

**Town of Chester**  
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CHESTER GOVERNANCE STUDY COMMITTEE- SUMMARY MINUTES  
**December 19, 2022**

Location: Chester Town Office Meeting Room and Online

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The meeting of the Chester Governance Study Committee was called to order by Co-Chair Jon Joslow at 2:36. Governance Study Group appointees Pat Bandzes, Cindy Lignar, Jon Joslow, Briana Jewczyn, Mike Sanders and Richard Strauss were in attendance. Committee member Ed Meehan was unable to attend. First Selectwoman Charlene Janacek was in attendance as were members of the community in the audience and on line.

1. Review and approval 11/16/22 minutes

The minutes from the 11/16/22 were amended by edits provided by Co-Chair Mike Sanders. A motion to accept and approve was made by Cindy Lignar and seconded by Pat Bandzes. The motion was accepted.

2. Followup from 11/16/22 meeting

The primary followup to the 11/16/22 meeting is the reports of the subcommittee's research and findings. This information was presented in detail under "Subcommittee reports" that follows.

3. Subcommittee reports

**Identify Chester's key governance and management issues-** Briana Jewczyn, subcommittee chair:

Briana summarized various governance and management issues that have been reported by Municipal Research & Service Center, Wilton First selectwoman update, and Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The information contained in these documents will be available and linked through the Governance Study Committee section of Chester's municipal web site. Her findings are consistent with the concerns expressed within the BOS charge.

# Sample of Common Issues :

Summarized from Municipal Research & Service Center, Wilton First selectwoman update, and Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

- Increased Complexity of Municipal Government, including:
  - The role of politics in administration
  - Increasing responsibility
  - Efficient and effective oversight of town operations and service delivery
  - Ability to focus on long-term strategic planning, improvements, and investments
  - Increasing population and the resultant increase in service demands
- Form of Government
  - Capacity(ie. Time) for town leaders to respond & be accountable
  - Establishing effective management & administration practices; i.e. could professional management help?
  - Effective and clear communication practices between departments, residents, and volunteers
- Continuity of Government
  - Timing of retirement of key personnel, and concurrent/staggered term lengths of appointed, hired and volunteer positions
  - Attracting candidates to serve in either elected or appointed office
  - Decreasing rates of volunteerism and low attendance at meetings

## **Alternative forms of Connecticut municipal government- Richard Strauss, Chair:**

Note: This is the point where the technician started to record the meeting. The BOS will post the link to the video recording on the municipal web site. The following slides were presented by Richard Strauss and the narrative is contained within this recording. These slides were discussed in detail within this recording for 38 minutes and provide a lot of content in detail. Further, the resources that this subcommittee used to obtain this detailed understanding is being made available in advance of a final report to the BOS so that the public can begin the process of educating themselves as to the legal and functional options available to all 169 CT municipalities . These meeting notes will not be transcribed but can be accessed either now or when the committee issues its written report in January 2023. The slides are presented below to provide an outline of the various forms of government and their implications. A comprehensive report is being prepared from these base documents and their original sources (all source documents to be provided on the Town web site).

## Connecticut Forms Local of Government

***Municipalities have flexibility to determine their government structure***

- *No Charter or Charter*
- *Legislative Body*
- *Executive Authority*
- *Fiscal Authority*
- *Professional Management*



## Data Summary

### *Forms of Municipal Government by Population Range*

	POPULATION RANGE	781 - 27,522		27,523 - 148,333		TOTALS	
CONNECTICUT FORMS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT	POPULATION RANGE PER FORM	#	% OF FORM BY POPULATION RANGE	#	% OF FORM BY POPULATION RANGE	#	% OF MUNICIPALITIES BY FORM OF TOTAL # OF MUNICIPALITIES
SELECTMEN/TOWN MEETING	781 - 27,522	98	100%	0	0%	98	58%
COUNCIL/TOWN MANAGER	12,205 - 67,973	17	61%	11	39%	28	17%
MAYOR/COUNCIL	9,334 - 148,333	8	26%	23	74%	31	18%
SELECTMEN/ REP TOWN MEETING	19,553 - 63,514	3	50%	3	50%	6	4%
SELECTMEN/COUNCIL	20,732 - 36,950	1	50%	1	50%	2	1%
SELECTMEN/TOWN MANAGER/TOWN MEETING	9,066 - 10,953	3	100%	0	0%	3	2%
SELECTMEN/TOWN MANAGER	24,807	1	100%	0	0%	1	1%
DATA: 11/2022	TOTALS	131	78%	38	22%	169	100%



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## Data Summary

### *U.S. Municipality Form of Government Overview*

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION U.S. MUNICIPALITY FORM OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY (2018-2019)	NUMBER	%
COUNCIL/MANAGER	4,386	40.0%
MAYOR/COUNCIL	4,166	38.0%
COMMISSION	1,302	11.9%
TOWN MEETING	1,056	9.6%
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING	59	0.5%
TOTAL	10,969	100%
Data: ICMA - Survey Research: Municipal Form of Government (2018-2019); includes municipalities with at least 2,500 residents (2018 U.S. Census estimate); Form of government classified by ICMA as of 9/2019		
Note: The "Commission" form of government is defined as a board of elected commissioners that serve as heads of specific departments, while also collectively serving as the legislative body - this form is the only one shown that is not in use in Connecticut		



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## CT Forms of Municipal Government – Most Common

### *Selectmen – Town Meeting*

SELECTMEN/TOWN MEETING					
	TOTAL	STATE STATUTE		CHARTER	
781 - 5,000	39	35	90%	4	10%
5,001 - 10,000	31	18	58%	13	42%
10,001 - 20,000	23	3	13%	20	87%
20,001 - 27,522	5	0	0%	5	100%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43%</b>

*Towns without a charter: required to use Selectmen - Town Meeting form of government*



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## CT Forms of Municipal Government – Most Common

### *Council – Town Manager*

COUNCIL - TOWN MANAGER		
POPULATION	#	%
12,205 - 27,522	17	55%
27,523 - 50,000	8	26%
50,001 - 100,000	3	10%
100,001 - 148,333	0	0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>90%</b>

*Professional CEO – Town Manager as Executive Authority*

*Council as Legislative Body*

*Town Meeting typically held for some actions*



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## CT Forms of Municipal Government – Most Common

### *Mayor - Council*

MAYOR - COUNCIL		
POPULATION	#	%
9,334 - 27,522	8	26%
27,523 - 50,000	9	29%
50,001 - 100,000	9	29%
100,001 - 148,333	5	16%
TOTALS	31	100%

*Typically used by larger municipalities  
Characterized by “strong” or “weak” Mayor variations*



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## CT Forms of Municipal Government – Others

### *Other Charter Forms of Government with a Board of Selectmen*

- *Selectmen – Representative Town Meeting*

SELECTMEN - REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING					
MUNICIPALITY	POPULATION	BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEMBERS	LEGISLATIVE BODY: REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING		
			REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING MEMBERS	NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES AS % OF POPULATION	POPULATION PER REPRESENTATIVE
Waterford	19,553	3	25	0.1%	782
Darien	21,500	5	100	0.5%	215
Westport	27,279	5	36	0.1%	758
Branford	28,176	3	30	0.1%	939
Fairfield	61,949	3	40	0.1%	1549
Greenwich	63,514	3	230	0.4%	276

- *Selectmen – Council (2): New Canaan, Trumbull*
- *Selectmen – Town Manager – Town Meeting (3): Granby, Hebron, Winchester)*
- *Selectmen – Town Manager (1): Simsbury*



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### **Interview relevant Connecticut municipalities-Pat Bandzes, Chair**

Pat reported on the process of identifying the appropriate people and organizations to interview. The criteria and the meeting schedule is summarized on these two charts

# Criteria for Interviews

## How Interviews Selected

- Utilize regional Councils of Government
- Select at least one town for each form of government for towns similar in demographics
- Begin with towns in region
- Targeting total of 12-15 interviews using priority ranking

## How Interviews Conducted

- Interview can be in person (preferred), virtual or by phone
- Expected duration = 60 minutes each
- At least two Committee members present
- Document each interview with key findings and information

# Interview Schedule

Priority 1=High 3=Low	Interview Date	Town	Population (Source: AdvanceCT 2021 Town Profiles)	Current Form of Gov't	Chartered or Statute	Key Contact	Remarks
		Chester	4,234	Selectman - Town Meeting	Statute		
1	11/18 by phone	Central Region COG	N/A	N/A	N/A	Matt Hart, Exec Director	Matt was former TM and ATM for Mansfield and Simsbury
1	12/1 @ 2 pm, Essex	RiverCOG	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sam Gold, Exec Director	Chester is member
1	12/8 @ 12:30, Conference Call	South Central Region COG	N/A	N/A	N/A	Laura Francis, Deputy Director	Laura was long-time FS of Durham
1	12/12 @ 10 am, DR Town Hall	Deep River	4,480	Selectman - Town Meeting	Statute	Angus McDonald, First Selectman	
1	12/13 @ 2 pm, Columbia Town Hall	Columbia	5,417	Selectman - Town Meeting (Town Administrator)	Chartered	Mark Walter, Town Administrator	Mark was former First Selectman for East Haddam
1	12/13 @ 3:30 pm, Marlborough Town Hall	Marlborough	6,368	Selectman - Town Meeting	Chartered	Amy Traversa, Interim Town Manager	Amy was a former First Selectwoman for Marlborough; In process of hiring Town Manager
1	12/16 @ 2 pm, Old Saybrook Town Hall	Old Saybrook	10,090	Selectman - Town Meeting	Chartered	Carl Fortuna, First Selectman	
1	12/19 @ 4:30 pm, Essex Town Hall	Essex	6,604	Selectman - Town Meeting	Statute	Norm Needleman, First Selectman	
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	Old Lyme	7,396	Selectman - Town Meeting	Statute	Tim Griswald, First Selectman	In process of hiring Exec Asst to assist CEO
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	Portland	9,322	Selectman - Town Meeting	Chartered	Susan Bransfield, former First Selectman	Susan is one of the longest-serving First Selectman in our state; Portland has a larger BOS and no BOF
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	Wilton	18,463	Selectman - Town Meeting (Town Administrator)	Chartered	Matt Knickerbocker, Town Administrator	Hired TA in Sept 2022
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	Hebron	9,512	Selectman - Town Manager - Town Meeting	Chartered	Andy Tierney, Town Manager	
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	Clinton	12,944	Town Manager - Council	Chartered	Christine Goupil, last First Selectman	Changed from FS - Town Meeting in Nov 2021
1	Week of Jan 2 or 9	South Windsor & East Hampton	25,898 12,827	Town Manager - Council	Chartered	Mike Maniscalco, Town Manager	Mike was former Town Manager for East Hampton; has good knowledge and experience of local government nationally

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## 4. Report to the Board of Selectmen- set date

1/13/23: Report issued to the BOS for review before the 1/25 presentation.

1/25/23: Presentation to the BOS at their schedule.

## 5. Coordination of subcommittee work into a cohesive report

At this point, Governance Study Committee co-chair Michael Sanders led the balance of the meeting.

Since the Committee is on target for delivery of its report to the BOS on 1/13, there is questionable benefit to scheduling a 3rd public meeting to update status because the report will be completed by then. The public is encouraged to attend the BOS 1/25 meeting at which time the Committee will present its report.

## E. Coordination of subcommittee work into a cohesive report

		Week										
		11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23
Milestones	Week#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>Study Committee Mtg:</b>												
Formation and Planning												
Update												
Presentation to BOS												
- Report issued to BOS (60 Days)												
- Report discussed at BOS meeting												
<b>Subcommittee Assignments:</b>												
Alternative forms of government												
Government and management considerations for Chester												
The experience of relevant municipalities												

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## 6. Recap of decisions and next steps

Mike pointed out that the work of the Committee in obtaining the information presented at today's meeting could have been provided by the Town if it had the resources and bandwidth within its staff.

The research phase is almost done and the interviews will be completed within a few weeks.

The format and content of the report is now being structured. There will be an executive summary that will refer to appended chart and resources. The more difficult section of the report will be our conclusions and next steps for the BOS and Town to consider. No recommendations for a specific structure will be made because that was not within our Committee's charter. However, the Committee did not prioritize considering the "Mayor/Council" form of government used by some large municipalities because of its relevancy and suitability to our small population.

The Committee was not constructed to perform a workflow or management study of Town operations, but the BOS may find that certain aspects of how we operate might be improved without changing structure. Although that will not impact other issues of governance, it might help the town operate more effectively.

Our 60 day scope did not include speaking to the various commissions, agencies and staff for a comprehensive understanding of all issues and opportunities for improvement outside of the basic issues summarized by the BOS and included in their charge to our committee. Those aspects might be considered by the BOS for future confirmation.

Pat said that the interviews will take a few more weeks and time will be needed to compile the information. Mike expressed a desire to stay on the 60 day schedule with a 1/13/23 draft. Material aspects of the remaining interviews might reveal new information that could impact our findings so Committee agreed to the 1/13 draft with an understanding that the draft could be amended between 1/13 and the BOS presentation on 1/25/23.

## 7. Other

Jon discussed the Committee's desire to make its research available to the public in almost real time and before the 1/25/23 BOS presentation because there is so much information to absorb in order for the Town to understand its options. The many references to public documents have been listed with the links to the actual documents. This link to be incorporated into the town web site. He explained that the Committee wants the public to have an trail of their thinking which is why the minutes to the first meeting were so detailed.

## Government Study Committee Resources

Town [web site](#)- bottom of home page

- Agendas
- Minutes

Go to temporary GSC information [web site](#) (link to be posted next week)

- Research materials and reference documents

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### 8. Audience of Citizens

David Fitzgibbons- Thanked the Committee for its work. He is struggling with the “why”. How is life going to be better for the residents of Chester and what problems are we solving?

Charlene said that the BOS drove this study, it is not Charlene’s sole decision. Mike said that we might need to change in order to maintain and improve the quality of services to the public.

Any change in structure would need to be approved by voters. Briana pointed out that the Committee is providing the public with the base information so they can be educated on the options that are available.

Michelle Wallack- new to Chester (2 years). Regarding interviewing other towns, how did they educate the public so they could be better voters? What is going on in the minds of the voters? Taxes. The staff workflow should be studied and might impact any thinking about a Town Manager and its effect on taxes.

Karin Badger- Thanked the Committee for the information and work thus far. Suggested that the Committee makes a recommendation because we are so close to it. Would like a professional to manage and be accountable for Town management. Richard said that the report will include a section on “considerations” that might become the basis for the BOS next steps. The BOS, if they move forward, will have guidance from our Committee.

## 9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:16.

Submitted by

Jon Joslow, Co-Chair