

Town of Orono

Proposed Town Charter Amendments

Elements of Orono's Town Charter

- **Establishes the Council - Town Manager Form of Government**
- **Vests powers in the Town Council and defines criteria for Town Councilors**
- **Creates and defines criteria for certain Boards**

Elements of Orono's Town Charter

- **Vests and defines powers of the Town Manager**
- **Describes the Annual Budgeting Process**
- **Establishes the Municipal Nomination and Election Process**

Elements of Orono's Town Charter

- **Prescribes the referendum and initiative process to:**
 - **Overrule certain Council action;**
 - **Allow for Council to submit ordinances, orders or resolves to popular vote; and**
 - **Allows voters to enact ordinances by initiative.**

Charter Amendment vs. Revision

Amendment = Minor Changes to Update the Charter

- **Council Recommends Amendments**
- **Voters Accept or Reject at the Annual Municipal Election**

Revision = Changing the Fundamental Structure of Governance

- **Requires the Seating of an Elected Charter Commission**
- **Commission Recommends Revisions**
- **Voters Accept or Reject at the Annual Municipal Election**

**THE ORONO TOWN COUNCIL
IS RECOMMENDING
AMENDMENTS TO
THE TOWN CHARTER**

Proposed Amendment (Article #1)

Shall the municipality approve amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono updating gender references and correcting grammatical errors?

What does Article #1 do?

- **Updates gender references for consistency with current practices (he/him vs. they/them); and**
- **Corrects grammatical errors (town vs. Town, board vs. Board, and includes punctuation to reflect intent).**

(Throughout the document.)

Proposed Amendment #2

Shall the municipality approve the amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono to require that only residents of the Town are eligible to be Councilors?

What does Article #2 do?

In 1969, when the Charter was adopted registered voters were by definition residents of the town. Changes in Maine Law allow for individuals temporarily residing in the state to register to vote without declaring a permanent residency change. As proposed, this article would require an individual to be both a permanent resident and registered voter of Orono to serve on Council.

(Section 1.1.2)

Proposed Amendment (Article #3)

Shall the municipality approve amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono authorizing the addition of two (2) Associate Members of the Orono Board of Assessment Review, both of whom would be authorized to participate only in the event necessary to produce a quorum?

What does Article #3 do?

With only three members on the Board of Assessment Review (BAR), it is often difficult to schedule hearings within the statutory time frame allowed for taxpayer appeal. The use of Associate Members mirrors the structure of other Town Boards and will allow the BAR to meet as necessary.

(Section 1.1.5)

Proposed Amendment (Article #4)

Shall the municipality approve amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono to recognize the organization of Regional School Unit No. 26 and to reflect that, pursuant to state law, the Town of Orono no longer has a Department of Education?

What does Article #4 do?

Several years ago, voters of the Town of Orono elected to move from a municipal school department and formed RSU #26. This vote created a new legal entity separate from the Town or oversight by the Town Council; however, the Town Charter has not yet been updated to reflect this change. Article 4 seeks to update the Charter to reflect this change in structure.

(Sections 1.1.7)

Proposed Amendment (Article #5)

Shall the municipality approved amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono to make clear that the Town Council has broad authority to review, amend, and approve the municipal budget and to extend the deadline for submission of a Capital Improvement Plan?

What does Article #5 do?

As a matter of practice, the Town Council has broad authority to adopt the annual budget. The Council is proposing to strike language in Section 1.1.8 that appears to limit this authority; however, seeks to maintain the practice of adopting budgets at the departmental level.

(Section 1.1.8)

Proposed Amendment (Article #6)

Shall the municipality approved amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono relating to municipal nominations and elections to clarify the priority of state law in the municipal election process, to impose certain ballot requirements, and to require write-in candidates to obtain the same number of votes required to be nominated in order to be successful?

What does Article #5 do?

Article 5 seeks to clarify that:

- In the case of conflicting statutory guidance for elections, the Town will follow MRSA 30-A;**
- The slate of nominees for election to municipal office will be placed on the ballot in alphabetical order using the name as it appears on the official voter list and without reference to political party or affiliation; and**

What does Article #5 do?

Article 5 seeks to clarify that (Cont.):

- Those meeting the criteria to serve as Town Councilor or RSU #26 Director may be elected by write-in vote with no declaration in advance provided that they garner at least the number of votes required to be placed on the ballot through the nomination process.**

(Section 1.1.9)

PROPOSED AMENDMENT (Article #7)

Shall the municipality approve amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono to reduce the threshold number of required signatures of registered voters needed to certify a petition from 10% of the total number of registered voters to 10% of those having cast ballots during the last Gubernatorial Election?

What does Article #7 do?

Currently, a petition to overrule Town Council action or enact an ordinance by initiative must be signed by at least 10% of individuals registered to vote in Orono. As proposed, this threshold would be reduced to require signatures of voters equaling at least 10% of the number of votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.

(Section 1.1.10)

Registered Voters vs. Votes Cast

<u>Year</u>	<u>Registered Voters</u>	<u>Votes Cast</u>	<u>Difference</u>
2018	9,844	4,447	5,397
2014	9,920	3,528	6,392
2010	10,364	3,293	7,071
2006	14,206	3,401	10,805

Proposed Amendment #8

Shall the municipality approve amendments to the Municipal Charter of the Town of Orono increasing the threshold for sending certain Town Council purchases and borrowings to referendum from \$100,000 to \$500,000?

What does Article #8 do?

When the Town Charter was adopted in 1969, the threshold for providing voters the opportunity to reconsider Town Council purchasing and borrowing actions to only those decisions related to a single item or capital project of \$100,000 or more. Adjusted for inflation, this would equate to approximately \$670,000-\$700,000 (depending upon index used).

(Section 1.1.10)