

# FORM OF GOVERNMENT DISCUSSION

*City of Westborough?*

# Four Common Forms of Local Government in MA

- Mayor/Council
- Council/Manager
- Open Town Meeting/Selectmen/Town Manager
- Representative Town Meeting/Selectmen/Town Manager

# Mayor/Council

- Strong mayor serves as the chief executive officer and is directly elected (+)
- Small legislative body (+)
- Frequent meetings of legislative body (+)
- Smaller citizen participation (-)
- Potential for political appointments to administrative positions (-)
- Less potential for professional administration in technical areas (-)
- Most authority is vested in one individual and council has little authority (-)

Source: MA Municipal Association

# Council/Manager

- Ability to establish experience qualifications for the chief executive officer (+)
- Small legislative body (+)
- Frequent meetings of legislative body (+)
- Ability to remove appointed chief executive at any time by vote of elected council (+)
- Smaller citizen participation (-)

# Open Town Meeting/Selectmen/Town Manager

- Ability to establish experience qualifications for chief executive (+)
- Direct and broad citizen participation in government (+)
- Ability to remove appointed chief executive at any time by vote of elected board (+)
- Cumbersome decision-making by legislative body (-)
- Legislative body less likely to be knowledgeable on issues (-)
- Shared executive authority between elected board and appointed manager can obscure responsibilities (-)

# Representative Town

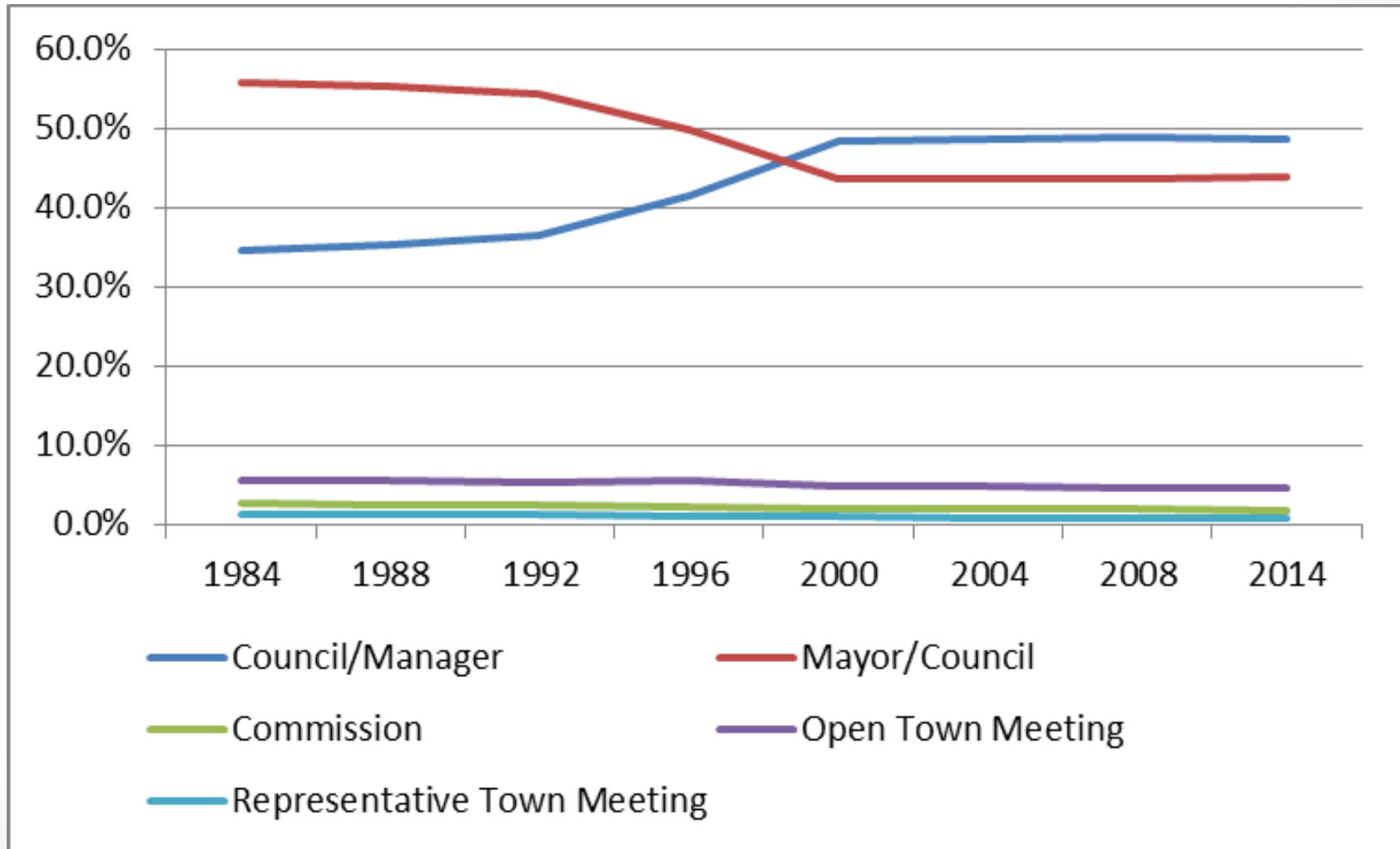
## Meeting/Selectmen/Town Manager

- Ability to establish experience qualifications for chief executive (+)
- Somewhat larger representative legislative body participates directly in government (+)
- Legislative body more likely to be informed on issues than open town meeting (+)
- Ability to remove the chief executive officer at any time by vote of elected board (+)
- Difficulty in achieving broad community representation, achieving quorums, and keeping the status of town meeting members up to date (-)
- The size of the legislative body can present challenges in trying to educate and provide information to this group prior to the decision-making process (-)

# Local Government Forms in the U.S.

<b><u>Form</u></b>	<b><u>National #</u></b>	<b><u>National %</u></b>
Mayor/Council	7,847	40.2%
Council/Manager	10,391	53.2%
Commission	369	1.9%
Open Town Meeting	722	3.7%
Representative Town Meeting	196	1.0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>19,525</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

# Growth/Reduction in Forms - %



Source: International City/County Management Association (ICMA)



# Why have this discussion?

- Town Meetings over the past five years in Westborough have averaged 1.9% participation of registered voters
- Open Town Meeting is cumbersome and only occurs twice per year reducing financial and legislative flexibility
- Manipulation by Special Interest Groups to get out the vote on one item without consideration of full implications
- Difficult to react to emerging issues
- Better decision-making process by elected officials that are knowledgeable on issues and can consider the full implication of decisions on the municipal government
- Lack of Accountability in Open Town Meeting vs. transparent and full accountability by locally elected body

# Westborough Voter Turnout

Event

Voter Turnout

Presidential	80.0%
Presidential Primary	48.0%
State	37.3%
Town Election	15.4%
State Primary	9.4%
Town Meeting	1.9%

# Council/Manager Recommendation

- Provides a directly elected council that equally shares legislative authority and meets regularly (twice per month)
- Provides professional administration of government operations
- Council has authority to determine qualifications and can hire/terminate the chief executive
- Impartial/apolitical decision making and appointing of municipal employees by professional administrator

# Process

Elected charter commission of 9 members through a petition process with an 18 month statutory timeframe – recommendation on governance change placed directly before voters as a ballot question.

VS.

Appointed charter committee through a vote of the Board of Selectmen – recommendation on governance change placed before town meeting (can also go to ballot box) and then requires special legislation.

# Challenges Should the Town Consider a Governance Change

- Process – Elected charter commission vs. appointed charter committee (ballot question or town meeting)
- Addressing the issue of “smaller citizen participation” (Council/Manager) highlighted in MMA’s information
- Public information/support
- City of Westborough or City Known as the Town of Westborough?

300 Years of TRADITION

Vs.

Planning for 300 Years into the

Future

