

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WORKGROUP**  
**REGULAR MEETING, September 5, 2023**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBER, NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER**  
**3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT**

*These minutes are subject to approval by the Work Group*

**MINUTES**

PRESENT: Bill Brimmer, Pat Llodra\*, Maureen Crick Owen, and Ned Simpson

ALSO PRESENT: one member of the press

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m. by the chair Mrs. Crick Owen.

VOTER COMMENTS – None

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Mr. Brimmer moved to approve the minutes of August 7, 2023, meeting. Mrs. Llodra seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Discussion and possible decisions:

1. Discussion of draft work group report  
There were no suggested changes to the Work Group report circulated last week. (Attached)  
Mr. Brimmer moved to approve of the Workgroup Report. Mrs. Llodra seconded. All in favor and motion passes.
2. Mrs. Crick Owen reported that she had contacted all those who met with the Work Group. All responses expressed a willingness to provide further assistance if needed. She went on to thank the members for their time and quality work.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Next Steps

Today was the last Work Group meeting. Recommendations will be presented to the BOS, Monday September 18, 2023.

VOTER COMMENTS - None

Mr. Simpson moved to adjournment. Mr. Brimmer seconded. All in favor, motion passes.  
The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ned Simpson

# TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WORKGROUP

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September 5, 2023

Prepared for

Newtown Board of Selectmen

Submitted by

William Brimmer, Former Selectman  
E. Patricia Llodra, Former First Selectman  
Maureen Crick Owen, Selectman Ned  
Simpson, Former Board of Finance

## Executive Summary

The objective of the work group was to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen regarding whether a change to the executive structure of the Town's government is warranted. The first phase of our analysis suggested three viable options: (1) no change; (2) add a Town Administrator to support the First Selectman (employee or contractor); or (3) move to a Town Manager form of government where the Town Manager is the Chief Executive Officer (this would require a change to the Town Charter).

The genesis of this project was the recognition that over the course of the last decade, that the density and intensity of the First Selectmen's role continues to increase in scope and content. These growing day-to-day operational responsibilities limit the First Selectmen's time and capacity to focus on long term planning, evaluate new ideas and recognizing challenges that are critical to crafting and executing on a strategic vision for the municipal future for Newtown's citizens.

As part of the work group's due diligence to craft alternative solutions to these challenges, we identified nine comparable towns to meet with and explore how they have responded. We met with Town Managers, Mayors, First Selectmen and Town Administrators from Clinton, Fairfield, Greenwich, Manchester, Monroe, Simsbury, South Windsor and Wilton. We also met with several of Newtown's department heads including a former department head. The interview process took four months.

Based upon the results of these interviews and further internal debate, the work group expressed their preliminary opinions as follows:

- Mrs. Llodra expressed her strong belief that Newtown is a stable and thoughtful community where anything other than a referendum vote for the town leader would be too much to ask and not constructive. Mrs. Llodra was in favor of the Town Administrator approach.
- Mrs. Crick Owen stated her belief in taking small, measured steps, which was supported by several people interviewed who felt that going directly to a Town Manager structure was overly ambitious. Mrs. Crick Owen was in favor of a Town Administrator.
- Mr. Brimmer stated that he is not against a Town Administrator but going in that direction would be postponing the inevitable – leading to a Town Manager. Mr. Simpson shared a similar view to Mr. Brimmer's in that a Town Administrator could be a good step along the path to Town Manager.

However, after further discussion and careful consideration, the work group came to a unanimous recommendation that the Board of Selectman move to establish a Town Administrator position. It also recommends that a longer-term assessment be undertaken to move to establishing professional management (i.e. Town Manager) that would further benefit the needs of the town.

## Objective/Charge

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Newtown First Selectman Dan Rosenthal introduced the idea of Town Administrator at the November 21, 2022 Board of Selectman (BOS) meeting. He referenced the past discussion related to moving Newtown to a Town Manager form of government. He indicated support for adding professional management capability, but acknowledged concerns related to a charter revision process which would be required to establish a Town Manager. The big thing with a charter change is fear of the unknown. It is a cliff jump. You have changed the charter and what if it doesn't work out?

First Selectman Rosenthal became aware that Wilton had hired a town administrator that works alongside the first selectman, rather than changing their charter. For Wilton, the Town Administrator position takes on day-to-day duties, freeing the First Selectman for more constituent services and planning. First Selectman Rosenthal described this as a "proof of concept" opportunity. If Newtown added a Town Administrator, it could assess the impact before making a charter change. From what is learned, the Town could establish the Town Administrator without a charter change or a Town Manager with a change to the charter.

The BOS discussed looking into the idea and decided to form an ad hoc committee to consider it. An ideal ad hoc committee would be comprised of former first selectmen and other people with a large amount of experience with Newtown's government.

At the December 19, 2022 meeting the BOS established the Work Group with the following charge:

Review the present executive structure of Newtown's municipal government (First Selectman) and consider if alternatives would enhance the management, oversight and continuity of town government. The process should consider all options/forms of management, not simply a Town Administrator. It is possible your final recommendation will necessitate a Charter Revision process, however your efforts would be additive to that process so your work should not be limited to avoiding that.

This charge was adopted by the Work Group at their January 23, 2023 meeting.

# Executive Structure

Four common forms of municipal government are found in Connecticut towns and cities. These government structures are further explained and exemplified in the attached document (Attachment 1).

## Newtown's Current Government Structure

Newtown has a First Selectman (FS)/Council form of government. A First Selectman is elected for a two-year term, serving with two elected selectmen in a three-person board (BoS). The FS is the CEO of the town. Connecticut state statutes delineate roles and responsibilities for the municipal CEO. In addition, the town charter may expand and further describe that local role. Newtown's Legislative Council (LC) is comprised of 12 members elected from three districts for two-year terms. The LC is the legislative body of the town as described by state statutes. It approves the Town Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and general funds budget which includes the Board of Education (BOE) general funds budget as a line item. The LC drafts ordinances and executes a process to review and apply additions or changes to local ordinances and regulations. The BOE is comprised of seven members elected to staggered four-year terms. The Board of Finance (BOF), comprised of six members elected to two-year terms, is advisory. It reviews the CIP and budget before those financial plans are considered by LC. The elected Planning and Zoning Commission members are responsible in promoting the orderly and coordinated development of the town. Other bodies elected to manage town activities include the Zoning Board of Appeals, Police Commission, and Edmond Town Hall Board of Managers. Many appointed bodies and commissions govern other town functions vital to the community. Among these appointed government entities are the Commission on Aging, Cultural Arts Commission, Public Building and Site Commission, Community Center Commission, C.H. Booth Library Board of Trustees, Board of Ethics, Inland Wetlands Commission, and more.

In 2023, the Town of Newtown has 170 full-time and 20 part-time employees, dedicated to 15 departments, not including seasonal employees. There are 5 employee unions. The FS office is staffed by an executive assistant and is the location for Human Resources led and staffed by one employee. The FS suite also houses the Finance

Department, led by the Finance Director and staffed by three employees, and the Purchasing Director. The Purchasing Director is shared with the public school's central office and overseen by the Finance Director, the school's Director of Business and Finance, and the FS.

## Recent History

Newtown has been fortunate with the stability and capability of its First Selectmen and department heads. Historically, Newtown FS have had tenures of service of six or more years. And major departments have been served by leaders with tenures of up to 15 years. This continuity of service supports an environment of stability, knowledge, and experience, with common understandings about practice, and shared values.

### Challenges and Concerns

1. The density and intensity of the First Selectman role continues to increase in scope and content. State and regional government and agencies regularly add new initiatives, modify existing regulations, policies, and laws. The FS must be knowledgeable about the actions these groups take and be able to respond accordingly in leading the local community.
2. The pressures of day-to-day leadership, being mired in operational decisions and actions, mitigates against the time the FS needs to be ready and able to respond to new ideas, plan, craft a vision of a municipal future, communicate pathways to that future state, and lead local government agencies and boards in alignment with that vision.

### Other Considerations

The position itself has some attributes that make it an unattractive career choice for many:

- a) Difficult and challenging solitary leadership role; complexity of issues and personalities;
- b) Work hours often include evenings and weekends, overlapping with family time.

What structure for Newtown's municipal government best meets the demands of current conditions and meets the specific needs of the community; provides easing for the identified challenges and concerns?

### Consider the Options

#### 1. Continue with FS/Council Form of Government with No Change

Pro: Current government structure known and understood by those who work and live in the community.

Con: Current structure does not address the identified challenges and concerns.

#### 2. Continue with FS/Council Form of Government with the Addition of a Town Administrator Position

Pro: Maintains structure as FS/Council; modification may be tailored to meet the specific needs of the community. Provides easing for the identified challenges and concerns.

Con: Requires funding. Realignment of supervisory hierarchy may not be welcome. Residents may resist reduced access to FS. Creates more bureaucracy.

#### 3. Change the Structure of Local Government; Adopt a Town Manager System Pro: A professional manager comes prepared and experienced in municipal issues. Con: Less direct accountability to the general electorate; enhanced role of LC may not be welcome.

# Research

## Reference Towns

The Work Group decided that research should be its first task. This included identifying and interacting with communities ‘similar’ to Newtown that practice models of government under consideration. A December 2020 research report from The Office of Legislative Research entitled “Town Managers” had a list of Town Manager Towns and their Legislative Bodies (see Attachment 8). Drawn from personal knowledge and the list identified, the Chair contacted and scheduled each community to join work group meetings. It is worth noting that in all but one instance Town Managers, First Selectmen, Town Administrators and other government officials made themselves available.

Leaders from the following towns met with the Work Group. For other than Newtown and Monroe, the guests attended virtually. Town data was taken from the 2021 CT Data Collaborative, Town Profiles.

Newtown	Population: 27,822	First Selectman
	Municipal - \$39,385,657	Grand List per Cap \$165,463
	Herb Rosenthal, Former FS	3/20/2023
	George Benson, Former Dept. Head	3/13/2023
	Fred Hurley, DPW Dept. Head	3/13/2023
	Amy Mangold, P&R Dept. Head	3/13/2023
	Bob Tait, Finance Director	4/03/2023
Clinton	Population: 12,944	Council – Town Manager Bd of Finance Since 2019
	Municipal - \$18,027,907	Grand List Per Cap \$174,099
	Chris Ansikovich, Chair, Town Council	5/30/2023
	Karl Kilduff, Town Manager *	6/12/2023

Was a revolving door of FS  
 Charter change for TM failed first time in 2018  
 TM: Contract – 3 years, Not required to live in town  
 Used Executive search for TM  
 No HR department or Town Planner  
 TM - Most time: Union Contracts & Finance

Fairfield	Population: 61,740 <a href="https://www.fairfieldct.org/">https://www.fairfieldct.org/</a>	First Selectman – RTM Town Administrator
	Municipal - \$124,442,000	Grand List per Cap \$258,395
	Brenda Kupchick, First Selectman	5/1/2023
	Tom Bremer, Chief Admin Officer	5/1/2023
	Jackie Bertolone, Chief of Staff	5/1/2023
500 Employees. HR staff of 5 CAO (TA) and CoS at will employees Recent Charter Revision to define CAO & CoS failed FS and CAO felt living in town is important for CAO position.		
Greenwich	Population: 62,587 <a href="https://www.greenwichct.gov/">https://www.greenwichct.gov/</a>	First Selectman – RTM (230 members) Town Administrator Bd of Finance Since early 2000s
	Municipal - \$200,520,432	Grand List Per C – \$774,735
	Fred Camillo, First Selectman	4/17/2023
	Ben Branyan, Town Administrator	3/20/2023
TA is at will employee TA was School Admin – a plus CIO reports to TA HR technically reports to FS, but TA spends more HR time than FS Working on changing TA title to COO		
Manchester	Population: 57,805 <a href="https://www.manchesterct.gov/Home">https://www.manchesterct.gov/Home</a>	Council - Town Manager Since 1952
	Municipal - \$65,327,000	Grand List Per C - \$98,895
	Jay Moran, Mayor,	5/1/2023
	Steve Stephano Town Manager	5/1/2023



Highest number of votes becomes Council Chair 500 employees. HR staff of 4 TM perceives it is important for the person in this role to live in town		
Monroe	Population: 19,546	(Weak) Mayor - Town Manager Bd of Finance Since 1990
	Municipal - \$26,663,460	Grand List Per C \$163,109
	Karen Burnaska, Former FS	6/26/2023
Established "Super Department Heads"		

Simsbury	Population: 24,799 <a href="https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/">https://www.simsbury-ct.gov/</a>	First Selectman – BOS Town Manager Since 2017
	Municipal - \$24,227,328	Grand List Per C \$146,925
	Wendy Mackstutis, First Selectman	4/17/2023
TM under contract not renewable in election years		
South Windsor	Population: 25,898 <a href="https://www.southwindsor-ct.gov/">https://www.southwindsor-ct.gov/</a>	Mayor – Town Manager Since at least 1968
	Municipal - \$39,333,898	Grand List Per C \$150,153
	Liz Pendleton, Mayor	5/30/2023
	Michael Maniscalco, Town Manager	6/12/2023
200 employees plus summer staff of 30 TM must live in town per charter Used Executive Search firm for TM Grand List & Financial Stability biggest time consumer of TM		
Wilton	Population: 18,463 <a href="https://www.wiltonct.org/">https://www.wiltonct.org/</a>	First Selectman – BOS Town Administrator Bd of Finance 2022
	Municipal - \$42,393,624	Grand List Per C \$329,955
	Matt Knickerbocker, Town Administrator	3/06/2023

	Lynne Vanderslice, First Selectman	5/15/2023
TA does not live in town HR reports to TA		

### Common Themes

There are many successful iterations/combinations of roles in local government. The best model for each community is the one that is most responsive to local needs and culture.

The human resources function in the municipal government structure should be transparent to all employees with roles carefully delineated and clarified.

An effective government model supports the executive's role in future orientation, strategic planning, vision, and modernization.

Municipal government is most effective when it can continually improve policy, protocol, and practices.

Critical attributes for success as a TA or TM include ability to communicate well, positive interpersonal relationships, experience in leadership roles, capacity for analytic and strategic thinking, and proven ability to collaborate as well as lead.

### Observations of Performance Management Processes Practiced

During our conversations with the officials from different cities and towns, one inquiry we made was how the Town Managers and Town Administrators were evaluated. As in how often goals and performance were formally or informally discussed. What we heard was that Town Councils sometimes would evaluate once a year, and in some cases, it was not clear how often it was done at all. This is unfortunate, as performance management is a positive tool for both the person being evaluated as well as the group doing the evaluation. It is suggested that a regular performance plan be established for formal performance reviews at 6 and 12 months, with informal reviews being done at 3 and 9-month intervals.

## Recommendation

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The Town Administrator Work Group recommends that the Newtown First Selectman with the approval of the Board of Selectmen establish a position of Town Administrator to serve the immediate interests and needs of the community as determined by the First Selectman and Board of Selectmen. Further, the Work Group recommends that the FS and BOS commit to a subsequent examination of the merits of further structural change in town government including the creation of a town manager model.

The Work Group also highly suggests that a contract for a Town Administrator be off cycle from the First Selectman election and that the town would benefit by said person having a municipal background.

Note: This report and documents of the Work Group provide guidance related to attributes and considerations for success in Town Administrator/Town Manager positions.

## Attachments

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Attachment 1: Common forms of municipal government as referenced in Executive Structure section of report.

Attachment 2: Town of Wilton's slide deck re: TA from their 01.10.2021 meeting

Attachment 3: Town of Wilton's slide deck re: TA from their 01.18.2022 meeting

Attachment 4: Questions posed to First Selectmen and Town Administrators

Attachment 5: Questions posed to Town Managers and Mayors

Attachment 6: Greenwich Town Administrator and Chief Operating Officer Job Description

Attachment 7: Fairfield Organizational Chart and Job Descriptions for Chief Administrator Officer and Chief of Staff