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Winchester Charter Residency Provision

By Charlene Lavoie, Community Lawyer

The Charter Revision Commission voted to delete the requirement that the town manager reside in Winchester. Citizens who attended the meeting to address the topic and a majority of Commission members believe that it does not matter where the town manager lives, as long as the job is done well. Others believe that the town manager, and other administrators should live in town as a show of support and interest in the welfare of the town and to better understand the workings of the town.

What is the role of the town manager? The town manager is not an elected position, nor is it a policy making position. It is a managerial position. The people employ a town

manager to administer the day to day operations of the town and to implement town policy developed by the Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen. This function requires competent managerial and administrative skills.

What is the role of citizens? The policy making body of this town is the Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen. A member of the policy making body must be an elector of the town.

An elector is one who is a citizen of the United States, eighteen years of age, and a resident of the town in which admission as an elector is sought. A person is also an elector

if they are 18 years of age and own property in Winchester which is assessed at \$1,000 or more and on which they are liable to the town for taxes.

It is the responsibility of the citizenry to restore, build and maintain respect for a democratic political structure and to require that the town manager and all others perform well on this score, the residency issue aside. When the citizenry provides leadership and direction, whether as an elected official or an active member of the Town Meeting, the results will be evident, and many will be attracted to live in Winchester, including administrators employed by the town.