

Proposed 2026 Charter Study Commission

Learn about the ballot question on the Barnstable County Charter Study Commission.

Informational notice: This flyer is provided for informational purposes only. Barnstable County does not advocate for or against ballot questions.

Nov. 3, 2026 Ballot question at the State Election	19 Commissioners, including 15 elected members	~18 Months Approximate review period	Final Report Findings and recommendations issued to voters
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BALLOT QUESTION A:

"Shall a charter study commission be created to study the present governmental structure of Barnstable County to consider and make findings concerning the form of government and make recommendations thereon?"

WHAT IS A CHARTER STUDY COMMISSION?

A 19-member, nonpartisan body made up of 15 elected members (one from each Barnstable County town), three County Commissioners or their designees, and the Speaker of the Assembly of Delegates or her designee.

Each member's vote is based on the population of the town they represent. The Commission would review the County Charter and governmental structure, make findings and recommendations, and issue a final report to voters.

WHY IS THIS ON THE BALLOT?

The Barnstable County Charter was approved by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1988 and requires periodic review to make sure that regional operations are fully accountable to the people. An elected charter commission is the standard democratic process under the Massachusetts Constitution that is used to review our government. The Board of Regional Commissioners voted to propose a Charter Study Commission citing the need for broader public involvement in reviewing the Home Rule Charter.

WHAT YOUR VOTE MEANS

Voters will be asked whether to create an elected Charter Study Commission.

YES Creates the Charter Study Commission.	NO Does not create the Charter Study Commission.
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ELECT YOUR TOWN'S COMMISSIONER

Voters in each of the 15 towns may also elect a Charter Study Commissioner, regardless of how they vote on the ballot question. Elected candidates take office only if the question passes countywide.

Nov. 3, 2026

Ballot question and town Commissioner races appear at the State Election.

After the Election

If the question passes countywide, the Commission is established and elected members take office.

2027–2028

The Commission reviews the Charter and governmental structure and develops its findings.

Final Report

The Commission issues a report detailing its findings and recommendations.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT

Robin Young, Barnstable County Government Regional Clerk

(508) 375-6648 | robin.young@capecod.gov

You may also contact your local Municipal Town Clerk or the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.



Understanding the Charter Study Commission

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Over the years, elected officials, civic leaders, and community organizations have expressed interest in reviewing Barnstable County government and its governing charter.
- In 2025, the Assembly of Delegates convened a Charter Review Committee as part of the Charter's required periodic review process.
- Citing the need for broader public involvement, the Board of Regional Commissioners voted to request that the Secretary of the Commonwealth initiate the process for a Charter Study Commission, placing the question on the November 3, 2026 ballot.

WHAT THE COMMISSION COULD CONSIDER

The Commission would review the current structure of Barnstable County government and recommend, at its sole discretion, potential revisions to the County Charter, including changes that could make fundamental and wholesale changes to the form of county government.

WHAT IS A CHARTER COMMISSION?

Elected charter commissions are used throughout Massachusetts to study local government structure and recommend potential changes to voters. A commission typically conducts research, holds public meetings, gathers community input, and issues findings and recommendations before any changes are considered by voters.

The proposed Barnstable County commission would operate under legislation specific to the County.

The background on charter commissions is provided for educational purposes and is not specific to the proposed Barnstable County Charter Study Commission.

BARNSTABLE COUNTY CHARTER RESOURCES

- **Charter & Commission Information:** capecod.gov/county-government/charter
- **2025 Charter Review:** capecod.gov/county-government/charter/charter-review/2025-charter-review
- **2019–2020 Charter Review:** capecod.gov/county-government/charter/charter-review/2019-2020-charter-review

SCAN FOR THE FULL DETAILS

Regional Clerk | (508) 375-6648 | robin.young@capecod.gov

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