (legislative branch) approved 91-40-1; Article 23 (elections) approved 91-40; Article 25 (Chapter 6, town boards) was approved by a vote of 89-37-1.