

## SPRAGUE CHARTER COMMISSION

Appointed by the Board of Selectmen in October 2007, the Sprague Charter Commission is in the process of drafting a charter for the Town of Sprague.

Recently the Commission presented a draft charter at a public hearing and townspeople gave us their feedback. The commission is discussing the comments we received and the minutes of our discussion are available at the town hall and on the town website.

For the most part, the charter will follow the existing town ordinances. The proposed charter sets forth the authority of each public official, board and commission while establishing executive and legislative authority in a way that the commission believes is respectful of Sprague's unique history.

However, one important change in a town ordinance is being proposed. The new charter will change the election of several boards in Sprague.

Currently, the election of the Boards of Finance, Selectmen, Education, Assessors, and Assessment Appeals is governed by a special act passed by the General Assembly in 1949. The special act provides for something called a bare majority in electing members to the listed boards. This means the party who has the most members known as the majority party can have only one more member than the party with fewer members known as the minority party. Importantly, this act limits the number that can be voted.

The majority party has nothing to do with the party of the selectman or number of registered Democrats or Republicans in the town but is only determined by the number of Democrats or Republicans on the board or commission.

Bare majority as defined in the special act has the advantage of allowing more members of the minority party. Many consider this to be fairer.

The party representation that is proposed by the charter is the same as the party representation allowed by the CT General Statutes. This representation is known as a supermajority. The number of members from the majority party would remain the same for boards of fewer than 5 members.

However, the Board of Finance, which has 6 members and can currently have 3 from each party, could elect up to 4 from the majority party and 2 from the minority party in the charter. The Board of Education with its 7 members could elect up to 5 members from the majority party and 2 from the minority party.

Why does the Commission think this is a better idea? Supermajority allows a party to run more candidates in an election. Why? Because each party is not limited to the number of candidates as the special act limits them. For example, if there were two full term positions open on the Board of Finance or the Board of Education, the charter would

permit voters to choose from two candidates from each party. Currently voters can choose from only one candidate from each party for the two positions.

The other reason for the proposed change is consistency. The Planning and Zoning Commission is elected according to the supermajority rule. All appointed commissions in town should also be appointed according to the supermajority rule, as there is nothing in the town ordinances which says otherwise.

The Commission is interested in your opinion on this subject. You can find a draft of the charter on the Town of Sprague website [www.ctsprague.org](http://www.ctsprague.org). The Charter Commission has its own tab on the left. Or send us comments to [spraguechartercommission@ctsprague.org](mailto:spraguechartercommission@ctsprague.org).

Look in next month's Our Town for another article about the proposed charter. There will be one more public hearing in January before the draft charter is given to the Board of Selectmen. In November 2009 the charter will go to town election.

If you are interested in hearing more about the charter, come to one of our meetings. We meet every other Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall. Our November meetings are November 11 and 25. Commission members are Dick Douville, Acting Chair; Susan Zimmerman, Secretary; Joe Osowski; Dennison Allen and Kord Jablonski.

Susan Zimmerman  
Sprague Charter Commission