



## NANTUCKET TOWN ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

September 24, 2024, at 4:00 pm

Meeting held in the Learning Lab of the Atheneum and by Zoom

### DRAFT MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Attendance in the Atheneum: Peggy Altreuter, Mary Anne Easley, Barbara von der Grueben, Doris Hanna, Peter Hanna, Bill Seay, Campbell Sutton, Anne Terry, Henry Terry.

Attendance by Zoom: Anne Dewez, Gail Norton. The Zoom link was <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87455121153>.

Guests: Curtis Barnes, Joe Grause.

Thanks to the Atheneum, Sammy Aguiar, for hosting the meeting, which was recorded and the link to the video is included here: <https://youtu.be/SJob--ZYvas>.

#### **I. Call the September 24, 2024, Annual Nantucket Town Association Meeting to Order.**

President Henry Terry called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. He then gave the regular warning that no Town Area Plan subjects would be discussed at this meeting.

#### **II. Approval of minutes of the Meeting of August 27, 2024.**

Henry Terry asked for approval of the minutes of the meeting of August 27, 2024; Anne Terry moved their approval, Sutton Campbell seconded them, and the vote to approve was unanimous.

#### **III. Treasurer's Report.**

In Mary Longacre's absence, Henry Terry presented the Treasurer's report, which had no changes in values. Mary Longacre wrote that "There was no activity in the account between 8/25 and 9/22/24 and the balance remains \$3,608.16. I will not be able to attend on Tuesday. Mary Longacre".

The Treasurer's report was accepted upon a motion made by Mary Anne Easley, seconded by Anne Terry, and approved unanimously.

#### **IV. Election of Officers and Directors.**

Henry Terry, in the absence of Barbara G. Cohen, Chair, Nominating Committee, presented the slate of nominees for officers of the Nantucket Town Association.

President: Henry Terry

First Vice-President: Barbara von der Grueben

Second Vice-President: Barbara G. Cohen

Recording Secretary: Lee Saperstein  
Corresponding Secretary: Mary Anne Easley  
Treasurer: Mary Longacre  
Clerk: Trish Bridier  
Directors: Peggy Altreuter, Marsha Fader, Craig Muhlhauser, Bill Seay, Anne Terry, and Paula Williams.

Anne Terry moved to approve the list, which Mary Anne Easley seconded, and the members approved unanimously.

#### **V. Guest Speaker, Joe Grause, Chair, Town Council Study Committee.**

At this point in the meeting, Henry Terry introduced the guest speaker, Joe Grause, Chair of the Town Council Study Committee. He began by reminding the group that there had been earlier calls to study forms of Town government other than by Town Meeting. At the 2023 Annual Town Meeting, a motion made by Curtis Barnes, and supported by many others, to study only one form of alternative government, namely the town council, passed. Subsequently, in November of 2023, the Select Board appointed a study committee, which has met bi-weekly, and this presentation is a report of findings from it.

Joe Grause started by listing some of the negative aspects of Town Meeting, including the reality that new issues appear only once a year and, that if there are questions causing an issue to be set aside, it is another year before it may be considered. With real population growth on Nantucket, waiting one year before zoning changes may be considered is too long. His presentation tended to follow the PowerPoint slides, which are attached to these minutes. The study committee intends to draft a revised Town Charter and share it with the public in open meetings, hence it could be two or three years before the draft charter can be brought to a vote. If approved by Town voters in both the Town Meeting and in a general election, it will go to the State's General Court as a home-rule petition for its review and approval.

At slide 9., a question was asked about the difference between a Town Council and the Select Board. Joe Grause responded by spelling out the distinction between a legislative body and a regulatory one. Annual Town Meeting is a legislative, sometimes called statutory, body and is the place where amendments and additions to the Town's Code are proposed and passed. Town Council would be a legislative body and would replace the Annual Town Meeting. The Select Board is a regulatory body and implements this legislation; it may not create new legislation. The proposed Town Council would have a secondary, regulatory role and just how this dual-role would work will be worked out in the draft town charter. Nantucket has a Town Manager, who would be retained in the new form of government. The Manager is appointed now by the Select Board and, should the Town Council form be approved, would report to the Council. In addition, existing boards, commissions, and committees would remain as they are at present. They will hold two public forums in October.

Joe Grause also indicated that the Study Committee will propose that the Council have nine members, all elected at-large for three-year terms. They considered the idea of precincts and rejected it because of the imbalance in the number of voters dwelling in any likely precinct. The numbers in Town are much greater than in any of the other villages on the Island. Unlike Town Meeting, where one must be a registered voter to speak on an issue, Curtis Barnes indicated that a Town Council is receptive to anyone who wishes to speak no matter their voting status.

During a lengthy question-and-answer period, Anne Dewez asked about the alternative of representative town meeting, which was one of the government

forms listed in the early slide, and was told that this style of town government did not solve the problem of too few meetings in a year. Also, there are issues on how to define fairly the notion of a representative person. She suggested also that the current selection process for those town boards, commissions, and committees that involve an open application and review process before the Select Board should be continued before a Town Council. Later in the discussion it was said that, at any time, a petition signed by a minimum of 200 people could initiate a full-scale Town Meeting.

In closing, it was said that the study committee welcomes inputs that can be sent to them through the e-mail address on their web site. Henry Terry thanked them of their input to the association.

#### **VI. New Business.**

Henry Terry reported that Bill Connell of the Nantucket Clean Team is looking, as always, for volunteers. They meet every Saturday morning at 8:00 am at the Handlebars Cafe; Henry Terry has contact information for the Clean Team. Also, that Nantucket Lights is holding a fund raiser at Cisco Brewery.

#### **VII. Adjournment.**

Henry Terry asked for a motion to adjourn and got one from Barbara von der Groeben, which was seconded by Campbell Sutton, and approved unanimously. It was 4:53 pm.

**\*Next meeting will be on October 22, 2024. It will be hybrid with an in-person meeting in the Atheneum and a virtual one via Zoom; if one uses Zoom, the address is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87455121153>.**

Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary, [saperste@mst.edu](mailto:saperste@mst.edu).

# A Step Towards More Responsive Town Government on Nantucket

## The Case for Converting to Town Council/Town Manager Form of Local Governance

Presented by the Town Council Study Committee  
September 2024

### Contents

- ▶ Town Council Study Committee
- ▶ Forms of municipal government in Massachusetts
- ▶ Open Town Meeting on Nantucket - What's the problem?
- ▶ Town Council/Town Manager. Characteristics and Benefits

### Town Council Study Committee

- ▶ Created by Citizens' Article 81 at 2023 ATM submitted by Curtis Barnes
- ▶ Purpose is:
  - ▶ To study the establishment of a Town Council form of Government, and
  - ▶ Submit an Article to a future Town Meeting enabling conversion to Town Council
- ▶ Select Board appointed nine voting members in October 2023; requested that the Committee review all possible government forms.
- ▶ TCSC unanimously voted to move forward with creating a draft Town Council form of Charter for Nantucket and Article for Town Meeting 2025.
- ▶ Public outreach to gain voters' reactions to Charter details

## Massachusetts Forms of Municipal Government

	Legislative Body	# of Communities	Population	Avg Size
Open Town Meeting >6000	Individual Voters	143	1,970,310	13,778
Open Town Meeting <6000	Individual Voters	116	296,424	2,555
Representative Town Meeting	Elected Voters (~100-200)	32	929,948	29,061
Town Council/Town Manager	Elected Town Councilors (9-11)	13	406,396	31,261
City Council/Mayor	Elected City Councilors	46	3,381,645	73,514

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## Open Town Meeting - Positives

- ▶ Part of Nantucket's history and culture
- ▶ "Direct" democracy
- ▶ Voters are the Legislature - participate in governance process
- ▶ Nantucket has historically had better-than-average turnout for Town Meetings, ranging 4.9%-15% over the past 20+ years

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## Open Town Meeting - What's the Problem?

- ▶ Nantucket, and the issues it faces, have out-grown Open Town Meeting:
  - ▶ OTM is slow and cumbersome. It does not deal with complex issues well
  - ▶ Only one or two town meetings per year means the Legislature meets and acts infrequently; Citizens' articles need to be submitted sixmonths prior to Town Meeting
  - ▶ Large number of Articles and complicated issues are very difficult for voters.
  - ▶ Attendance declines as Town Meetings extend from Day 1 to Day 2 to Day 3
- ▶ Open Town Meeting does not represent the Island's voters
  - ▶ Only rarely have more than 12% of voters attended; attendance declines to 23% over course of the meeting
  - ▶ Core attendees to OTM are older, wealthier and not fully representative of islands' population
- ▶ Despite trying week night and weekend meeting formats, OTM is very difficult for many voters to attend and participate in the whole meeting

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## Open Town Meeting Versus Town Council

- ▶ **Open Town Meeting:**
  - ▶ Citizens form Legislature
  - ▶ 1-3 Town Meetings per year
  - ▶ Select Board and Town Manager are the Executive branch. Town Manager executes most appointments, regulations, hires and fires key employees (usually with approval/veto of Select Board)
  - ▶ Select Board appoints those commission, committee members who are not elected
  - ▶ Town Charter defines various details about how Town is organized (e.g. Planning Board, Enterprise Funds, etc.)
- ▶ **Town Council/Town Manager**
  - ▶ Town Councilors - elected by citizens - are the legislative body.
  - ▶ Town Council meets regularly throughout the year.
  - ▶ Town Council hires Town Manager who is the head of executive branch. Town Manager responsible for most hires and appointments.
  - ▶ Voters and Non-voters have the right to speak before the Town Council.
  - ▶ Town Charter can be customized to reflect local preferences, i.e. include structures specific to Nantucket.

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## Advantages of Town Council/Town Manager Form

- ▶ Town Governance is a continuous process throughout the year. No need to wait for ATM or Special TMs
- ▶ The Town Councilors are the legislative body for the Town. Professional. Knowledgeable. Well -informed. The buck stops there.
- ▶ Town Councilors represent ALL of their constituents. Citizenry has open access to the Councilors as well as to Town Council Meetings. Citizens with a petition or issue only have to lobby the 9 Councilors.
- ▶ Competitive compensation for Town Councilors may attract more candidates for office.
- ▶ Town Council form can adapt to all of Nantucket's various committees and boards.
- ▶ Nantucket already has a strong Town Manager so conversion to TC form should be straightforward.

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## The Path to Town Council

- ▶ TCSC creates a new Town Charter document to support a Town Council form of government.
- ▶ TCSC, in creating a new Charter, will discuss (and will seek public input on) various administrative issues (e.g. number of Councilors, elected versus appointed boards and committees, etc.)
- ▶ TCSC will compose a report to the Select Board as well as an Article proposing the conversion to Town Council for the 2025 Annual Town Meeting.
- ▶ If the Article passes at ATM, the Select Board sends the proposed Charter to the Legislature;
- ▶ After legislative review, the new Charter would go before all the voters on the next Town election (May 2026).
- ▶ If successful at the ballot, the Select Board would create a conversion committee/process.

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## Town Council Study Committee

- ▶ Joe Grause, Chair
- ▶ Jeff Carlson, Vice Chair
- ▶ Tom Dixon, Select Board Representative
- ▶ Jill Vieth, Finance Committee Representative
- ▶ Caroline Baltzer
- ▶ Rachel Mandle
- ▶ Curtis Barnes
- ▶ Beau Barber
- ▶ Kelly Steffen
- ▶ Donna Martino, Non-Voting Taxpayers' Representative (non-voting member)
- ▶ Alternates: Malcom MacNab (SB), Jeremy Bloomer (FinCom), Pamela Suan (NVTP)

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