

# 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 &amp; 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 of text describing the committee's mission to study municipal government models. To the right, there are sections for "News", "Agendas" (listing dates from November 4, 2024, to October 7, 2024), and "Minutes" (listing dates from October 21, 2024, to September 16, 2024). A "Board Members" table is also visible at the bottom left of the page content.

Purpose

Process

How to Participate



# Today's Topics



Committee Origins

Ridgefield's Current Form of Government

Changing Nature of Local Government

Committee's Charge and Process

Your Role

# Origins

Form of Government Committee



## **Suggested by past two Charter Revisions Commissions:**

- Residents
- Town Officials

## **BoS appointed Form of Government Committee:**

- 9 members

## **Purpose:**

- Research whether alternatives/enhancements to current form would better serve residents.

# Town Meeting/Board of Selectpersons



Oldest form of government in U.S.

Prevalent in New England

CT: 102 of 169 municipalities

‘True’ democracy: residents meet to  
vote directly

# Structure of Town Meeting Gov't



Voters



Elected Boards



Board of Selectpersons/First Selectperson



Appointed Boards & Commissions



# Town Meeting / Board of Selectpersons



## **Legislative authority**

Voters decide:

- Annual/special budgets
- Ordinance/Charter changes
- Elected Committees

Participation is key



## **Executive Authority**

BoS:

- Town Policies
- Appointed Committees

First Selectperson:

- Similar to CEO
- Day-to-day oversight

# Changing Nature of Local Gov't



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



# Some CT Towns Enhancing/Changing

## **Of 24 CT towns with 20,000 - 30,000 populations:**

- Only 7 continue to use Town Meeting
- 3 elect representatives to vote at Town Meeting
- 14 elect a Town Council

## **Others have modified format:**

- Hire administrator or manager to oversee day-to-day operations
  - frees First Selectperson to focus on policy
  - helps ensure continuity in operations when elected officials change



**Charge:** Provide evidence-based recommendations to improve local government and better serve community

## Process

Analyze current form

- strengths/weaknesses

Research changes studied and/or adopted by similar towns

Interview local leaders

Consult state resources

## Considerations

Efficiency

Accountability

Citizen participation

Responsiveness

State statutes



# After Research & Deliberation...

Committee will make recommendations to BoS

- Written Report
- Public Hearings

Any change would likely:

- Require vote
- Possible Charter change

# Stay Informed

## Committee Meetings

- 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month
- 7 PM
- In person (Town Hall), streaming, Zoom

## Local Press

## Town Sources

- Website
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Ridgefield Alerts



An infographic titled "3 Easy Ways to STAY INFORMED" is presented on a light beige background. At the top right of the infographic is a smaller version of the Town of Ridgefield seal. The infographic is divided into three main sections. The first section, titled "Social Media", is on a dark blue background and lists three platforms: Facebook (with the URL "TownofRidgefieldCT"), X (with the handle "CTRidgefield"), and Instagram (with the handle "town\_of\_ridgefieldct"). Each platform name is accompanied by its respective logo and a QR code. The second section, titled "Town Newsletter", is on a dark blue background and includes the text "Receive weekly updates straight to your inbox. Go to ridgefieldct.gov or scan the QR code to subscribe." along with a QR code. The third section, titled "Ridgefield Alerts", is also on a dark blue background and includes the text "Receive emergency information via text, email, phone or the app. Go to ridgefieldalerts.com or scan the QR code to subscribe." along with a QR code.



# Express Your Opinion

## Comment in Meetings (7 PM)

- In person or by Zoom

## Attend Public Hearings

## Email Committee

- [torfoga@ridgefieldct.gov](mailto:torfoga@ridgefieldct.gov)

## Write letter

- FoG Chair, Town Hall,  
400 Main St.

The screenshot shows the Ridgefield Connecticut website. The main content area is titled "Form of Government Committee" and includes a "View Contact Info" link. Below this, there is a paragraph of text describing the committee's mission: "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." Below the text is a "Questions? Email us at: torfoga@Ridgefieldct.gov" link. At the bottom of the page, there is a "Board Members" section with a table listing the following members: Todd Zagone (Chair), Lauria Christiansen, Robert Hendrick, Mike Rettger, Charles Robbins, Jonathan David Seem, Rachel Sondheimer, Dennis Tracey, and Steve Zemo.