



MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT BULLETIN



CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES

900 CHAPEL STREET, 9th FLOOR, NEW HAVEN, CT 06510-2807 PHONE (203) 498-3000 • FAX (203) 562-6314

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BASIC STEPS FOR REVISING OR DEVELOPING A MUNICIPAL CHARTER

This bulletin is an update of one previously issued in March 1999.

The process for charter revision, from initiating a proposal to filing approved revisions with the secretary of state, is prescribed by the *Connecticut General Statutes* (CGS). Summarized below are the basic steps to municipal charter revision with their statutory citations.

STEP 1: Charter revision proposals must be initiated by either a 2/3 vote of the entire membership of the municipal appointing authority (common council, board of aldermen, selectmen, etc.), or a petition signed by not less than 10% of the electorate.
(CGS §§ 7-187(a), 7-188(b))



STEP 2: Within 30 days after step 1, the appointing authority must appoint a charter commission, charter revision commission, or home rule ordinance revision commission. The commission must consist of five to fifteen electors, not more than 1/3 of whom may hold another public office, and with no more than a bare majority from the same political party.
(CGS § 7-190(a))



STEP 3: The commission must hold at least two public hearings: one prior to beginning substantive work, and one after the commission has completed a draft report, but before submitting it to the appointing authority. (CGS § 7-191(a))



STEP 4: The appointing authority shall prescribe a date, no later than 16 months from appointment, by which the commission must submit the draft report, including the proposed revisions, to the municipal clerk.
(CGS §§ 7-190(b), 7-191(b))



This bulletin has been sent to all CCM-member mayors, first selectmen, city/town managers and town attorneys.

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STEP 5: The appointing authority shall hold at least one public hearing not later than 45 days after submission of the commission's draft report. (CGS § 191(b))



STEP 6: The appointing authority may recommend changes to the draft report not later than 15 days after its final hearing. If no changes are recommended, the draft becomes final. (CGS § 7-191(b))



STEP 7: Not later than 30 days after the commission receives the appointing authority's recommendations, the commission may accept or reject any recommendations, and submit a final report. (CGS § 7-191(c))



STEP 8: Not later than 15 days after receiving the final report, the appointing authority may, by majority vote, either approve or reject the charter, amendments, or revisions in total or in part. The commission terminates upon the appointing authority's acceptance or rejection of its final report. Following a vote to reject, the electorate has 45 days in which to file a petition for referendum. (CGS §§ 7-191(d), 7-190(c))



STEP 9: Not later than 30 days after appointing authority approval or certification of electorate petition, the charter, amendments, or revisions must be published at least once in a local newspaper. (CGS § 7-191(d))



STEP 10: After approval or the filing of electorate petition, the appointing authority decides by majority vote whether to hold a vote on the charter, amendments, or revisions at either a regular election (simple majority vote is needed for approval), or a special election (majority equal to at least 15% of qualified electors needed for approval). (CGS §§ 7-191(e), 7-191(f))



STEP 11: Within 15 days of the election, the municipal clerk must notify the secretary of state, in writing, of the results. Not later than 30 days after approval, the municipal clerk must file three certified copies of the charter, amendments, or revisions with the secretary of state. (CGS §§ 9-371, 7-191(h))

For more information on charter revision, or for a copy of CCM's *Information Kit* on this subject, please contact CCM's Information Service at (203) 498-3000, or by e-mail at research@ccm-ct.org.