

Amherst Charter Commission Public Input Form

The Amherst Charter Commission seeks input for our community conversation about Amherst and its values about Town government. We invite interested stakeholders to share their thoughts on the following questions. You may also provide your input online via the Charter Commission website, at <http://www.amherstma.gov/2248/Charter-Commission>

1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

The fact that any citizen who cares to can find a place to participate in the government such as a committee or in town meeting they can learn the facts + complexities as deeply as they want to be involved

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

We do a lot of dissemination of information - but you can't make those work find some way to get everyone to inform themselves.

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Some people are not able to be involved because they have other priorities or are just not interested as long as their lives are not impacted upon by an issue or a selection.

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

Change human nature - we are lucky to have a preponderance of interested citizen who do pay attention & participate.

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

do not close down the methods we have for getting maximum participation - by having fewer positions to be filled

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

Public/private dorms - taxable.

Could actually take the actual property tax bill every month, rather than depend on estimates

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Keep developers at bay (though the N. Amherst project - Atkins and such - was done well....)

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

Retain (and streamline) town meetings

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

Contact info (optional) _____

(Attach additional sheet(s) if needed)

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

- Citizen participation in votes on issues-
- Government information reaches residents in large numbers.
- Chance for residents to bring issues by petition.

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

- more early outreach and discussion of issues by boards & committees

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

- planning for future needs & growth that will occur whether we want it or not.
- Housing
- Parking in town center
- Fire station

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

- Effort to include public input early.

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

structurally its fine, but town committees need to both be more diverse and to represent more diverse (and library Trustees) points of view

appointive

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

require that the Select Board conduct a budget public hearing and that the Joint Capital Planning Committee also be required to publish a draft 5-year plan and conduct a evening public hearing

as the School Committee does

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

remaining a family-friendly community with a 12-month economy rather than becoming a giant UMass dormitory based on a 2-month economy ... obtaining significant revenues from UMass for roads

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

elect the planning board and the finance committee so that they become more responsive to our year-round residents

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

and from the town's non-profits to benefit the General Fund and stabilize taxes

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taxes

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

I like participatory democracy. It includes people from the community at a level & appropriate to people working full time. I very much want to keep this possibility open.

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

- * Meetings where decisions are made could be more contiguous, year around.
- * All committee members could be elected instead of appointed.
- * Town meeting size can be reduced (but more people needed than a council would have).

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Town meeting faces with a town administration, in which opinion is unanimous, but different than many or most citizens. Business interest seems to affect the leaders more than the average citizens.

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

Make committee members voted on, rather than assigned by any in the leadership - this current way it feels too involved.

? How do we, keep a 9 member council have high diversity. Will moneyless segments be represented?

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

- * A town council can make decisions faster but with less citizen input. Also it will likely be not able to participate in decisionmaking directly, as a person working full time.
- * Also don't use consultants, it reduces credibility!

Contact info (optional) GABOR LUKACS (Attach additional sheet(s) if needed)

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

~~I like the current approach to government~~

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE AMHERST KEEP TOWN MEETING BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD DROP THE NUMBERS OF MEMBERS TO 9 PER PRECINCT ~~PER~~ (3 YEAR TERMS - 3 VOTED IN EACH YEAR). I

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

FEEL THAT THIS WILL MAKE TOWN MEETING MUCH MORE REPRESENTATIVE & EACH ELECTION MORE CONTENTIOUS. IT WILL ALSO ~~CREATE~~ ^{MAKE} TOWN MEETING MEMBERS MORE RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR CONSTITUENT & CAN/WILL BE VOTED

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

OUT IF THEY DONT SPEAK FOR THE PEOPLE.

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

Contact info (optional)

NOLAN ANAYA

(413) 627 7922 (CELL)
(Attach additional sheet(s) if needed)

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

town meeting and the potential for democratic participation it represents
I am excited about our new town manager

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

Better relationships with between the public and boards particularly zoning.
More access to boards

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Balancing development and maintaining the character of the town. Enlarging the economic base so there are more jobs. Providing true public transportation

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

Better communication, out reach to a more diverse public.

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

I like Town Meeting.

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

I think Town Meeting on average is a deliberative & fair governing body.

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Development - over crowding,
too much traffic - plundering
natural resources for profit -
new buildings v. renovation

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

Keep Town meeting in place

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

Efforts to get rid of Town meeting always follow a defeat of some major zoning act or rejection and appear as a sour grapes and power play.

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

Town manager + superintendent have no accountability to voters.

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

Mayor + council w/ superintendent tied to mayor + mayor able to appoint some school board members,

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

Either go regional K-12 or disband regional system

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

No thanks

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1. What aspects of Amherst's current approach to government do you like?

- Inclusive & active participation; citizen involvement, citizen boards, committees
- Transparency & accountability for political & fiscal decisions
- SB, professional Town Manager, Legislative/Representative Town Meeting

2. What aspects do you think could be improved?

- Reduce size of Town Meeting in order to increase # of informed citizens speaking positions - too inefficient currently, often due to time to respond to questions that reps should already know; have picked
- Help increase the responsiveness & quality of town meeting. Reduce # to no more than 10 per precinct

3. What do you see as key challenges facing Amherst?

- Balancing development with other Amherst values.
- financial encumbrance of 4 major capital projects
- Not having Rocky Posier! Appointment of his successor soon, hopefully!
- long range planning while the Charter Commission does its work
- timely decision making: replace Rep TM w/ "Committees from each precinct"

4. How can we improve our Town government's ability to meet those challenges?

- Reorganization of central areas/departments charged with advice
- Collaborative partnerships with 3 Higher Ed institutions - INCREASE
- Tighten/Combine the over 50 committees, (some dealing with familiar changes;
- Key stakeholders: Residents, w/ & w/out school aged children; businesses; staff, colleges, etc
- Elected positions for Planning & Finance Boards

5. Any other thoughts or feedback you would like to provide?

- More women & minorities as stakeholders

Contact info (optional)

Amanda Terrence

(Attach additional sheet(s) if needed)