

**Newton Charter Commission**  
**Composition of the City Council: Follow Up Discussion**  
**November 16, 2016**

**Recap of City Council Composition Decision-Making Process**

*April 2016*

- Reviewed peer city council data and best practices recommendations
- Conducted panel discussions with current and former city councilors from Newton and comparably sized cities
- Considered 5 scenarios
- Deliberated and voted for **Scenario D** at April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting:
  - 13-member council composed of 1 councilor from each ward, elected at large, and 5 truly at-large councilors
- Received feedback from voters following the April 13<sup>th</sup> vote via email, blogs, Newton Tab editorial page, public comment at meetings, and personal conversations
  - Most consistent themes of feedback (not necessarily in equal proportion) were 1) support for scenario D proposal, and 2) support for continuing to have ward-only councilors on the city council. To a lesser degree, there was support for the 16-councilor scenario and for maintaining 24 councilors.

*August 2016*

- Revisited the topic of city council composition at August 24<sup>th</sup> meeting in light of feedback received

- Considered an **alternative scenario**:
  - 12-member council composed of 1 councilor from each ward, elected at large, and 4 councilors from districts made up of combined wards, elected at-large
- Commissioners generally expressed preference for
  - Downsizing city council by about half
  - All councilors to be elected at-large
  - *One commissioner expressed strong preference for a number of councilors that is easily divisible by 3 and 4 (to get a whole number for a 2/3 or 3/4 majority). This also lowers the threshold for achieving a majority.*
- No vote was taken
- Continued to receive feedback
- Additional research was undertaken to understand the differences in the scenarios

## City Council Composition Alternatives

<b>At-Large Pool</b>	<b>At-Large by District</b>	<b>Ward Councilor Scenario</b>
<p>12 or 13-member council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 at-large by ward councilors plus 4 or 5 at-large councilors (with no residency requirement)</li> </ul>	<p>12-member council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 at-large by ward councilors plus 4 at-large by district councilors</li> </ul>	<p>13-member council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce # of wards to 6</li> <li>• 1 ward councilor per ward plus 7 at-large councilors (with no residency requirement)</li> </ul>
<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All at-large; all councilors answer to the whole city.</li> <li>• At-large pool is likely more accountable, always challenged.</li> <li>• At-large pool allows the best in the city to get elected regardless of residency.</li> <li>• Of 54 cities in Massachusetts, 52 have at-large pool (popular due to specific benefits).</li> <li>• Allows an individual to run for office without challenging an incumbent in a 1:1 race or waiting for the seat to open.</li> </ul>	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All at-large; all councilors answer to the whole city.</li> <li>• Eliminates the at-large pool concern of having a concentration of councilors from one ward.</li> <li>• Provides 2 layers of geography-restricted representation.</li> </ul>	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retains ward-only representation; ward councilors answer only to the ward.</li> <li>• Retains a majority of at-large representatives.</li> <li>• Adds complexity for voters when ward boundaries are re-drawn.</li> </ul>