



City of Biddeford
Charter Revision Commission

August 27, 2026 at 6:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers & Teams

[Join the Charter Revision Commission Meeting on Microsoft Teams](#)

Meeting ID: 267 002 268 826 818

Passcode: D7Ns76N5

Dial in by phone: 1-872-242-8054

Phone conference ID: D7Ns76N5

1. Roll Call
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adjustment(s) to Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
 - 4.a Minutes of August 10, 2026
5. Staff Update
 - 5.a Commission Funding
 - 5.b Remote Participation Policy
6. Action Items
 - 6.a Approval of additions to website
 - 6.b Approval of Meeting Schedule dates
 - 6.c Legal Resources
7. Discussion/Review
 - 7.a Process for change approval
 - 7.b Discuss Charter Article review process
 - 7.c Article VI **POLICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
 - 7.d Article VII **FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
 - 7.e Agenda Discussion Items for next meeting

7.f Action Items for next meeting

8. Other Business

9. Adjourn

DRAFT

**City of Biddeford
Charter Revision Commission
August 10, 2026
City Hall Council Chambers & Teams**

1. Call to Order

Chair Belanger called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Roll Call

Present

Michael Swanton (Ward 1)

Richard Rhames (Ward 3)

Robert Mills (Ward 4) [attended online]

Cat Bates (Ward 5)

Norman Belanger (Ward 6)

Samuel Pecor (Ward 7)

Elyse Oliver (Mayor appointed)

Steven Ellis (Mayor appointed)

Absent

Scott Whiting (Ward 2)

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Public Hearing

4.a Public Hearing to receive information, views, comments, and other material relating to the functions of the Charter Commission as required by State statute.

Several members of the community, both in-person and online, shared their views, thoughts, comments, and suggestions to the Charter Commission.

5. Approval of Minutes

5.a Minutes of July 16, 2026

Motion to accept by Commissioner Bates.

Second: Commissioner Pecor.

Discussion

Commissioner Rahmes stated that he was unable to review the draft meeting minutes as the City website was down.

Commissioner Pecor asked if clarification was needed in the minutes regarding the 9-month resolution period, as clarification was later received via email.

Chair Belanger clarified that the minutes accurately reported what was discussed.

Yeas: Commissioners Swanton, Bates, Belanger, Pecor, Oliver, and Ellis

Nays: none.

Abstain: Commissioners Rhames

No vote recorded due to technology issues: Commissioner Mills

Vote: 5-0-2

Order passed.

6. Discussion/Review

6.a Discussion of comments & public input presented at the Public Hearing.

Charter Revision Commission members discussed their input on the public's comments.

6.b Charter Review Process

The Charter Revision Commission discussed how the Commission should move forward with the process.

Samuel Pecor made a motion for the Commission to follow Robert's Rules of Order.

Motion by Commissioner Pecor.

Second: Commissioner Mills.

Discussion

Discussion followed as to whether Robert's Rules of Order were necessary/useful, as well as when Robert's Rules could be suspended.

Yeas: Commissioners Swanton, Bates, Belanger, Pecor, Oliver, Mills, and Ellis.

Nay: Commissioner Rhames.

Vote: 6-2.

Order passed.

The Commission also discussed how to organize the meetings moving forward, including whether a new charter or revisions to the charter should be considered. Other topics included the use of subcommittees, what a final report would look like, updates on independent counsel, and voting twice for charter recommendations.

City staff will look into Commission budget and RFP process for legal representation.

6.c Charter Commission Meeting Schedule Approval

Discussion occurred around proposed dates and issues with those dates. City staff will look into other possible dates and venues.

Commission agreed to the next meeting on August 27th, while future dates would be determined.

7. Public Comment

One member of the public commented regarding the scope of the Commission.

8. Other Business

Public involvement as part of the process; reviewed resources: The Commission discussed how to involve the public in the process, including resources that Commissioner Oliver created, how to involve the school system, and making sure physical, printed agendas and packets were available.

9. Next Meeting

9.a Agenda Discussion Items for next meeting

Several potential agenda items were discussed with Chair Belanger stating that he and City staff would put together a draft agenda for the commission.

10. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn: Commissioner Pecor

Second: Commissioner Mills

Discussion: None.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Order passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.

City of Biddeford REMOTE MEETING PARTICIPATION POLICY

Purpose:

Pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 403-B, a municipality may continue to allow members of its various boards, committees, commissions, including city council, and the public to participate in public meetings by remote methods upon adoption of a written policy. This policy satisfies the legal and administrative requirements needed to allow remote participation.

Definitions:

Hybrid Public Meeting - means a public meeting consisting of a combination of in-person and remote participation, where there must be at least one member of the public meeting body present at the specified meeting location.

Remote Public Meeting – means a public meeting consisting of remote participation by all members of the meeting body and the public by remote methods.

In-Person Meeting – means a public meeting held in-person with no remote two-way participation option(s) for the public or participating members of the public meeting body.

Remote Methods - means telephonic or video technology allowing simultaneous reception of information and may include other means when such means are necessary to provide reasonable accommodation to a person with a disability. Public proceedings may not be conducted by text-only means such as e-mail, text messages or chat functions.

Meeting Body - means any of the various City of Biddeford public boards, committees, commissions, including city council.

Applicability:

This policy, as may be amended from time to time, applies to all boards, committees, commissions, including city council (meeting body). Municipal staff and each respective meeting body chairperson or assigned alternate shall ensure compliance with this policy.

Unless otherwise specified, all public meetings of the city meeting bodies shall be conducted as hybrid meetings.

Requirements:

1. All hybrid and remote public meetings must be properly noticed. The notice must include the means by which the public may access the meeting remotely, currently through Zoom, and will provide a method for disabled persons to request necessary accommodation to access the meeting. Notice will also identify a location where the public may attend a hybrid meeting in person. Notice timelines and format shall comply with existing meeting body rules or requirements and any applicable charter, ordinance, policy, or bylaw.
2. The public meeting body will make all documents and materials to be considered by the public meeting body available, electronically or otherwise, to the public who attend remotely for hybrid and remote meetings to the same extent customarily available to the public who attend

in person, provided no additional costs are incurred by the City. This requirement shall be satisfied upon publication of agenda materials on the city website and agenda software, currently Granicus.

3. All votes taken during a hybrid or remote public meeting will be by roll call vote that can be seen and heard if using video technology, or heard if using audio technology only, by other members of the meeting body and the public. A member of the meeting body who participates remotely will be considered present for purposes of a quorum and voting.
4. All meeting body members are expected to be physically present for the public meeting except when being physically present is not practical. Reasons for remote attendance may include:
 - a. An Emergency - the existence of an emergency or urgent issue that requires the entire public meeting body to meet by remote methods;
 - b. Illness, Physical Condition, or Distance - illness, other physical condition or temporary absence from the jurisdiction of the meeting body that causes a member of the meeting body to face significant difficulties traveling to and attending in person;
 - c. Geography of the Public Meeting Body's Influence - with respect to a public meeting body with statewide membership or influence, significant distance a member must travel to be physically present; and
 - d. Geography of the Public Meeting Body's Jurisdiction - The area of the public body's jurisdiction includes geographic characteristics that impede or slow travel, including but not limited to islands not connected by bridges.
5. A determination as to a member of a meeting body's ability to participate remotely shall be made by the meeting body's chairperson or assigned alternate in consultation with the assigned staff representative and/or city manager or assigned alternate.
6. A public body member shall provide notice to the respective chairperson as soon as practical if attendance at a scheduled public meeting is impractical.
7. Public attendance at a proceeding will not be limited solely to remote methods except under the conditions in paragraph 4, subparagraph (a).

Limitations:

1 M.R.S. § 403-B, does not allow regional school unit budget meetings held pursuant to Title 20-A, section 482-A to be conducted using remote methods.

This policy will remain in force indefinitely unless amended or rescinded.

Adopted by the Biddeford City Council: July 20, 2021 by Order 2021.82

Planning Board Ratification Date: August 4, 2021

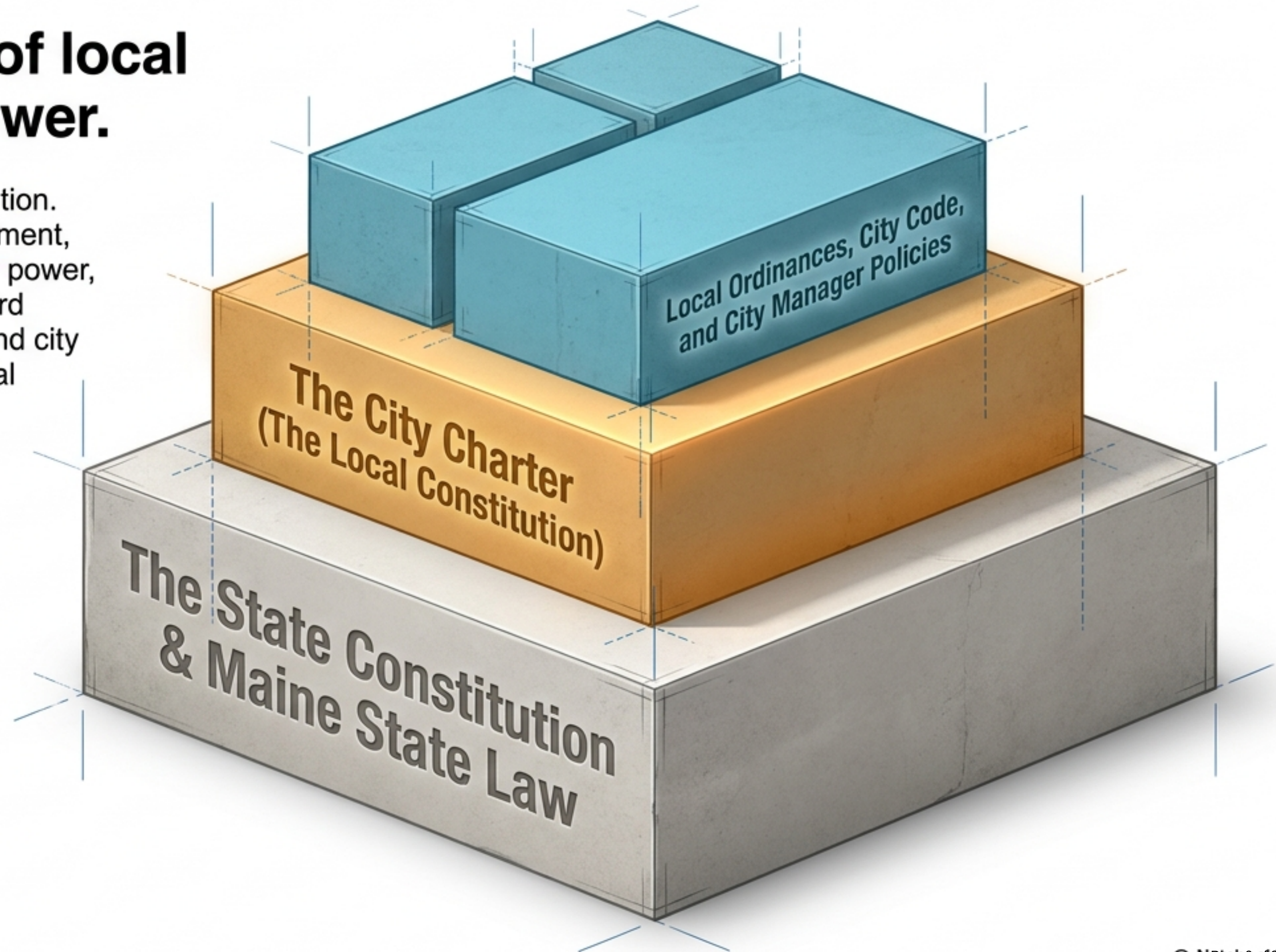
The Blueprint of Biddeford

Understanding our City Charter and shaping the future of our local government.



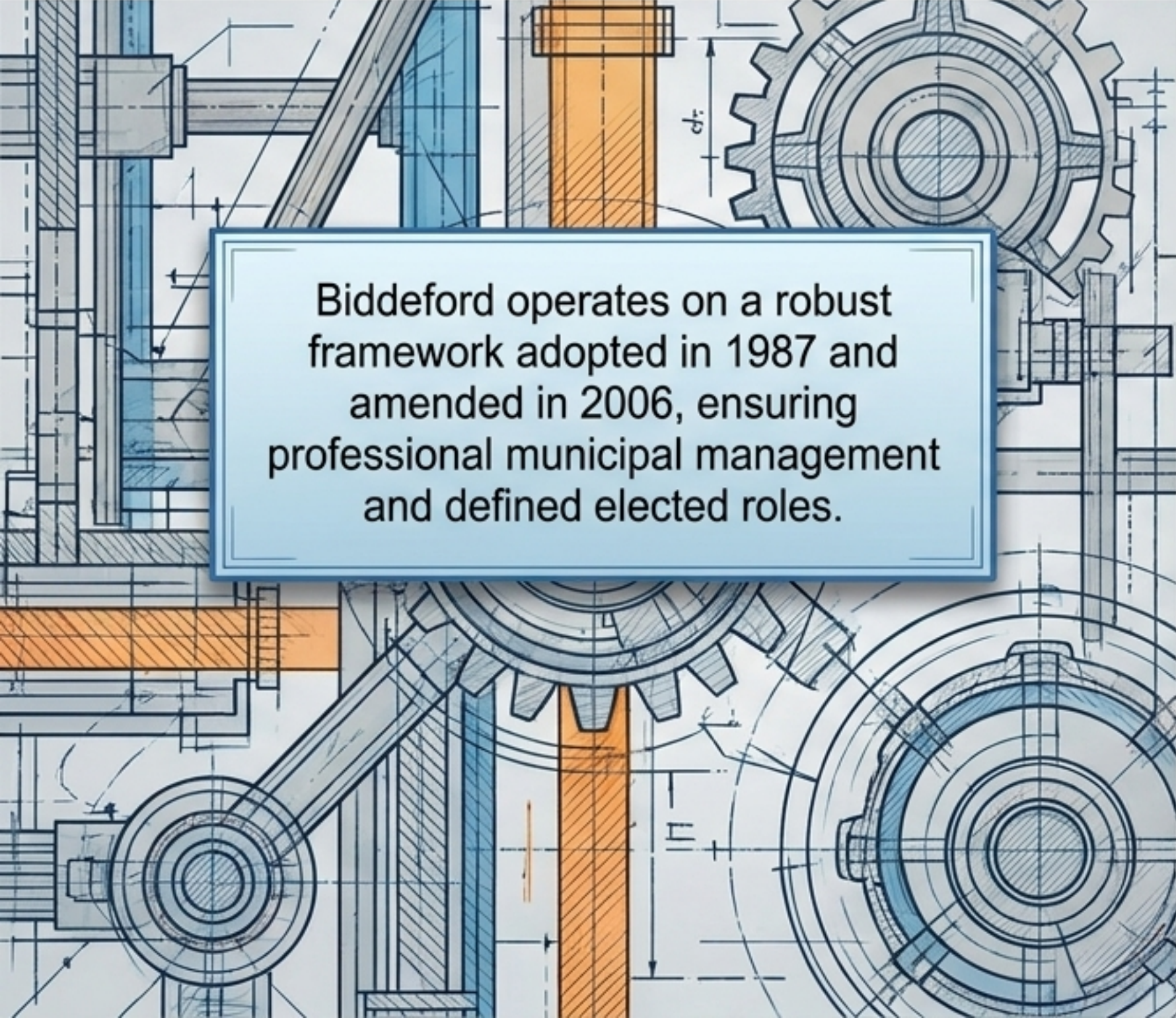
The foundation of local law and civic power.

A city charter is our local constitution. It dictates the form of our government, the strict distribution of municipal power, and the specific rights of Biddeford citizens. Every local ordinance and city policy rests upon this foundational legal framework.



Evolving the master plan for modern challenges.

Our Current Blueprint

A detailed technical drawing of mechanical components, including several interlocking gears of different sizes and shafts. The drawing is rendered in a blue and orange color scheme with fine lines and hatching to indicate depth and texture.

Biddeford operates on a robust framework adopted in 1987 and amended in 2006, ensuring professional municipal management and defined elected roles.

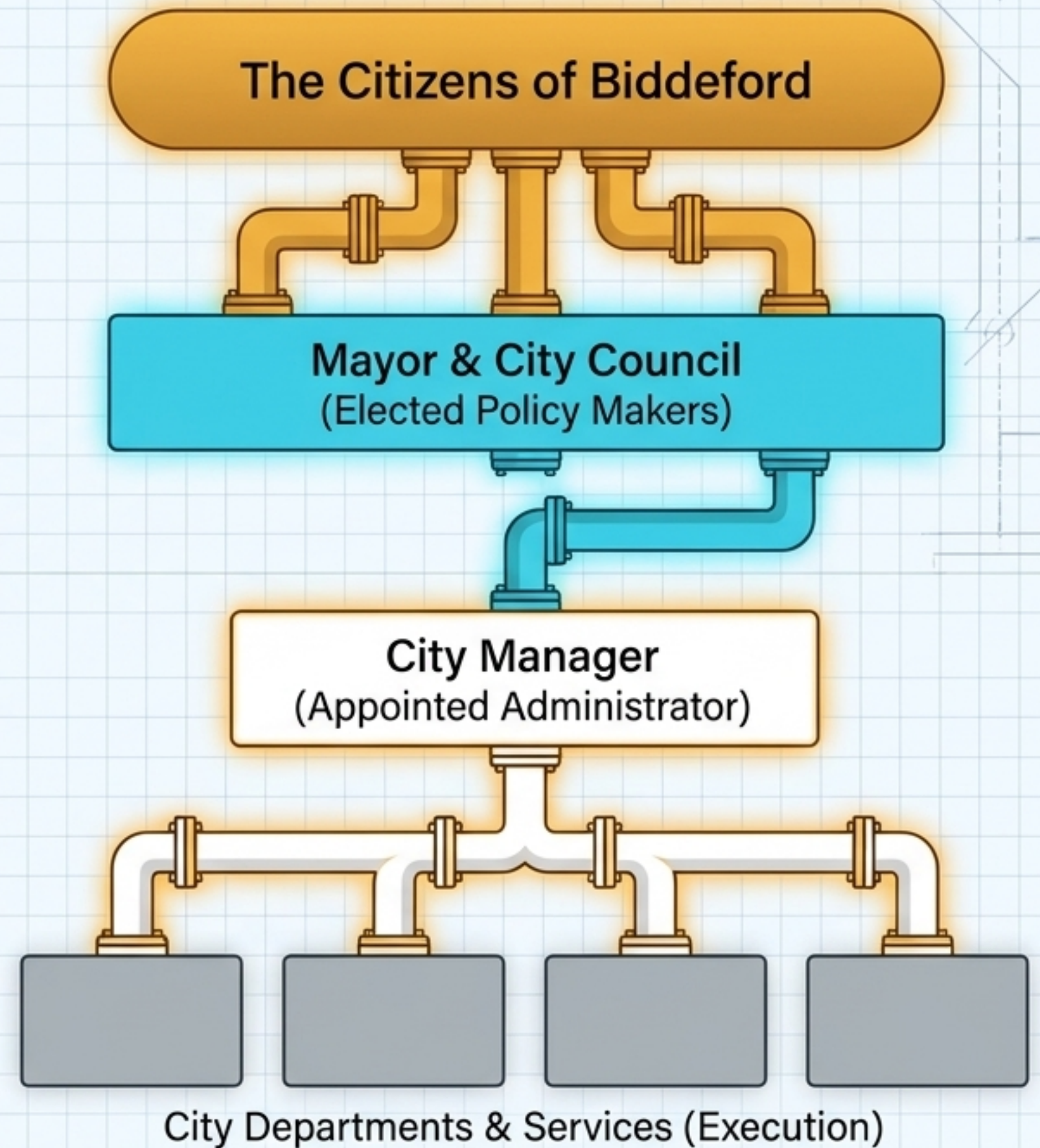
The New National Standard

An abstract network diagram featuring a dark blue background with a complex web of glowing blue and orange lines. The lines intersect at various points, creating a sense of connectivity and flow. Some lines are straight, while others are curved, and the overall pattern resembles a modern digital or social network.

The 2021 National Model City Charter identifies that modern cities must go beyond basic efficiency. The newest blueprints prioritize a structural social equity lens, comprehensive diversity, and robust, co-produced public engagement.

Biddeford relies on the Council-Manager system.

This structure separates political vision from daily administration. Citizens elect the Council to set the policy and budget. The Council then hires a non-partisan, professional City Manager to execute that vision with maximum efficiency and economy.



The Policy Makers: Mayor and City Council.



The Breakdown

9 Councilors (1 from each of the 7 wards, 2 At-Large) plus 1 Mayor.

The Rules

Must be a resident for 6 months.
Serve 2-year terms.
Compensated \$100 per month
(capped at \$1,200/year).
Wards are re-evaluated every 10 years.

The Role

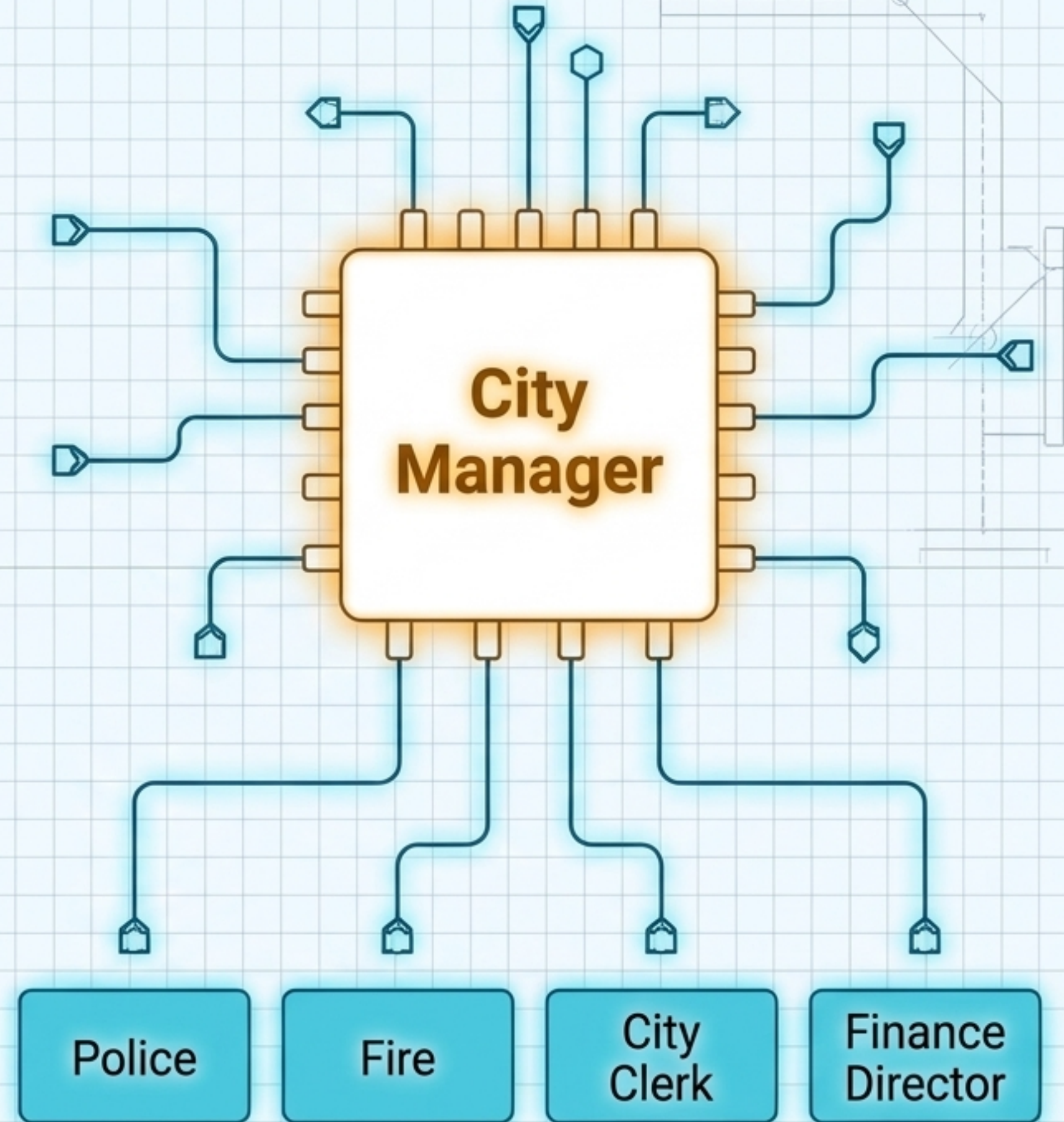
Possess the legislative supremacy to enact ordinances, approve the budget, and represent the citizens.

The Administrators: Executing the vision.

City Manager: Nominated by the Mayor, confirmed by the Council for up to a 3-year contract. Evaluated annually. Must establish residency within 6 months of hire.

Core Duties: Chief Administrative Officer responsible for day-to-day operations. Prepares the annual budget and 5-year Capital Improvement plan. Enforces all laws, ordinances, and lawful directives of the City Council.

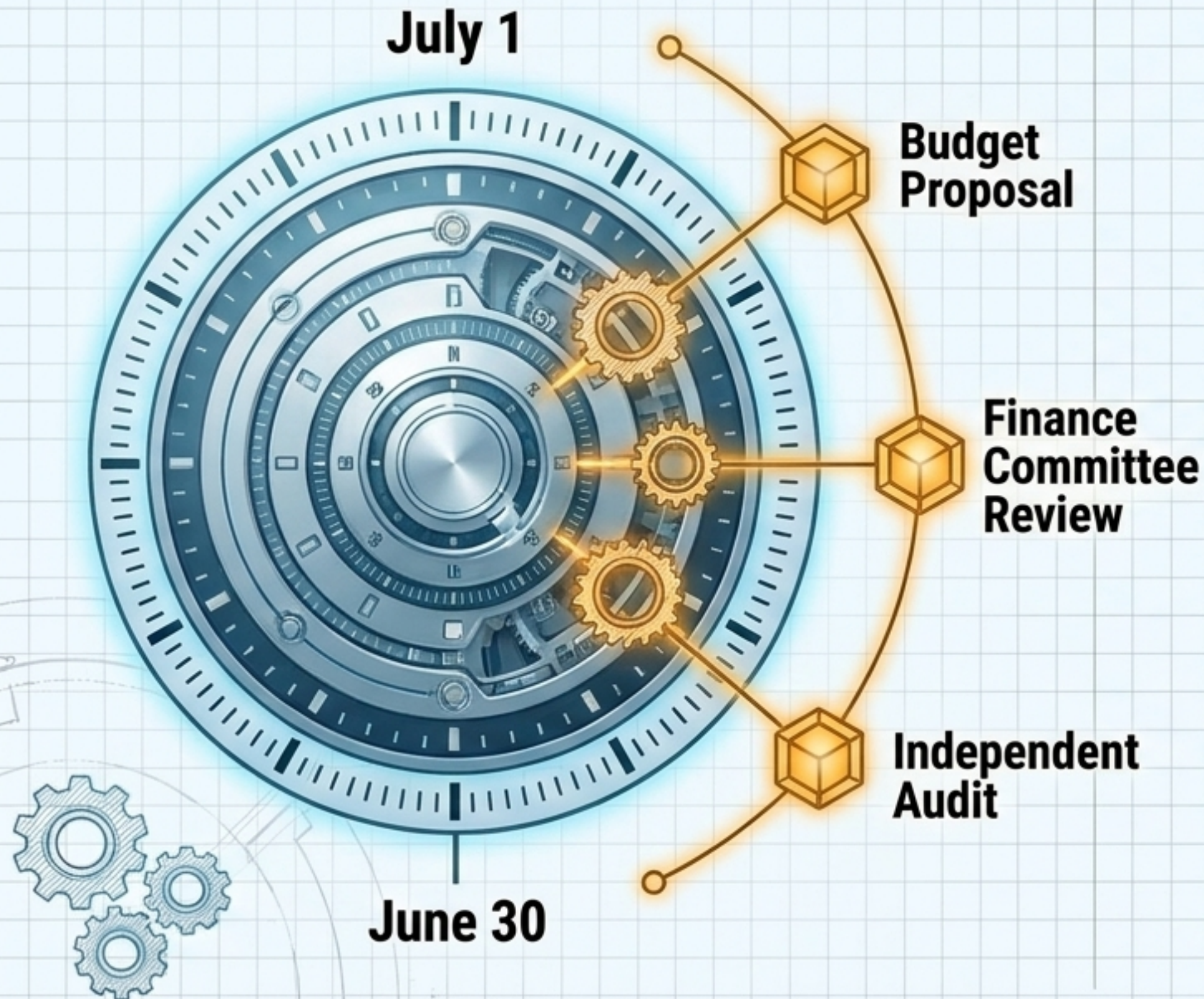
Key Officers: City Clerk & Finance Director are nominated by the Mayor, confirmed by Council, and managed within the administrative branch.



Mapping the boundaries of municipal power.

	Mayor	City Council	City Manager	School Committee
Selection	Elected At-Large	Elected (Ward & At-Large)	Appointed by Council	Elected At-Large
Budget Role	Proposes Initiatives	Approves Final Budget	Drafts & Proposes Budget	Manages Ed. Budget
Daily Staff Management	✗ No	✗ No	✓ Yes (City Staff)	✓ Yes (Superintendent)
Veto Power	✓ Yes	Can Override Veto	✗ No	✗ No
Unique Duty	Chairs School Comm. (Tie-breaker)	Passes Emergency Ordinances	Submits 5-Year Capital Plan	Directs Public Education

Guarding the public purse and financial integrity.



❑ **Strict Oversight**

The charter mandates an independent annual audit of all City accounts.

❑ **The Finance Committee**

Comprised of the Mayor, Council President, and 2 Councilors. The City Manager and Finance Director serve as non-voting members.

❑ **Citizen Check on Borrowing**

Any bond issues pledged on the credit of the city require 14 days public notice and must be ratified by a majority of voters at an election.

❑ **Code of Ethics**

Absolute prohibition on personal financial interest in city contracts for all officials and their immediate families.

The direct levers of democratic action.



Elections

Biennial voting on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November.



Initiative & Referendum

Citizens can force a binding (not advisory) vote on issues. Requires a petition signed by 15% of registered Biddeford voters, gathered within a strict 30-day window.

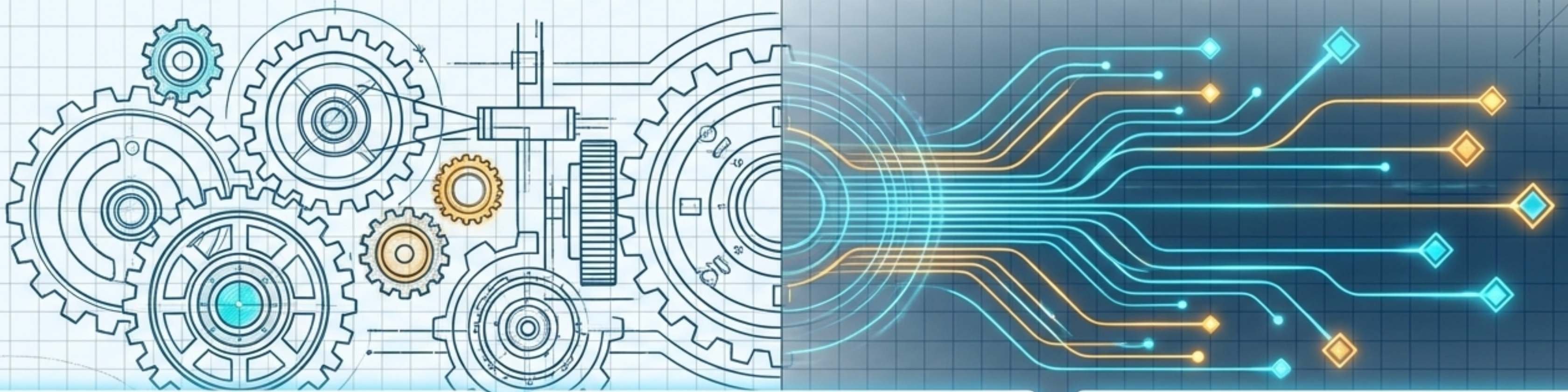


Recall

The power to remove elected officials. Requires a petition signed by 15% of registered voters from the previous Gubernatorial Election (or 15% of ward voters for a ward councilor).

Why communities rewrite their blueprints.

A charter is not a static document. As communities grow, their foundational laws must adapt. The newest national models emphasize:



Social Equity:

Adopting an equity lens to reshape decisions across personnel, land use, and budgeting.

Inclusive Engagement:

Moving beyond basic public comment to collaborative co-production and participatory budgeting.

Structural Modernization:

Fixing bureaucratic bottlenecks and ensuring the government accurately represents changing demographics.

The Engine of Change: The Charter Revision Commission.

The Charter can only be changed in matters of form and substance by a duly elected Charter Revision Commission. It is a temporary, independent body of citizens tasked with comprehensively reviewing the local constitution and drafting a modernized framework for voter approval. It is the ultimate tool for municipal self-determination.

Assembling the architects of our next charter.

Composition

9 Total Members.
7 Elected by voters (1 from each Ward).
2 Appointed by the Mayor and confirmed
by the City Council.

The Qualifications

Must be a Biddeford resident for at least 6 months.
Cannot hold any other elected office
within the City.

The Requirement

To run for a Ward seat on the Commission, a
citizen must gather nomination petition
signatures from 25 qualified voters in their
respective ward.



The revision pipeline: From proposal to law.

1. Initiation

Triggered by a City Council ordinance OR a citizen petition.

2. Election

Biddeford voters elect the 7 ward representatives to the Commission.

3. Review & Drafting

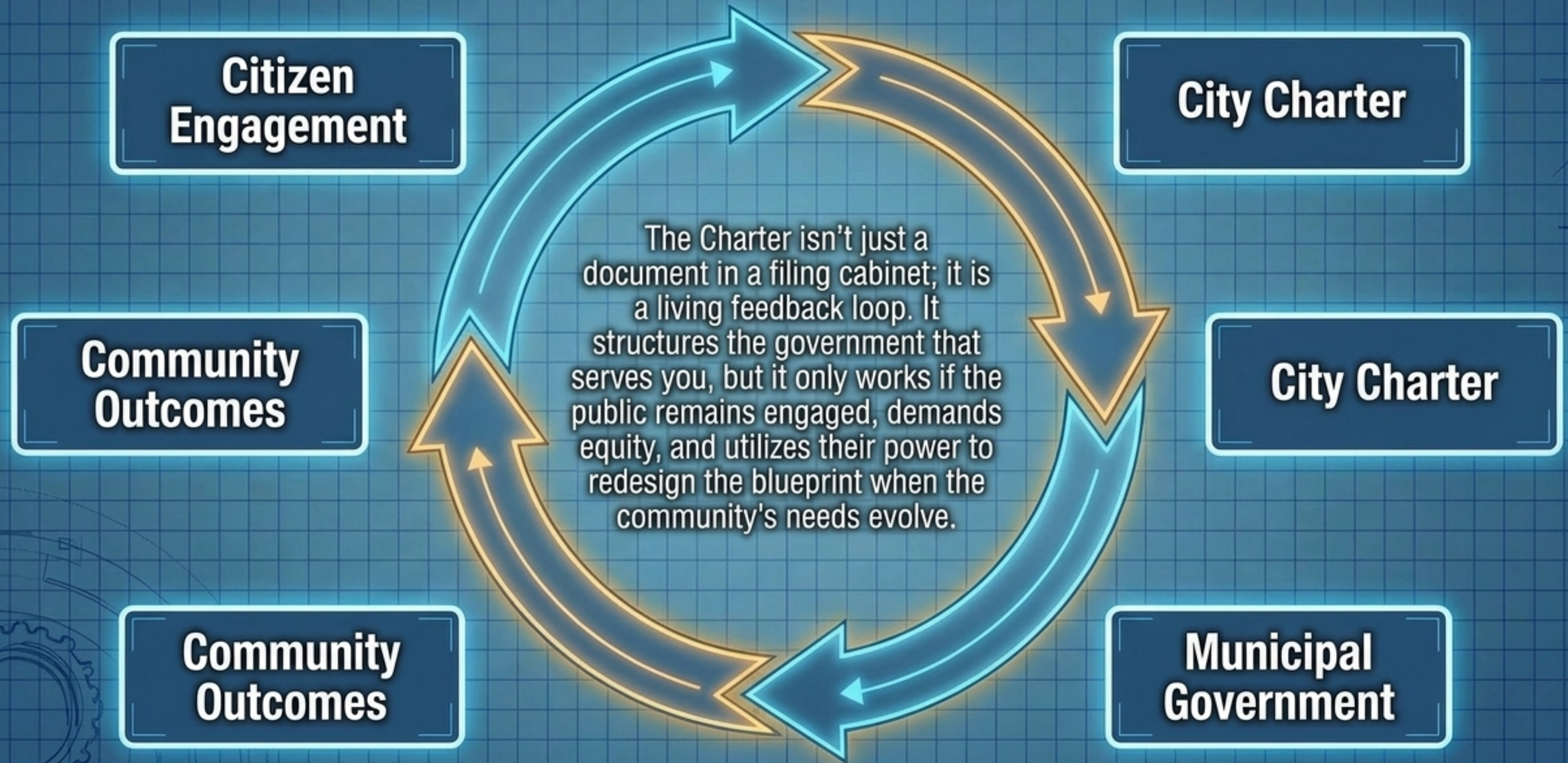
The Commission conducts public hearings, studies the current charter, and drafts proposed revisions.

4. Referendum

The final, drafted revisions are placed on the ballot. They only become law if approved by a majority vote of Biddeford citizens.



The continuous ecosystem of civic power.



Take your seat at the drafting table.

Read the Blueprint.

Review the current City Charter on the Biddeford website to understand your baseline rights.

Speak Up.

Attend public City Council and School Committee meetings (agendas are always posted 24 hours in advance).

Run for the Commission.

Gather 25 signatures from your ward to put your name on the ballot and help rewrite the future of Biddeford.

City of Biddeford Charter Revision Commission - Public Comment Form

Residents of the City of Biddeford may make suggestions regarding the City Charter using the form below or share testimony at public hearings held by the City's Charter Revision Commission. All submissions to this form are considered part of the public record.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. Name *

Enter your answer

2. Email Address *

Enter your answer

3. Ward *

Select your answer



4. Charter Revision Public Comment

Enter your answer



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GET TO KNOW YOUR CITY CHARTER

Two free, easy-to-use tools for reading and understanding how Biddeford's city government works

The City Charter is Biddeford's founding rulebook — it spells out who has authority to make decisions, how the Mayor, City Council, and City departments work together, and how residents like you can have a say. Reading it used to mean digging through a long paper document. Now there are two simple tools, free for anyone to use, that make it easy.



The Charter Explorer

A simple search tool for the Charter — like using a search engine, but just for this one document.

- Type in a word or question — like “mayor” or “veto” — and it shows you every part of the Charter that mentions it.
- Browse by topic if you’d rather look around than search.
- Click any result to read the full text right there on the page.
- Switch to a larger, easier-to-read view any time with one click.



The Charter Quiz

A short, friendly quiz that helps you learn the Charter while having a little fun.

- Answer 10 quick questions — a new mix every time you play.
- Find out right away whether you got each one right, with a plain-language explanation.
- Finish and earn a fun title, like “Charter Champion” or “Emerging Citizen,” based on your score.
- Takes about five minutes — play it once, or as many times as you like.

Getting Started

1. Open the links below on any computer, tablet, or phone — there’s nothing to download or install.
 - The Charter Explorer: <https://participlan.studio/projects/biddeford-charter/>
 - The Charter Quiz: <https://participlan.studio/projects/biddeford-charter/quiz>
2. Click into the Explorer to look something up, or the Quiz to test what you know.
3. That’s it — no account, no sign-up, no password.

A Few Things to Know

- Both tools are completely free and available any time, day or night.
- Nothing you type is saved to your name or shared with anyone.
- If you get stuck, it’s okay to ask a family member, friend, or library staff member to help you click the link — that’s what this page is for!

City of Biddeford Charter Revision Commission - Community Presentation Request Form

Thank you for your interest in learning more about the City of Biddeford Charter and the work of the Charter Revision Commission. Complete this form to request an informational presentation by a Charter Revision Commission member at one of your group's upcoming meetings. We will share an overview of what the charter is and what the charter review process looks like. The details you provide below will help us schedule efficiently. Once submitted, a member of the Charter Revision Commission will reach out to you to confirm a date and time.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. Organization / Community Group Name *

Enter your answer

2. Organization / Community Group Website URL

Enter your answer

3. Organization / Community Group Meeting Location *

Please provide a physical address. Or, if you meet virtually, provide the platform that you use.

Enter your answer

4. Point of Contact Name *

Enter your answer

5. Point of Contact Email Address *

Enter your answer

6. Point of Contact Phone Number *

Enter your answer

7. Preferred Method of Contact *

☐ Email

☐ Phone

☐ Either

8. On which days of the week does your group meet? *

☐ Sunday

☐ Monday

☐ Tuesday

☐ Wednesday

☐ Thursday

☐ Friday

☐ Saturday

9. What time of day does your group meet? *

Enter your answer

10. How frequently do you meet? *

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Biweekly (every other week)

☐ Monthly

☐ Other

11. When is your next meeting? *

Please input date (M/d/yyyy)



12. What tech set up do you have at the meeting location? *

☐ Projector / screen

☐ Computer connection (HDMI/USB-C)

☐ Wifi

☐ None of the above

☐ Other

13. If someone from your group will need accessibility accommodations, please specify them here:

Enter your answer

14. Does your group have any specific questions about the charter or charter review process?

Enter your answer



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DRAFT

Charter Review Commission

2026 Meeting Schedule

July 16 - First Meeting

Mon. Aug. 10 Public Hearing and Regular Charter Commission Meeting

Thurs. Aug 27 - Finalize details of how to move forward

Third Meeting

- Art V - SCHOOL COMMITTEE
- Art VI - POLICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
- Art VII - FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Fourth Meeting

- Art II- OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
- Art III- CITY COUNCIL
- Art IV CITY MANAGER

Fifth Meeting

- Art VII- ELECTIONS

Sixth Meeting

- Art IX - RECALL

Seventh Meeting

- Art X- DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES OR AGENCIES

- Art XI - BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

8th Meeting

- Art XII - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Rest of the meetings for 2026

- New/other material; additional time for previous topics

2027 Meetings would be used to focus on the draft of the report due March 2027.

Charter Commission

The following are dates when the City Council Chambers is available and we have Technicians available livestream the meeting

Thurs Sept 10

Mon. Sept. 14

Thurs. Sept 17

Mon. Sept. 21

Thurs. Oct. 1

Mon. Oct. 12 - Holiday

Mon. Oct. 18

Thurs. Oct. 15

Thurs. Oct 29

Thurs. Nov. 5 - City Council Meeting (Election day is Tues. Nov. 3)

Mon. Nov. 9

Thurs. Nov. 12

Mon. Nov. 16

Thurs. Nov 23 - Thanksgiving

Mon. Nov. 30

Thurs. Dec. 3

Mon. Dec. 14

Thurs. Dec 17

Mon. Dec. 21

Thurs. Jan. 7

Mon. Jan. 11

Mon. Jan 18 - Holiday