

Amherst Charter Commission  
Listening Session Minutes  
Amherst Community Connections  
Oct. 19, 2016, 10 am

Commission members present: Meg Gage, Nick Grabbe, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Julia Rueschemeyer, Diana Stein.

Comments received in Group 1, as reported by Nick Grabbe:

What's working?

There's no barrier to participation in Town Meeting.  
The block party.  
Services are being delivered.  
Services to support homeless.  
You can walk down the street without worrying about being robbed or seeing addicts.

What's not working?

Police racial profiling.  
Only one African-American working at Town Hall.  
Many people don't know what kind of government there is.  
Schools are worse than they were 40 years ago.  
Young families are leaving town.  
UMass does whatever it wants and has no plan to house more students.  
Board members who are there a long time have biases.  
Ten times as many homeless people  
Town overwhelmed by rentals, crowding non-students out  
Students not treated with respect.

What would you change?

Planning Department under-resourced.  
We don't get good value for taxes.  
Staff unable to hear voice of the people  
Should have term limits on boards.  
Select Board members shouldn't choose their friends for committees.

Comments received in Group 2, as reported by Meg Gage:

It's hard to track what's happening; need more transparency.  
Housing Authority has negative energy and bad leadership.  
There's not enough help working with the governmental system.

We need more public transportation.

Visible homeless tip of the iceberg.

People elected on basis of name recognition.

Anxiety about a mayor

If you don't have an Amherst address, you're not given preference on Housing Authority list

Need more housing vouchers.