



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
KATJANA BALLANTYNE  
MAYOR

August 21, 2025

The Honorable Thomas P. Walsh  
Chair, House Committee on Bills in the Third  
Reading  
24 Beacon St.  
Room 20  
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Brian M. Ashe  
Vice Chair, House Committee on Bills in the  
Third Reading  
24 Beacon St.  
Room 160  
Boston, MA, 02133

Dear Chair Walsh and Vice Chair Ashe,

I am writing in response to the comments from the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, shared on August 19, 2025. In accordance with the vote of the City Council dated May 5, 2025, I hereby approve the following amendments to the City's petition to establish a charter for the City of Somerville. I have determined that these amendments are within the scope of the public objectives of the petition.

**1. Definition of “Voter” in Section 1-7 and the use of the term throughout the charter:**

The charter initially contained separate definitions of “municipal voter” and “statewide voter” to accommodate provisions regarding non-citizen resident and 16–17-year-old voting. Those provisions were removed from the final version of the home rule petition passed by the City Council, but the separate definitions were not. To address the concerns regarding potential confusion generated by “statewide voter” being a separately defined term, I recommend that the definition of municipal voter be struck, that the definition of statewide voter be changed to “Voter”, anyone residing in the city of Somerville who is eligible to vote pursuant to state and federal law.”, and that each instance of the terms “municipal voter” and “statewide voter” be replaced with the term “voter”. Further, in certain sections where a qualifier regarding residence in the city is attached to those terms, that qualifier be struck as well. The changes and the relevant sections are as follows:



Section 1-7(12) strike the definition of “municipal voter”

Section 1-7(16) strike “statewide” and insert after “anyone” the phrase “residing in the city of Somerville”

Section 2-1(a) strike and replace the term “municipal voters” with “voters” in each place it appears.

Section 2-1(c) in the first sentence strike and replace the term “statewide voter residing in the city” with “voter”. In the second sentence strike and replace the term “statewide voter” with “voter”. In the final sentence strike and replace the term “municipal voter of the city” with “voter”.

Section 2-11 strike and replace the term “municipal voters” with “voters”.

Section 3-1(a) strike and replace the term “municipal voters of the city” with “voters”.

Section 3-1(c) strike and replace the term “statewide voter residing in the city of Somerville” with “voter”.

Section 4-1(a) strike and replace the term “municipal voters of the city” with “voters in each ward”.

Section 4-1(c) strike and replace the term “statewide voter” with “voter”.

Section 4-6 strike and replace the term “statewide voters” with “voters”.

Section 7-2(a) strike and replace the term “municipal voters” with “voters”.

Section 7-2(b) strike and replace the term “municipal voters” with “voters”.

Section 9-7(f) strike and replace the term “municipal voter” with “voter”.

2. **Section 2-11 Group Petitions:** After the word “commissioners” add the words “within 5 days of the receipt of the petition. The city clerk shall accept the petition following the certification.”
3. **Section 3-13: Filling of Permanent Vacancy:** In subsection (a), strike the second sentence and insert the following “Otherwise, the city council shall immediately order a special election to be held within 150 days following the date of the vacancy.”
4. **Section 4-4 School Committee Rules and Procedures:** Strike and replace the term “officers” with “chair and vice-chair”.

5. **Section 7-1 Preliminary Elections:** Strike and replace the word “third” with “second” in the first sentence. Strike and replace the word “fourth” with “third” in the second sentence. Strike and replace the number "28" with "35" in the third sentence.
6. **Section 9-6: Disposition Of Certain Special Acts:** In subsection (b), strike the number “41” and replace with “49”; strike the number “653” and replace with “650”; strike “ss. 40, 40A, B, C, and D”; strike “297” and replace with “397”; strike “St. 2012, c. 312. and”; and strike “50”.
7. **Section 9-7 (a) and (b):** After the word “regular” add the words “or special”.
8. I approve consolidating the language of Sections 5 and 6 regarding the ballot question and the effective date of the mayoral term into Section 9 and the addition of Section 12 to reflect that Section 9 will take effect upon passage.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and please reach out with any further questions.

Best,



Katjana Ballantyne

Mayor

Cc: Representative Christine P. Barber

Kimberly Wells, City Clerk