

Print**Town Charter Revision Commission - Town Administration, Staff, Board/Commission Chairs - Submission #453****Date Submitted: 7/12/2024****First Name***

Christopher

Last Name*

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Town Department or Board/Commission*

Library

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The following questions are optional:**Are you a resident of Bloomfield?**

Yes
 No

Proposed Recommendation to the Town Charter

The Bloomfield Town Charter is available

at: https://library.municode.com/ct/bloomfield/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH**What section number of the Charter does your change affect?***

Section 604

Proposed Recommendation *

I propose that section 604 be left as it is currently written, with a library director who oversees all aspects of library operations, and a library board that appoints, and can remove, the library director

Brief description of the issue addressed by the proposed change:*

Section 604 seems to have worked well for the Town of Bloomfield, as the library continues to deliver responsive services to citizens of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances. The library has a good reputation state-wide and in the region.

Impact of Proposed Change

What benefits will be realized by the citizens and/or government of Bloomfield?*

To effectively deliver for all citizens, public libraries should be dynamic, democratic, and, to some degree, autonomous institutions. The library in Bloomfield is both a town department and an independent entity with its own director, governing board, policies, branding, and unique bond with the citizens of Bloomfield. The current model is very democratic, in that it allows the library to adapt and respond to the needs of the citizens, while being governed by the library director, the library board, the town council (through the budget), and the town manager (through town policy/operations). This provides a healthy degree of independence and oversight.

What potential impacts may be associated with the proposal change?*

To keep Section 604 as it is written will allow the library to continue to be responsive, adaptive, and focused on the whole community. Part of the library's effectiveness is that it is part of the town's municipal structure and governance but it often seems to the citizens to be independent. This quasi independence builds a different kind of trust that can transcend political power or partisanship.

Can you provide data to assist in validating the impact of the proposed change?

I have worked in the Connecticut public library world for over 20 years, in many different settings. In my experience, libraries that are administered or presented as just another town department are often weakened for it, especially in terms of their identity and their ability to deliver on behalf of entire community. A governing board that oversees a strong library director, with a degree of independence, often leads to better and bolder library services for everyone. Public libraries are increasingly complex institutions that must be highly adaptable to the shifting needs of citizens. They need an administrative structure that serves this complexity. The current charter structure does this quite well, while still maintaining a degree of oversight at the municipal level.

Describe any obstacles, costs, or cost savings associated with the proposed change, if any?

I don't see any obstacles or costs to keeping in place a governing structure that has served Bloomfield for decades. A town council elected by the citizens, working through the town manager, will continue to oversee the appropriation of the library's budget and be part of the democratic fabric that makes the library what it is. The library board, working through the library director, will continue to make sure the library serves the community according to its mission and in alignment with the pluralistic and democratic values of public libraries worldwide. Keeping this section of the charter intact will help the Bloomfield Public Library remain effective, democratic, and semi-independent.