

## CILU's Position on the Charter Study Recommendations

In accordance with its mission to advocate for an open and transparent government with an informed electorate, Citizens for Informed Land Use (CILU) recently hosted an educational program explaining the Holmdel Charter Study Commission's (CSC) report which recommended changing some characteristics of Holmdel's municipal government. Click [here](#) to watch the presentation.

After extensive deliberation, the bipartisan CILU Board voted to urge membership to vote YES to the recommendations of the Charter Study Commission during the July 26th election. The decision was based on the premise that most of the recommended changes speak to the heart of what this organization stands for: an informed citizenry that educates itself on candidates and issues. The analysis and deliberations are below.

Here is a chart highlighting the salient aspects of the proposed form of government as compared to Holmdel's current form:

<b>Current Government: Township Committee</b>	<b>Proposed Government: Council - Manager</b>
5 Township Committee members	5 Township Council members
5 members choose one member to be mayor on an annual basis. Mayor has ceremonial powers, sets the agenda, and appoints volunteers to commissions and boards.	Voters would elect a mayor who has ceremonial powers and sets the agenda. The entire council would approve all volunteers to commissions and boards.
3 year terms (staggered)	4 year terms (staggered)
Transition between governments: 1 or 2 newly elected Township Committee members start their terms The committee chooses a new mayor. The mayor fills vacancies on each of the boards, commissions, and committees in town.	Transition between governments: The new government would start in January 2023. New mayor would serve a 4 year term. Other Council members would serve 4 year terms with the exception of the first year where they would draw lots for 2 or 4 years in order to get staggered terms. Certain boards, commissions, and committees (i.e., Planning and Zoning Boards, Environmental Commission) would begin new terms by appointment of the council.

Ballot design has party-endorsed columns of candidates (a party line) vetted through a partisan process at the county or local level.	Non-partisan ballot design would have all candidates for one position in the same column. Order of candidates for each position would be random.  There would be no primary at the municipal level for the identification of candidates.
Current paid Township staff continues in their positions.	Current paid Township staff would continue in their positions.
A hired administrator does the daily work of the town. The administrator can be removed with 4 votes of the committee.	A hired manager would do the daily work of the town. The manager can be removed with 3 votes of the council.
Community members, through the petition process, can initiate changes to local laws relating to bonding issues only.	Community members would be able to put ideas on the ballot or initiate changes to local laws through the processes of <b>Initiative &amp; Referendum</b> . This would require a petition from 10% of the number of people who voted in the previous general election (estimated 650 signatures). Holmdel voters would then vote on the issue in the general election.

### Issues the CILU Board considered in deciding to endorse changes:

1. Most of the components of our current government would not change. If the new government is chosen; however, the current Township Committee would be in power until December 31 and the new Township Council would take over the next day. The possibility exists, therefore, of the Township Council and all members of certain boards and committees being new to governing. However, new Council members would most likely reappoint some of the previously served volunteers to boards and commissions for reasons of continuity. Township staff would not change.
2. The mayor would be elected directly by the voters, making him/her accountable to them. Despite this, the mayor, with a few exceptions, would have powers similar to those of other Council members, as is the case with the current Township Committee.
3. While the proposed term of office for all Council members would be one year longer, this change would allow for biennial elections, thereby giving Council members more time to focus on governing and less on campaigning. Biennial elections would also cut down on annual campaign signs, flyers, and expenses.
4. CILU has long understood that issues facing our town, such as street paving and recycling pick up, are not partisan issues. The change to non-partisan elections would allow for a less confusing ballot design that puts candidates of all parties on equal footing and promotes election of local candidates based on their platforms rather than party endorsements. This would allow for a larger pool of candidates, thereby benefitting all of us. While campaigning, candidates could identify their party affiliations but there would be no party-endorsed local candidates denoted on the ballot.

5. The manager's duties would be similar to those of the administrator with essentially just a title change. Salaries for Township Council members and administrators would be commensurate with current salaries.

6. Residents would have the ability to put new ideas on the ballot via Initiative or get laws changed through Referendum. This option would probably be used sparingly due to the high standard required to implement it. The ballot question would ultimately need approval from a majority of the Holmdel electorate. This change would put more power into the hands of the voters on **all** issues as compared, under the current form of government, to only those issues requiring bonding.

7. Holmdel's current form of government has been in existence since 1798. Life has changed significantly since then. The trend for other municipal governments is to make moderate changes to their government structures to better reflect the current needs of their constituents. Holmdel is one of the leading towns in this respect. For backup information, see the Charter Study Commission's explanation on the CILU Facebook page. (Go to Citizens-For-Informed-Land-Use-CILU).

**The CILU Board recommends that you vote YES on July 26th because the recommendations of the CSC support our mission of advocating for a more transparent government. It is through actively engaged citizens and open governance that we are able to preserve our open spaces, protect our natural resources (including our water supply) and guarantee the wonderful quality of life that we all enjoy here in Holmdel.**

#### **How to Vote in Person:**

- **Polls are open on Tuesday, July 26 from 6AM to 8PM.** There will be no early in-person voting available.

#### **How to Vote by Mail:**

- If you usually vote by mail, you may have already received a Vote By Mail (VBM) ballot. If not, you need to apply for one. Call the **Monmouth County Board of Elections at 732 431-7790** or go to <https://www.monmouthcountyvotes.com/> and click on ***Voter Information, or*** <https://www.monmouthcountyvotes.com/voter-information/> . The deadline to apply for an application is 7/19.

#### **Once you receive and fill out your VBM ballot, you can**

- Mail it (Must be received at the Board of Elections or postmarked by 7/26; however, the sooner you mail it, the better.)
- Use the Ballot Drop Box at the Holmdel Community Center on Crawfords Corner Road.
- Deliver it to the Board of Elections at 300 Halls Mill Road in Freehold.