

Form of Government Committee

A screenshot of the Ridgefield Connecticut website. The header features the town's logo and name, a search bar, and navigation links for "Visitors", "Government", "Community", "Calendar", "Forms & Documents", and "Contact Us". The main content area is titled "Form of Government Committee" and includes a "View Contact Info" link. Below this is a paragraph describing the committee's mission to study municipal government models. To the right, there are sections for "News", "Agendas" (listing dates from October 7 to November 4, 2024), and "Minutes" (listing dates from September 16 to October 21, 2024). A "Board Members" section at the bottom lists names and titles, with Todd Zagorec as the Chair.

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Form of Government Committee

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The committee is charged with conducting a comprehensive study to compare various types of municipal governments. This study should delve into the structures, functions, and efficacy of different municipal government models authorized by State Statutes, including but not limited to council-manager, mayor-council, and town meeting forms of government. The committee's analysis should focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each model in terms of promoting efficiency, accountability, citizen participation, and responsiveness to local needs. Furthermore, the committee is expected to gather evidence and best practices from municipalities that have implemented innovative governance strategies, with the ultimate goal of providing evidence-based recommendations for improving municipal governance in Ridgefield and better serving the community.

Questions? Email us at: torfoga@Ridgefieldct.gov

Board Members

Todd Zagorec	Chair
Laurie Christiansen	
Robert Hendrick	
Mike Rettger	
Charles Robbins	
Jonathan David Seem	
Rachel Sondheimer	
Dennis Tracey	
Steve Zemo	

News
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Agendas

- Agenda
November 4, 2024 - 7:00pm
- Agenda
October 21, 2024 - 7:00pm
- Agenda
October 7, 2024 - 7:00pm

Minutes

- Minutes - Unapproved
October 21, 2024
- Minutes - Unapproved
October 7, 2024
- Minutes - Approved
September 16, 2024

Draft Report
June 9, 2025

Today's Topics

Form of Government Committee



Review Current Form of Government

Committee Recommendations

- Legislative Changes
- Executive Changes
- Rationale

Next Steps

Some Background

Form of Government Committee



Suggested by past two Charter Revisions Commissions

Purpose : Research whether alternatives/enhancements to current form would better serve residents

Process:

- Analyze current form
- Research changes studied and/or adopted by similar towns
- Interview local leaders
- Consult state resources and intergovernmental organizations
- Solicit public input

Review: Town Meeting/Board of Selectpersons



Oldest form in U.S.

Prevalent in New England

CT: 102 of 169 municipalities

Pure democracy

Structure of Town Meeting Government



Voters



Elected Boards



Board of Selectpersons/First Selectperson



Appointed Boards & Commissions

Changing Nature of Local Government

Life is more complex for all



Voters

- Difficulty getting to meetings
- High turnout only on controversial issues

First Selectperson

- Local and state issues/legislative processes
- Management
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Land use issues and regulations
- Grant applications



Recommendations

Retain Town Meeting as our legislative body

- Improve accessibility / facilitate participation
- Transfer certain decision-making authority to BoS

Retain elected chief executive

Establish professional Town Administrator role

Retain Town Meeting as Legislative Body



Hallmark of direct democracy

Offers Ridgefielders direct voice in important decisions

Public feedback shows strong support



Improve Accessibility / Facilitate Participation

Scheduling

- Establish regular schedule
- Ensure time between hearings and votes, where appropriate



Anonymous and Electronic Voting

- Eliminate voice votes
- Ensure voter privacy through paper ballots or electronic devices, when practical
- Create a task force to evaluate electronic voting systems

Transfer Certain Decision-Making Authority to BoS



Decisions that are typically:



Non-controversial

Routine

Infrequent

Establish Professional Town Administrator Role



Hired by BoS

- Reports to First Selectperson
- Manages day-to-day town operations / staff

Allows First Selectperson to focus on strategy, issues

Ensures continuity



Town Administrator: Cost Impact

Salary range: \$190,000 to \$225,000, plus benefits

Impact if a TA had been hired this year:

- Town budget/mil rate: increase about 0.05%
- Median property taxes of \$14,000: about \$30



Next Steps

Evaluate public feedback

Finalize written report

Submit report to BoS by June 30

Major changes would require vote



Stay Informed

Local Press Town Sources

- Website
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Ridgefield Alerts



**3 Easy Ways to
STAY INFORMED**



Social Media

 
TownofRidgefieldCT

 
CTRidgefield

 
town_of_ridgefieldct

Town Newsletter
Receive weekly updates straight to your inbox. Go to ridgefieldct.gov or scan the QR code to subscribe.



Ridgefield Alerts
Receive emergency information via text, email, phone or the app. Go to ridgefieldalerts.com or scan the QR code to subscribe.

