

Tracey Spruce

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## Recall Provisions

Input Hello Committee Members,

Thanks for your work on this committee. As an elected official, I know the time and commitment it takes to serve the Town of Andover. I'd like to share my thoughts about the proposal to amend our Town Bylaws to add a recall provision.

First, I'm not aware this is problem that Andover needs to solve; rather, it feels like a solution in search of a problem. Having lived here for 20+ years, I can't think of a time when giving the voters a chance to recall an elected official was necessary. If any of you can share an example that I'm missing, I would certainly be open to reconsidering my perspective.

Second, as we've seen in other parts of the country, recall elections easily can be weaponized to advance a political agenda. This is undesirable even when elected officials are political (i.e., Democrat, Republican, etc.). It's even more undesirable, and potentially harmful, when the elected officials are supposed to be non-partisan, as is the case with elected Andover officials. I can think of situations over the past few years when a group of people wanted to see the Town Manager or Superintendent fired, and the elected board chose to retain the executive (e.g., AYS, "Respect Our Coaches"). In those cases, the public does not have -- and should not have -- all of the information about the particular situation, and cannot possibly know all of the factors that went into a particular personnel decision or action. Yet, it is not a stretch to imagine the groups clamoring for Dr. Berman's or Mr. Flanagan's discharge turning to the recall process for recourse. Similarly, the school committee has had to make incredibly difficult decisions throughout the pandemic, many of which have resulted in uncivil debate and deep divides within our community. Yet, we've done our best with a complicated and unprecedented pandemic where the data changes rapidly and guidance is constantly evolving. Nonetheless, I don't doubt one or more of use would have faced a recall if that were an option for Andover voters. Allowing voters to seek a recall over a single issue would be an egregious abuse of process that likely would sow deep divisions in our town. We should not put in place any process that might do further harm to our town than already is caused by social media and the greater political forces at play around the country.

Finally, the recall process is expensive. Why would we want to add the potential for an expensive process like this to our budget, where we're already stretched thin? If voters don't like their elected officials, they have an opportunity every March to replace those officials. I'd rather see our resources devoted to increasing voter turnout, which is how democracy thrives, than to misguided recall efforts, which allows a one-issue group to subvert the annual election process.

By the way, my perspective has nothing to do with an interest in retaining my position as an elected official. Frankly, after the past 18 months of serving in this role and being abused and maligned by so many members of the public, there isn't a whole lot of ongoing appeal. I just don't see any benefit to adding a recall process and I see a lot of drawbacks. Thank you for considering my perspective.

Contact Me The Committee May Contact Me to Discuss my Input