

Presented to the Plymouth Charter Commission

June 24, 2021

I would first like to thank the members of the Commission for allowing me the opportunity to address them.

The most basic function of a government, at every level, is to provide necessary services for the people. From the position of town meeting member up to the President of the United States, it is the duty of every elected official to support the general welfare of their constituents. The greater the level of confidence that a constituency has that their representative not only recognizes but understands their concerns and grievances, and can present them to the appropriate people, the greater level of confidence the people will have in their government as a whole.

The single most important aspect of an effective and productive government is that the citizens believe their representative has an immediate and intimate knowledge of their specific community, the problems within that community and the challenges it faces. When someone with a concern contacts a local official, who lives outside their community, to address a local problem, the concerned citizen often does not have the conviction that the official, because they do not live with the problem, cannot fully comprehend the gravity of the situation. Whether or not this belief is warranted, having a person represent a community of which they are not a part diminishes the trust and expectations by the citizenry.

In addition, if one community of a town gets their streets paved, trees trimmed, or fields manicured before other parts of town, the citizens of the other communities will complain that it is because their district does not have the same level of representation within the governmental structure. These are not outrageous claims, but legitimate occurrences. It is quite common that citizens with concerns are left feeling helpless because there is not one specific person to whom they can relate their concerns.

Currently, as you all know, in the town of Plymouth, a town larger than any other in area and continually growing in population, is divided into 15 precincts. Each precinct has concerns and demands specific to their location as well as individual challenges from the demographics of that community. With five selectmen elected on an at-large basis, each of the selectmen are responsible for approximately 135 square miles of area for constituent services. As Town Meeting Members are elected by precinct and can more readily understand the issues that face their community, their ability to interact with citizens is often more effective, but as it currently stands, the duties of Town Meeting Members are limited, and do not include either constituent services or representing the needs of their precinct to town officials, departments or agencies.

It is for this reason that I would like to present to the Charter Commission a proposal that would address the difficulties and limitations of constituent services in Plymouth as well as

raise the level of confidence the citizens of Plymouth have in their government. The proposals are as follows:

1. The town of Plymouth be divided into five districts. The districts shall be established by using the current precinct boundaries. Each district shall be comprised of three precincts that are in a contiguous alignment. The precincts shall contain their current autonomy in elections for Town Meeting Members, and elections of Town Meeting Members will not be changed from its current manner.
2. The voters of each district shall elect a district selectperson. Upon his/her election, the district selectperson shall also be appointed as a Town Meeting Member to the precincts within their district.
3. After the first two elections, the term of all district selectpersons shall be three years. Prior to the first election of district selectperson, the town clerk shall draw numbers to determine which district will be an initial one year, two-year and three-year position. This will ensure an orderly and continual level of experience on the board.
4. It will be the duty of each district selectperson to represent the needs and concerns of their district, and present those concerns to the town administrator, town department heads, or the town legislative body for debate, deliberation and necessary action.
5. The members of the board of selectmen, although representing their own district, shall work with the other members of the board as a body to address the issues brought before them concerning a specific district, as well as work as a body to address the issues of the town as a whole.
6. The adoption and implementation of this proposal shall not, in any way, change the current workings of Town Meeting.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

William Arienti  
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 6  
23 Highland Ave  
617-594-0681