



Chester Charter Commission
The Proposed Draft Charter
Submitted to the Board of Selectmen
February 14, 2024

THE COMMISSION

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WHY A CHARTER

A Charter serves as a framework for our government

- **It is a local constitution for town government**
 - Created with high degree of community input
 - Upholds Connecticut and New England Traditions
 - Specific to needs and interests of Chester
 - Permits a flexible and innovative approach
- **State statutes set parameters which can be restrictive for Town government**
 - Arbitrary population threshold
 - Limits opportunities



Why a Charter

A Charter will provide:

**Local
Autonomy**

Flexibility

CHESTER

The Town

The Residents

Engagement

Innovation








GOVERNANCE COMPARISON

GENERAL STATUTES VS CHESTER CHARTER



CHESTER GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

	Current  State Statute	Charter  Proposed Draft Charter
Executive Authority	First Selectman (CEO) Board of Selectmen 	First Selectman (CEO) Board of Selectmen Town Administrator
Legislative Body	Town Meeting 	Shared by Board of Selectmen & Town Meeting
Fiscal Authority	Board of Finance Town Meeting 	Board of Selectmen Town Administrator Financial Accountability Board Fiscal Advisory Committee Town Meeting



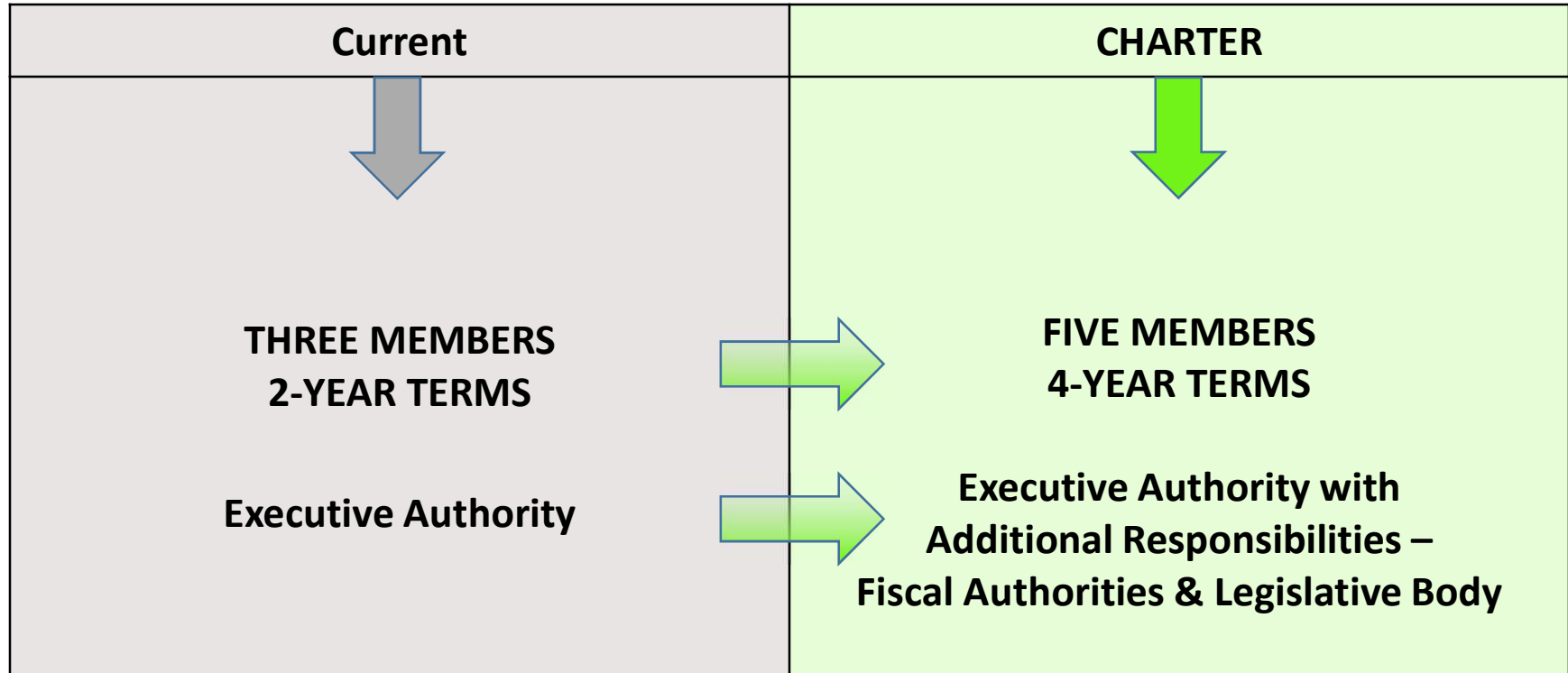
AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – DRAFT CHARTER ISSUES RAISED

The following issues will be addressed in remarks provided by the Commission:

- **Increase in number of members of the Board of Selectmen**
- **Assumption of fiscal responsibilities by Board of Selectmen, professional staff, and Fiscal Policy Committee**
- **Appointment vs. election for some of the agencies with regulatory authority**
- **Elimination of alternates from agencies**
- **For an agency with 7 members - reduction in maximum number members from the political party holding a majority on the agency from 5 to 4 members**
- **Request to require use of Robert's Rules of Order for all agency meetings**
- **Consider BOS Audit Committee**
- **Consider an Ethics Commission**



BOARD OF SELECTMEN



CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Increases number of members
- Provides opportunity for wider range of expertise for assuming expanded responsibilities



PROFESSIONAL MANAGER

Current



Executive Authority

First Selectman
Chief Executive Officer &
Policy and Administration
& Day to Day Operations
2 Year Term

CHARTER



Executive Authority

First Selectman
Chief Executive Officer & Policy
4 Year Term

Town Administrator
Chief Administrative Officer
Appointed Staff Position
Delegated Authority by First Selectman from
Board of Selectmen
Administration &
Day to Day Operations

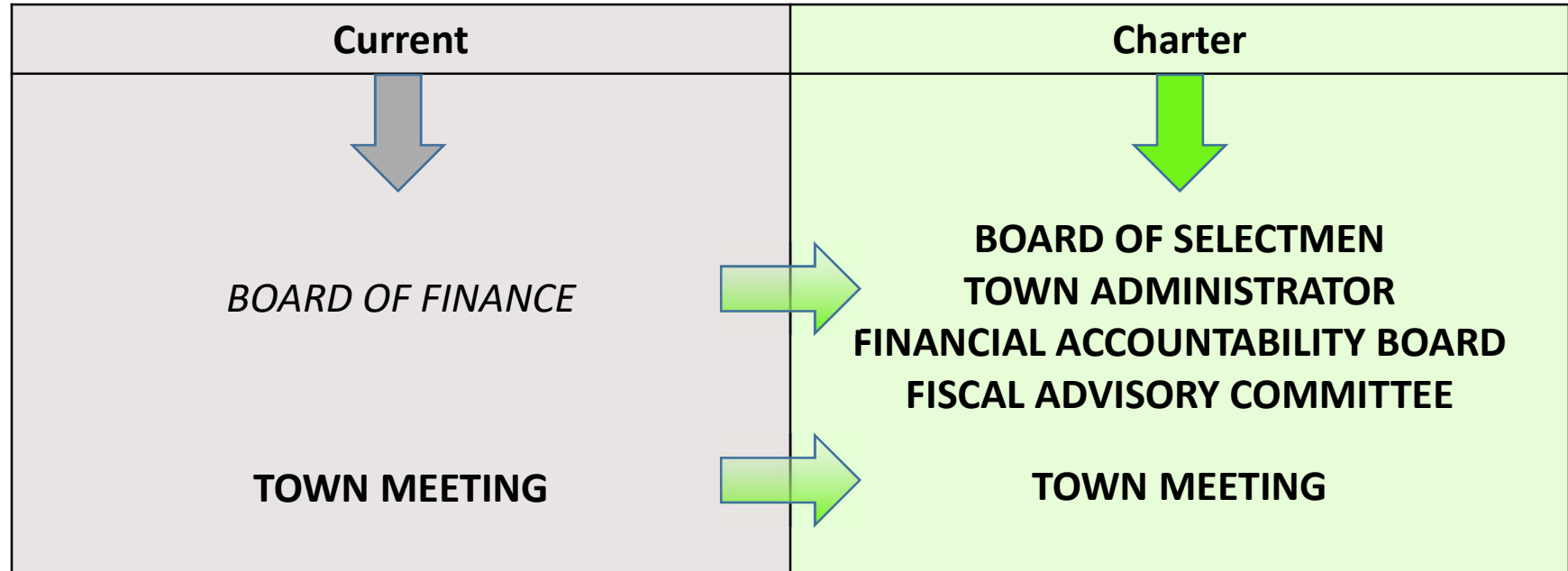


CONTINUITY AND COMPLEXITY

- Professional manager is a qualification and performance-based position with education, skills and experience for successfully administering quality service to the public effectively and efficiently
- Enables Board of Selectmen to focus on policy development, strategic planning, & overseeing & monitoring performance of the professional manager



FISCAL AUTHORITY

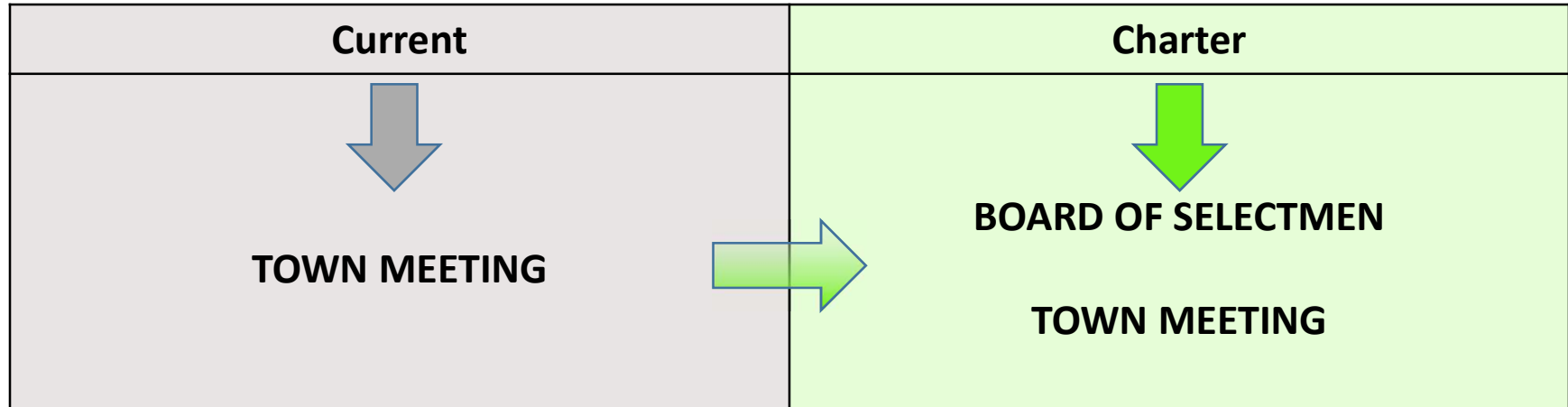


CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Revised framework for financial management and budget process
- Responsibility and accountability for budget development and performance assumed by Board of Selectmen and Financial Accountability Board with support from Town Administrator, Finance Director, and Fiscal Advisory Committee
- Aligns the Town's fiscal authorities with the authority and responsibility for policies, programs, services, and initiatives – and their funding



LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

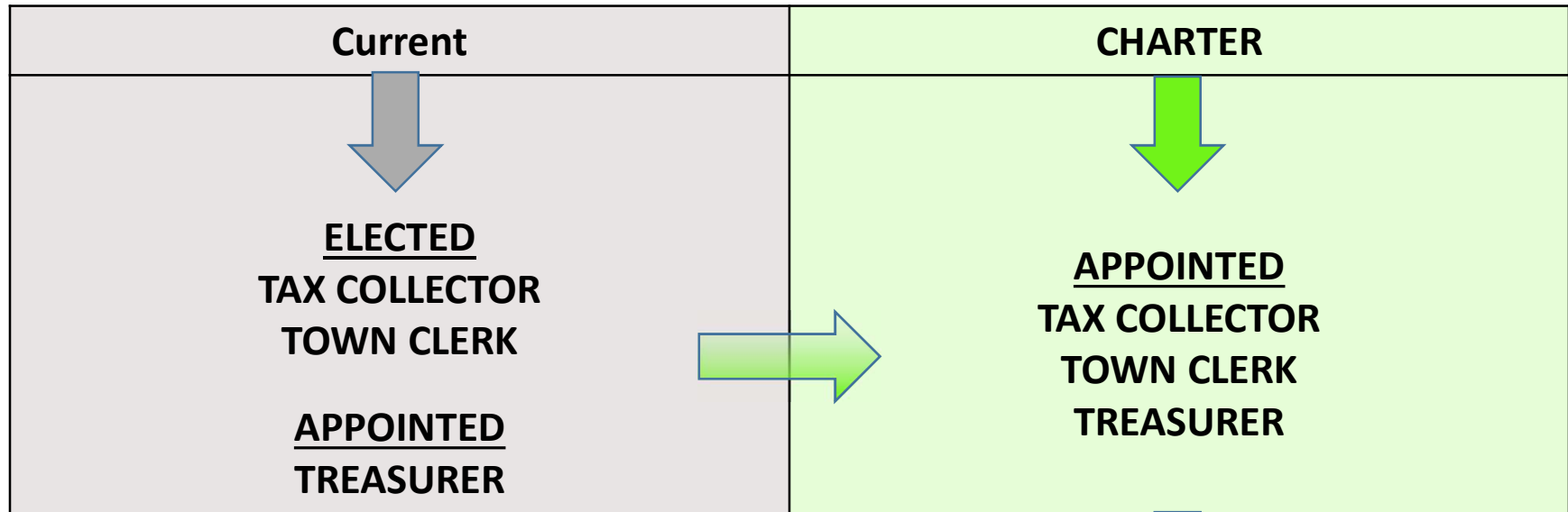


COMPLEXITY AND ENGAGEMENT

- Addresses typically low attendance at Town Meetings
- Provides for informed decisions by expanded Board of Selectmen
- Preserves Town Meetings for major actions including adoption of the Annual Town Budget
- Simplifies approval process for many routine actions
- Creates opportunity for Voters to “petition” for Town Meeting on some BOS actions



MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

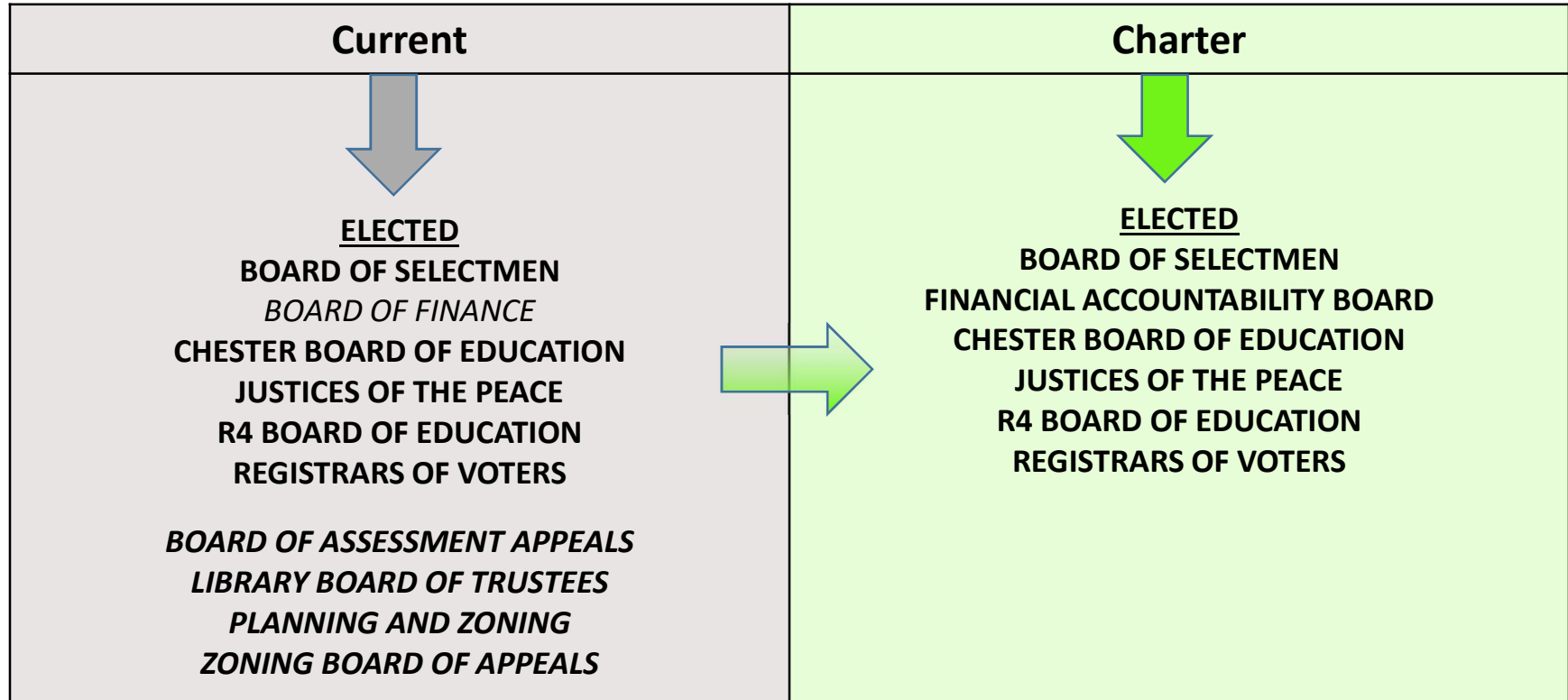


CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY

- Tax Collector & Town Clerk are administrative positions more suited for appointment of qualified individuals rather than by election. Ongoing training and certification are required
- Appointment provides for continuity where there are complex duties & responsibilities
- Appointed combined position of Finance Director/Treasurer provides unified approach for financial management with BOS oversight



AGENCIES: ELECTED







CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Simplifies process for selection of members of agencies
- Easier to engage residents to serve – especially unaffiliated Electors
- Board of Finance responsibilities provided by revised Fiscal Authorities – Board of Selectmen, Financial Accountability Board, Town Administrator/Finance Director, & Fiscal Advisory Committee



AGENCIES: APPOINTED

Current		Charter
 <u>ELECTED</u> BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES PLANNING AND ZONING ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS <u>APPOINTED</u> BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS CEDAR LAKE WATERSHED COMMISSION CITATION HEARING OFFICERS CONSERVATION COMMISSION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION INLAND WETLANDS/WATERCOURSES COMMISSION PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION RETIREMENT BOARD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY	 	 <u>APPOINTED</u> BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES PLANNING AND ZONING ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS CEDAR LAKE WATERSHED COMMISSION CITATION HEARING OFFICERS CONSERVATION COMMISSION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION INLAND WETLANDS & WATERCOURSES COMMISSON PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION RETIREMENT BOARD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

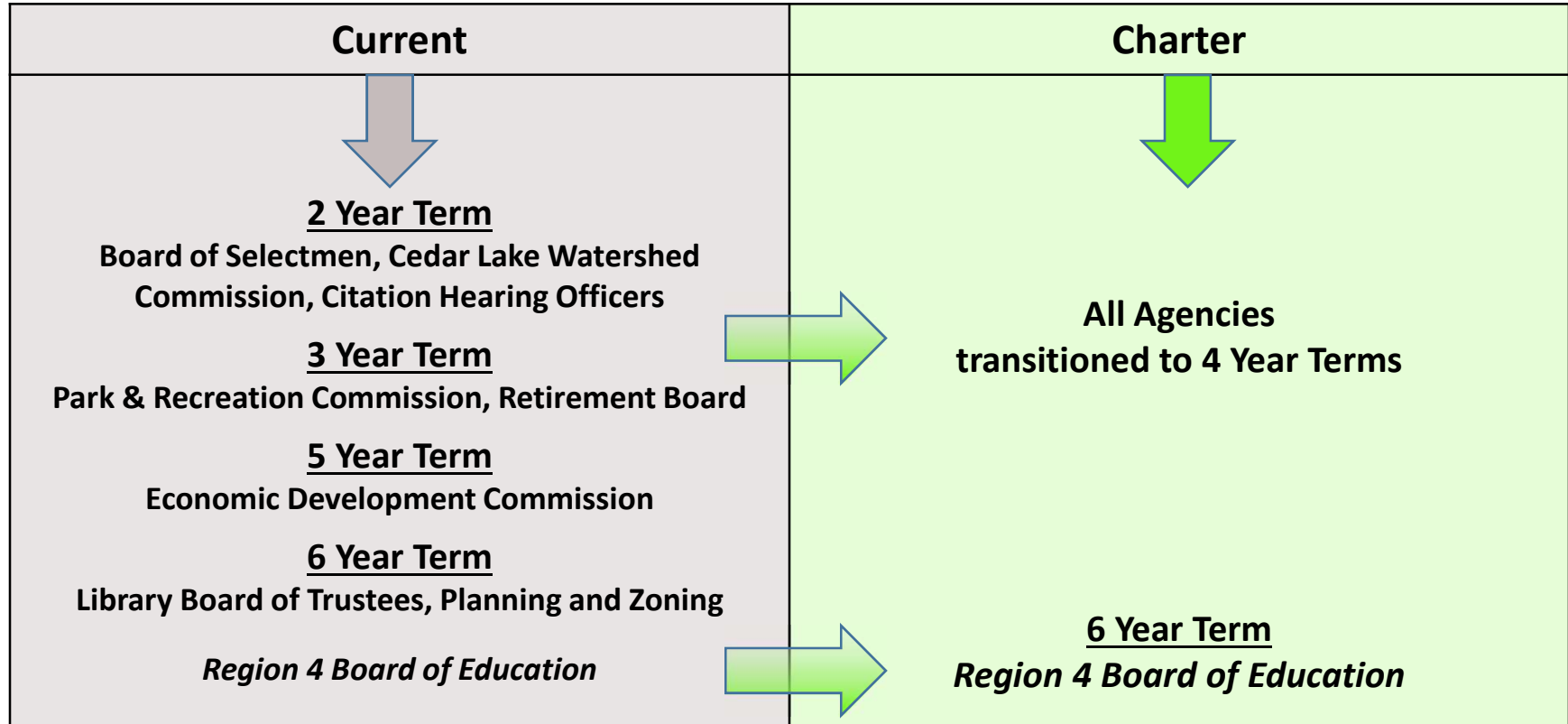


CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Simplifies process for selection of members of agencies
- Easier to engage residents to serve – especially unaffiliated Electors



AGENCIES: TERM LENGTH

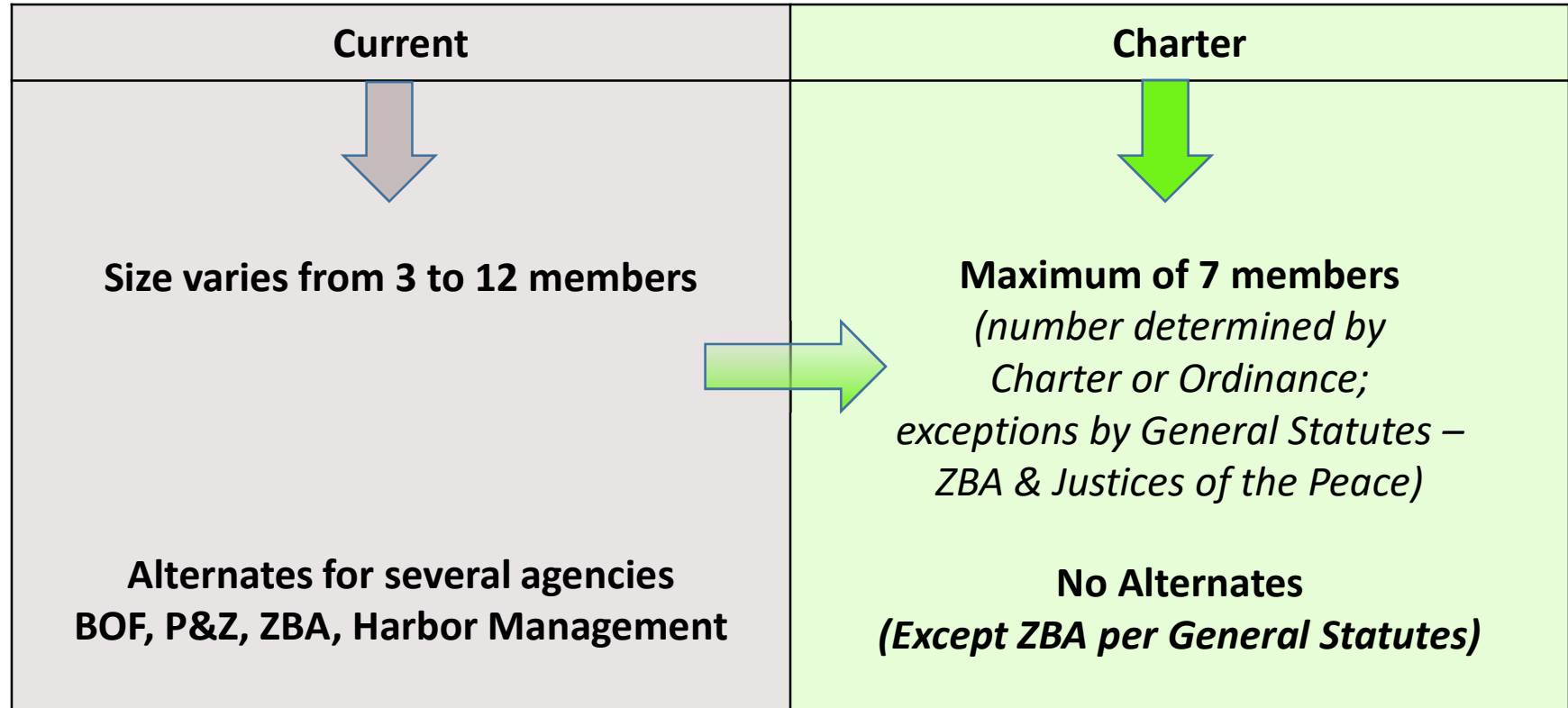


CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Term changes to 4 years for engaging Elector interest in serving, continuity, as well as addressing complexity
- Region 4 BOE terms set at 6 years by Special Act and regional consistency with Deep River and Essex



AGENCIES: # OF MEMBERS





CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

- Addresses engagement and challenges in finding Electors to serve
- Eliminating Alternates intended to reinforce engagement, involvement and commitment of members elected or appointed



AGENCIES: POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION

Current	Charter
	
<p>General Statutes (Sections 9-167(a), 9-188, 9-204, 9-204(a) & (b)) establish maximum number of members from the political party having a majority on an agency</p> <p>3 Members – MAX = 2 4 Members – MAX = 3 5 Members – MAX = 4 6 Members – MAX = 4 7 Members – MAX = 5 8 Members – MAX = 5 9 Members – MAX = 6 More than 9 – Two-thirds of total Members</p>	<p>Follows General Statutes – except for changes for agencies with 5 and 7 members</p> <p>5 Members – MAX = 3 7 Members – MAX = 4</p> <p>Applies intent of Section 9-188 and 9-204(a) for election of Board of Selectmen</p> <p>Applies Section 9-204(a) for Election of Chester Board of Education</p>

ENGAGEMENT

- Encourages bipartisan decision-making and engages those other than majority party members
- For appointive agencies establishes principle of expanding pool of candidates to include unaffiliated Electors as well as minority party members



THE ARTICLES

- **Article 1: Incorporation and General Powers**
- **Article 2: Town Meeting**
- **Article 3: Board of Selectmen**
- **Article 4: The First Selectman**
- **Article 5: Town Administrator**
- **Article 6: Elections**
- **Article 7: Elective Officers and Agencies**
- **Article 8: Appointive Agencies, Departments, & Other Entities**
- **Article 9: Finance and Taxation**
- **Article 10: Intergovernmental Relations**
- **Article 11: Transition and Miscellaneous Provisions**



Process – Next Steps

- Review / Revise PROPOSED Draft Charter
- Deliver DRAFT Charter to BOS through Town Clerk
- BOS holds Public Hearing(s)
- Charter Commission considers BOS recommendations for changes, if any
 - If recommendations provided - Charter Commission provides response (with or without changes) – followed by BOS vote on whether to send FINAL Charter to Town Referendum for adoption vote.
 - If no recommendations - BOS votes on whether to send FINAL Charter to Town Referendum for adoption vote

NOTE: Consideration of Charter has been a deliberative two-year process with BOS decision to create Governance Study Committee through completion of work by the Charter Commission and finally a town-wide referendum to consider adoption.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Chester Charter Commission Webpage
www.chesterct.org/charter-commission

Contact Information

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