

Information about Barrington's Local Ballot Questions and Voting in the General Election

November 5, 2024



Barrington Board
of Canvassers



Polling Places for the November 5 General Election

EARLY VOTING WILL TAKE PLACE AT TOWN HALL ONLY

283 County Road, 2nd floor Council Chamber

Wednesday, October 16 to Monday, November 4, 2024

during usual business hours:

- Monday: 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM
- Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
- Friday: 8:30 AM to 12:00 noon

Early voting ends at **4 PM** on Monday, November 4.

ALL POLLING PLACES WILL BE OPEN 7 A.M TO 8 P.M ON ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2024

- Barrington High School (Precinct #101), 220 Lincoln Avenue
- Barrington Middle School (Precinct #102), 261 Middle Highway
- Nayatt School (Precinct #103), 400 Nayatt Road
- Hampden Meadows School (Precinct #104), 297 New Meadows Road
- Sowams School (Precinct #105), 364 Sowams Road
- Town Hall (Precinct #106), 283 County Road
- Limited ballot (President only) and same-day registration will take place at Town Hall (Precinct #107)

Please bring a valid photo ID when you vote at your polling place.

**For more information on the November 5 general election,
including information on the local and statewide ballot questions, go to:**

<https://www.barrington.ri.gov/370/2024-Election-Information>

View your voter registration record and see a sample ballot at:

<https://vote.ri.gov/>

LOCAL BALLOT QUESTIONS FOR BARRINGTON VOTERS IN THE NOVEMBER 5 GENERAL ELECTION

The November 5, 2024, ballot includes 5 statewide questions for all Rhode Island voters to consider. These will appear on the ballot as Questions #1 thru #5. Information about these statewide ballot questions is available at the RI Secretary of State's website: <https://vote.ri.gov/>

In addition to the 5 statewide questions, Barrington voters will be asked to consider 5 local ballot questions: 3 proposed changes to the Town Charter and 2 questions regarding the use of funds for synthetic turf athletic fields. These local questions will appear on the ballot as Questions #6 thru #10. Information about the 5 local questions is provided in this booklet. The official explanations for the local questions were written by the Town Solicitor's office.

Local Ballot Questions: Proposed Charter Revisions

Question #6

AMENDMENT TO BARRINGTON HOME RULE CHARTER FINANCIAL TOWN REFERENDUM

Shall the annual Financial Town Meeting be replaced by a process whereby voters would vote at an all-day Financial Town Referendum on the budget proposed by the Committee on Appropriations, along with any additions, deletions, or alterations proposed by a qualifying petition from the Town Council, School Committee, or Town voter?

Explanation: The charter changes addressed in this question would replace the Financial Town Meeting (FTM) with a Financial Town Referendum (FTR). The Town's annual budget would be approved at an all-day referendum, rather than at a meeting held by a quorum of voters at a particular place and time. The charter changes attempt to leave as much of the FTM process the same as possible, while replacing the meeting with a referendum. Some additional changes that needed to be made to accommodate the referendum process is that any proposed changes to the budget proposed by the Committee on Appropriations (COA) would need to come from either a qualifying voter petition, the Council, or the School Committee by a deadline set in advance of the scheduled referendum, so that there is time to print the proposals on the ballot. The Board of Canvassers would be responsible for receiving proposals and setting the FTR ballot. Further, the COA would no longer be elected by a vote at the conclusion of the FTM, but instead would be elected by ballot. Aside from these changes, the annual budget process will remain largely the same and the authority exercised by the FTM will be transferred to the FTR.

Description of the Financial Town Referendum Process to Replace the Financial Town Meeting *(adapted from the Final Report & Recommendations of the Barrington Charter Review Commission, January 2024)*

NOTE: The following is an excerpt from the final report of the Barrington Charter Review Commission, submitted to the Town Council in January 2024. This excerpt describes how the proposed Financial Town Referendum process would work, if approved by the voters. Additional information about the Charter review process is available at the Town's website.

The Committee on Appropriations is responsible for formulating the Town's annual budget and presenting it to the Barrington community for final approval by means of a budget referendum ballot. The Committee shall work collaboratively to review the budgetary needs of the Town and School departments, as reflected in their respective proposed budgets, as well as any other financial obligations of the Town. The Committee shall seek to balance the operational and financial best interests of the Town and its taxpayers in carrying out its duties. The Committee shall meet as often as necessary to carry out its duties, meeting with the Town Manager and the Town Council, the School Superintendent and the School Committee, and any other Town officials as the Committee deems appropriate, and these parties shall provide the Committee all data reasonably necessary for the Committee to carry out its duties.

The Committee shall hold a public hearing where the Committee shall present its proposed unified budget to the public for comment. Members of the public may ask questions, provide feedback, and offer suggestions. As an open public meeting for informational purposes (i.e., no voting taking place), no check-in of attendees or limitation of attendees to only registered voters would be necessary.

The Committee shall then hold a second public hearing, approximately two weeks after the first hearing, where the final unified budget proposal shall be presented. The final budget may or may not incorporate changes based on the feedback received at the first public hearing.

The final unified budget proposal submitted by the Committee on Appropriations would be put before the Town's electorate for a vote, to be known as the Financial Town Referendum (FTR). All registered voters would have the opportunity to vote in person in a process generally following the procedures of a general election (i.e., personally casting a paper ballot in a DS-200 vote tabulating machine, or delivering an absentee/mail ballot by the prescribed deadline to the Town Clerk's office). Voting would take place on the prescribed date from 7 AM to 8 PM at the location(s) to be determined by the Board of Canvassers.

Prior to the date of the Financial Town Referendum, any registered Barrington voter may seek to offer an amendment to the final unified budget proposed by the Committee on Appropriations that may increase or decrease the municipal (Town departments) budget, the School Department budget, or both. Any amendment must take the form of a petition that has been approved (for form and substance) by the Town Clerk and must contain a number of verified signatures no less than 20% of the qualified Barrington registered voters. Petitions must be received by the Town Clerk at a date prescribed in advance of the scheduled vote on the final budget referendum. Qualified petition-amendments would be placed on the ballot and decided at the FTR election.

Initial Implementation of the Financial Town Referendum

The Commission recognizes that transitioning from the FTM to any alternative approach will require changes to practices, policies, and approaches, some of which are beyond the scope of the Charter or the authorities explicitly reflected in the Charter. There also may be unintended consequences that result from the proposed changes, or unforeseen inefficiencies in how the mechanics of the new system operate. Other towns that have transitioned away from the FTM have found the need to revisit the process to make adjustments after the initial implementation. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Town Council carefully monitor the progress and practice of the Financial Town Referendum (should it be approved by the Council and the voters), and that assessment(s) of the FTR be conducted as needed to see if adjustments may be beneficial or necessary. These subsequent changes, if needed, could then be offered to the voters as further amendments to the Charter (prior to the 2034 Charter review exercise).

NOTE: If voters approve the change to the Financial Town Referendum format, given the requirement for General Assembly approval of all Charter changes and the timing of the fiscal years, it is anticipated that the first FTR town-wide vote to approve a new budget would take place in May 2026 (i.e., it will be necessary to hold a Financial Town Meeting in May 2025 to approve the FY2026 budget).

Question #7

AMENDMENT TO BARRINGTON HOME RULE CHARTER TOWN DEPARTMENTS,
COMMISSIONS, AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Shall changes be made to the Charter to reflect the current structure of Town government and current duties and practices of the Town Clerk, Clerk's Department, Director of Planning, Building, and Resiliency, Department of Planning, Building, and Resiliency, Finance Department, Tax Assessor, Director of Human Resources, Human Resources Department, Parks and Recreation Commission, Charter Review Commission and to incorporate these duties and practices into the Town Charter (including eliminating the requirement that the Town Clerk to post a bond as she is covered by the Town's insurance)?

Explanation: This question is addressed to house-keeping changes in the charter, designed to eliminate outdated provisions and to recognize the current structure of government in the Town. For instance, there was an antiquated provision requiring the Town Clerk to post a bond for performance of her or his duties. This provision is no longer relevant or necessary considering the Town and all Town employees and officials are covered by the Town's insurance carrier. Further, the charter was amended to recognize the Director of Planning, Building, and Resiliency, who will head the Department of Planning, Building and Resiliency, which includes supervising the Building Official and overseeing planning, building, and zoning matters in the Town. Further, this question would add charter language recognizing that the Town's Tax Assessor is currently housed in the Town's Finance Department and reports to the Town's Finance Director, which is current practice but not currently recognized in the charter. Further, these charter amendments would recognize and specify the roles of the Charter Review Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Human Resources, and Human Resources Director, all of whom have had a role in Town government for some time, but such roles had not been specified in the charter.

Question #8

AMENDMENT TO BARRINGTON HOME RULE CHARTER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Shall Charter language that suggests that the Town has the authority to eliminate the Fire Department be eliminated from the Town Charter?

Explanation: While the charter has recognized the Town Fire Department for some time, there is language in the charter implying that the Fire Department could be eliminated by vote of the Town Council. This question would eliminate that language.

Additional information is available at the Town's website:
<https://www.barrington.ri.gov/370/2024-Election-Information>

Local Ballot Questions: Funds for Field Improvements

Question #9

USE OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY FINANCIAL TOWN MEETING FOR SYNTHETIC TURF ATHLETIC FIELD(S) AT BARRINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Shall the Town be authorized to utilize the funds appropriated by the electors at the Financial Town Meeting on May 22, 2024, to install synthetic turf athletic field(s) at Barrington Middle School?

Explanation: At the Financial Town Meeting on May 22, 2024, the electors approved a resolution authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance the design, acquisition, construction, improvement, renovation, repair and equipping of athletic fields in the Town (the "Athletic Fields Project"). Section 2 of this resolution states as follows: "To the extent permitted by law, the electors of the Town shall determine, by a question to be submitted at the general election to be held on November 5, 2024, whether the athletic fields at Barrington Middle School may be rebuilt as synthetic turf fields." Approval of this ballot question would provide authorization for the funds approved by the electors at the FTM to be utilized in connection with the installation of synthetic turf athletic field(s) at Barrington Middle School.

Question #10

USE OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY FINANCIAL TOWN MEETING FOR SYNTHETIC TURF ATHLETIC FIELD(S)

Shall the Town be authorized to utilize the funds appropriated by the electors at the Financial Town Meeting on May 22, 2024, to install synthetic turf athletic field(s) on municipally controlled land as an alternative to Barrington Middle School?

Explanation: Approval of this question would provide authorization for the Town to utilize the funds appropriated by the electors at the Financial Town Meeting on May 22, 2024, to install synthetic turf athletic field(s) on land that is controlled by the Town, as an alternative to Barrington Middle School.

Supplemental Clarification for Questions #9 and #10

(provided by the Town Solicitor's office)

At the Financial Town Meeting on May 22, 2024, voters approved a bond for \$5 million to fund improvements to Town fields. Included in this was a proposal to install a synthetic turf athletic field at Barrington Middle School along with other improvements previously committed (i.e., culvert improvement project estimated at approximately \$500,000). The FTM resolution specifically called for placing a question before Barrington voters at the November 2024 election as to whether or not the bond funds should be spent on the Middle School synthetic turf project. This requirement is fulfilled with Question #9 (above).

Question #10 goes further to ask Barrington voters whether they approve use of the bond funds to install synthetic turf elsewhere in Town, aside from the Middle School, and independent of the outcome of Question #9. If voters approve Question #10, Town officials would be authorized to explore installing synthetic turf on athletic field(s) owned and operated by the Town's municipal government. If voters reject Question #10, Town officials would not be authorized to use the bond funds for synthetic turf athletic fields owned and operated by the Town's municipal government.

It should be noted that the outcomes of Questions #9 or #10 do not dictate how the School Committee may or may not decide whether to install synthetic turf on athletic fields managed by the School Department (i.e., fields located at Barrington schools). At its July 18 meeting, the Barrington School Committee voted 5-0 to renovate the stadium field at Barrington High School into a multi-use synthetic turf surface as well as construct a new track oval. The project will be funded with money from the School Department's capital reserve account, which was compiled from budget surpluses over the years

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Barrington Board of Canvassers
Town Hall
283 County Road
Barrington, RI 02806

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