

Massachusetts House of Representatives Bill Summary

Bill #: H.5577

Title: An Act relative to the department of public works in the town of Barre

Sponsor: Rep. Donald Berthiaume and Sen. Peter Durant

Committee: Municipalities and Regional Government

Hearing Date: July 22, 2026

Current Law: Chapter 56 of the Acts of 1988 authorized the town of Barre to establish a department of public works under the jurisdiction of a public works commission. The commission is comprised of the board of selectmen, water commissioners and sewer commissioners. The superintendent of public works is appointed by the public works commission.

Mass. General Laws Chapter 268A (conflict of interest law)

Summary: This bill would abolish the current public works commission with a new department of public works overseen by a superintendent.

Section 1 of the bill repeals the 1988 special act and abolishes the current public works commission.

Section 2 Establishes a new department of public works, which will have the powers that are exercised by the highway, water, sewer and parks and recreation departments.

Section 3 provides for the new department of public works to be supervised by a superintendent who would be appointed by the select board following a recommendation by the town administrator, to whom they would report. An employment contract may be entered into with the superintendent, and the agreement would cover salary, benefits and other conditions of employment. The superintendent would be barred from holding any other elected or appointed position in the town unless given approval from the select board, and could not be engaged in any other business that might be a conflict of interest.

Section 4 states that the superintendent shall exercise the powers, rights and duties of the department, under the direction and supervision of the town administrator. They shall recommend the

appointment of subordinate employees, subject to the town administrator's approval, with compensation set according to personnel policies and practices, rules and regulations, and any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Section 5 ensures the continued effect of existing contracts and liabilities, and the assignment to the new department of public works and the superintendent of all records, property and equipment.

Section 6 provides for the act to take effect upon its passage.

Notes:

This home-rule petition was approved as Article 19 at the May 19, 2026 Annual Town Meeting by majority vote.