

**To:** Medfield Board of Selectmen

**From:** Medfield Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee

**Re:** Updating BOS name to reflect “changing use of language”

**Date:** Nov. 19, 2021

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The Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee unanimously recommends the town of Medfield change the name of its governing board to “Select Board.”

The advisory committee consists of Nathan Bazinet, Richard DeSorgher, Theresa Knapp-Enos, Alexandra Maider, Julie Maviglia, Suzanne Newark, and Ann Thompson. It should be noted that committee members Richard DeSorgher and Ann Thompson both previously served on the Medfield Board of Selectmen.

### **Charge**

The committee was appointed by Medfield’s current Board of Selectmen in August 2021 and was issued the following charge:

*The Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee is charged with determining if the Town should vote to approve a charter amendment that changes the name of the Medfield Board of Selectmen to reflect the changing use of language. The Committee will review the history of the Board of Selectmen, determine if a name change is advisable, and if so, identify options for a new name. The Committee should also identify any related costs or implications of changing the name.*

The committee held meetings on Sept. 14, Sept. 29, Oct. 13, Oct. 27, and Nov. 10, 2021. A community forum was planned for Oct. 27 but was cancelled due to a lack of quorum caused, in part, by inclement weather and power outages for some members. The community forum was rescheduled to Nov. 10 (Attachment A). The meetings were posted on the town website and in the *Hometown Weekly*.

### **Recommendation**

The committee recommends a change to “Select Board” after considering other suggestions such as Board of Administrators, Board of Managers, Board of Supervisors, Executive Board, Town Council, and The Board. It was determined that the

term “Select Board” would be the clearest title for the town’s governing body and the gender-neutral term contains the most inclusive language.

According to the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA), as of Oct. 25, 2021, 149 towns (of the 292 towns eligible to do so) have changed their names. “There are 127 towns that have adopted ‘Select Board’ as two words that we know of, and 22 that have adopted ‘Selectboard’ as one word.”

The committee also considered “Selectboard” (one word) but concluded that the more prominent “Select Board” would be the better choice.

## **Survey**

The committee issued a public survey (Attachment B) which accepted responses from Oct. 14 to Nov. 9, 2021. The survey asked “Should the name of Medfield’s governing board be changed to “Select Board?” and offered an open response box for further comments (Attachment C). The survey link was shared out to Medfield residents via the *Hometown Weekly*, *Medfield Patch*, the town’s website, and on Facebook pages “Friends in Medfield” and “Concerned Citizens of Medfield” (comments also on Attachment C).

Residents were also able to send comments directly to the office of the Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator at town hall (omitting their return address if they wanted to remain anonymous) via USPS or Janes Ave dropbox, or emailing [MedfieldBOSNameChangeCommittee@gmail.com](mailto:MedfieldBOSNameChangeCommittee@gmail.com) -- none of these options were utilized.

## *Survey results*

The survey had 220 respondents with 170 people (77.3%) in favor, 34 people opposed (15.5%) and 16 people 7.3%) neutral.

## *Themes & Comments*

All qualitative data can be found in Attachment C. Themes included:

Change is needed: Term is outdated and sexist, name needs to be gender-neutral, important change, no downside, obvious, necessary change, sensible, long overdue, non-controversial, words and language matter, etc.

Change is NOT needed: Waste of time and money, “Select Board” is meaningless, nonsense, ridiculous, more important priorities, foolish, etc.

## **Costs**

The committee was asked to look at possible costs associated with the change. According to Assistant Town Administrator Nicholas Milano, who discussed the issue with town counsel, the anticipated costs would be minimal as most signage and stationery are digital.

## **Implications**

The committee was asked to look at possible implications associated with the change. According to Assistant Town Administrator Nicholas Milano, who discussed the issue with town counsel, no implications were foreseen.

## **Process**

Since the words “Board of Selectmen” appear in the town charter, the easiest way to effect the change is to make an amendment to the town charter that says “The Board of Selectmen shall now be known as the Select Board.” Since the words “Board of Selectmen” appear in the state constitution, those words must remain in the town charter. Note, there is a bill currently before the state legislature that proposes a similar statewide change. According to State Rep. Denise Garlick (D-Norfolk)...

*“There is currently a bill (S.2440) currently before the legislature regarding a statewide change from “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board.” The bill proposes to amend the constitution to remove the terms relative to “selectmen” and replace them with “select board.” As this is a constitutional amendment, should the legislature choose to enact it, it would need to be placed in front of the voters of the Commonwealth for their approval before any amendment to the constitution can be made.”*

A representative of the committee consulted the MMA to review the process and timeline to effect a name change at the local level. There are two ways to effect such a change:

- 1) Approval by Annual Town Meeting [May 2022] followed by approval at Town Election [date tbd]<sup>1</sup>; or

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<sup>1</sup> The vote would then need to be reviewed by the Office of the Attorney General.

(2) Approval by Annual Town Meeting [May 2022] followed by town petition to State Legislature for a charter change. MMA says this tends to be the slower option; Garlick confirms *“This timeline is dictated by the members of both the House and the Senate and may not sync up with the town’s expected timeline.”*

## **Conclusion**

It is the recommendation of this committee that Medfield start the process to change the name from “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board” in short order.



## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **Community Forum Powerpoint Presentation**

*Welcome...*



**Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee**

*Nathan Bazinet, Richard DeSorgher, Theresa Knapp-Enos, Alexandra Maider,  
Julie Maviglia, Suzanne Newark, Ann Thompson*

**Community Forum \* Nov. 10, 2021**

***Meeting flow & norms***

Please note: **THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED**

Your presence and your opinions are valued.

We will make a 15-minute presentation followed by Q&A.

Feel free to enter your questions into the Chat for us to address OR feel free to use the “**Raised Hand**” feature to enter the queue to speak.

Be kind, courteous, and charitable to all speakers.

Please know that we are an advisory committee that has been asked to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen who will then decide how to proceed.

*Thank you for participating in the process.*

### *Our charge...*

The Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee is charged with determining if the Town should vote to approve a charter amendment that changes the name of the Medfield Board of Selectmen to reflect the changing use of language. The Committee will review the history of the Board of Selectmen, determine if a name change is advisable, and if so, identify options for a new name. The Committee should also identify any related costs or implications of changing the name.

*We will make a recommendation to the BOS shortly.*

This committee is proposing a change to “**Select Board**”

*Based on the following:*

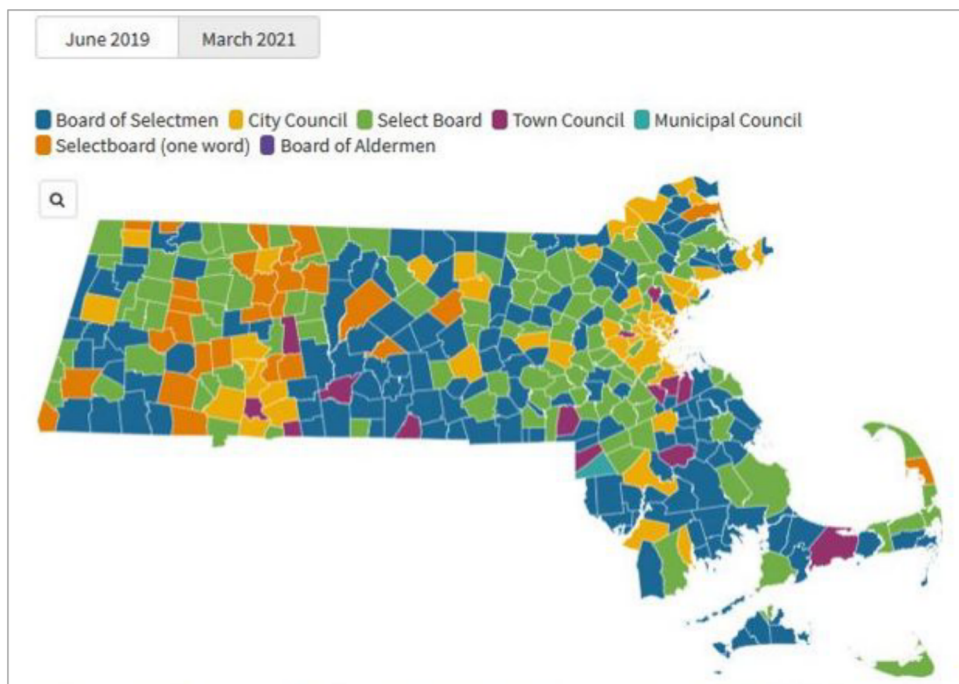


1. Gender-neutral language is more inclusive.
2. Massachusetts **Select Board** Association changed its name in 2020 from Massachusetts Selectmen's Association
3. As of Oct. 25, according to the Massachusetts Municipal Association, **149 towns** (of the 292 towns eligible to do so) have changed their names: **“There are 127 towns that have adopted ‘Select Board’ as two words that we know of, and 22 that have adopted ‘Selectboard’ as one word.”** (no MMA graphic available)
4. “Generally speaking, those are probably your two main options, that’s what most towns have done.” *There are two exceptions: Wakefield changed its name to “Town Council” but operates as a Board of Selectmen (7 members) which is causing confusion because it is not a Town Council/Mayor form of government; Amherst also changed to “Town Council” (13 members) but is “very different, not a traditional model.”* - Massachusetts Municipal Association (Oct. 25, 2021)

## At least 127\* municipalities in MA have changed to “Select Board”

Acton	Brewster	Fairhaven	Irving	Milton	Sandisfield	Tisbury
Aquinnah	Brookline	Falmouth	Lancaster	Monson	Scituate	Topsfield
Amherst	Buckland	Goshen	Leicester	Monterey	<b>Sharon</b>	Truro
Andover	Burlington	Grafton	Leverett	<b>Norfolk</b>	Sheffield	Wales*
Arlington	<b>Canton</b>	Groton	Lexington	North Andover	Nantucket	<b>Walpole</b>
Ashburnham	Carlisle	Hadley	Lincoln	North Reading	<b>Natick</b>	Ware*
Ashfield	Carver	Hanover	Littleton	Norton	<b>Needham</b>	<b>Wellesley</b>
<b>Ashland</b>	Chelmsford	Harvard	Longmeadow	Norwell	Newbury	West Boylston
Ayer	Chilmark	Hatfield	Lunenburg	Oak Bluffs	<b>Sherborn</b>	West Newbury
Barre	Cohasset	Heath	Lynnfield	Orleans	Shirley	West Stockbridge
Becket	Concord	Hingham	Mansfield	Otis	Southampton	West Tisbury
Bedford	Dalton	Hinsdale	Marion	Pembroke	Southwick	Westford
Belchertown	Danvers	Holbrook	Mattapoissett	Pepperell	Sterling	Weston
Belmont	Dartmouth	Holland	Maynard	Plainville	Stoneham	Westborough
Berlin	<b>Dedham</b>	<b>Holliston</b>	<b>Medway</b>	Plymouth	Stoughton	<b>Westwood</b>
Billerica	Dennis	Hopedale*	Mendon	Provincetown	Stow	Williamsburg
Blandford	Eastham	<b>Hopkinton</b>	Middleboro	Reading	Sudbury	Winchester
Bolton	Easton	Hubbardston	Middleton	Rockport	Sutton	
Boxborough	Egremont	Hudson	Milford	Royalston	Swampscott	
Boxford	Erving	Ipswich	<b>Millis</b>	Rutland	Templeton	

\* known to be in process; 22 others have chosen “Selectboard”



Source: *Milford Daily News* (as of March 2021)

## The survey...

### Should the name of Medfield's governing board be changed to "Select Board"?

The Medfield Board of Selectmen recently created a "Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee" which is charged with "determining if the Town should vote to approve a charter amendment that changes the name of the Medfield Board of Selectmen to reflect the changing use of language." The advisory committee is proposing a change to "Select Board". Please submit your answers by Nov. 1, 2021 at noon. \*\*All answers are anonymous\*\*

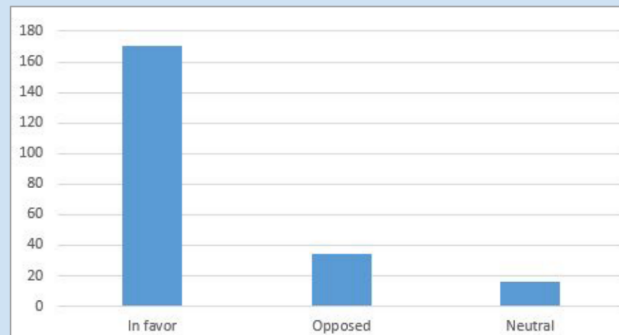
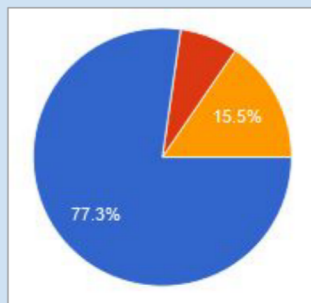
How do you feel about changing the current name of the Board of Selectmen to the "Select Board"?

- ☐ In favor -- I support the name change
- ☐ Neutral -- I have no opinion either way
- ☐ Opposed -- I am opposed to the name change

### Distribution:

- Hometown Weekly, [medfield.patch.com](https://medfield.patch.com), and [www.town.medfield.net](http://www.town.medfield.net)
- Facebook pages "Friends in Medfield" and "Concerned Citizens of Medfield"
- Other ways to submit: [MedfieldBOSNameChangeCommittee@gmail.com](mailto:MedfieldBOSNameChangeCommittee@gmail.com), via USPS mail to Town Hall, drop off at Town Hall dropbox (Janes Ave) or BOS/TA office *[Note: No one chose these options]*

## Final results...



**\*\*Responses to date: 220pp\*\***

**In favor: 170 (77.3%)**

**Opposed: 34 (15.5%)**

**Neutral: 16 (7.3%)**

### Themes and comments from survey responses...

PROS +	CONS -
Term is outdated and sexist; appropriate and overdue; way past time for a name change; name needs to be gender neutral. Very important.	There are more important things to work on than changing a reasonable and historic name. <b>Waste of time and money.</b>
No reason to keep it and good reason to change it. "No skin off my nose if it helps people feel respected." No downside. Obvious.	"Select Board" is meaningless and does not convey the same thing as "Board of Selectmen."
Not offended but like the proposed name better, it doesn't hurt to change to "Select Board." No harm in changing it.	More important issues. Ridiculous. Nonsense. Don't be woke. Panders to special interests. Where does it end? What's next on the hit list?
Why is this a survey question in 2021, the current name should be changed. Should have happened years ago. <b>Long overdue.</b> We are not all men. "It's time. I don't understand the need for a forum. I can't imagine why anyone would oppose this." Necessary change.	Infinitely more important priorities to be addressed. "It's sad that so much time is being wasted on such ignorant misunderstanding [of word roots]"
"It may seem silly to some but it's an important step forward as a town." It's "incredibly embarrassing" that we haven't done it yet. "Sounds like a very sensible and non-controversial change."	"Select Board...sounds elitist... a select board...doesn't sound right. In all honesty y'all have bigger fish to fry than worrying about what to call yourselves."
Nice gender improvement; name should reflect that eligible individuals who are not men can serve on the Board. More inviting and reflective of the town. "Words and language matter and signal whether the town leadership is inclusive or not."	"Do you really think changing the name is going to make the world a better place? Stop wasting time and money on foolish agendas. Work to make this a better world to live in."

### Themes from Facebook comments...

PROS +	CONS -
Representation matters. Many towns around us have already changed their language to be more inclusive. Small change with a big impact.	"They are always going to be called Selectman. Its the same for the Police station & Fire station. And on and on. Don't they have more important things to do?"...Give it a rest. The name or Title of the job they have is sufficient. Stop creating drama and wasting taxpayers hard earned money."
Just do it	Do you think you're not able to run because of the name?

#### Info:

- *Friends in Medfield*: 40 comments, mostly on two main threads -- including response from John Thompson asking if Ann was consulted
- *Concerned Citizens of Medfield*: 12 comments

*In response...*

Why didn't BOS just make the change; did we really need an advisory committee?

**Aren't there larger issues to think about?**

This process feels "well intended but poorly thought out"

**This change is a waste of time and money**

Why recommend "Select Board"?

*Be advised that all comments will be shared with BOS*

*Considerations...*

Costs:	Minimal - according to Assistant Town Administrator Nicholas Milano; could include some signage and stationery (which is mostly digital)
Implications:	None foreseen- as reported by Nick Milano after speaking with Town Counsel
Process/Timeline:	Two options:  1) Approval by Annual Town Meeting (May 2022) followed by approval at Town Election (Nov. 2022); <b>or</b>  (2) Approval by Annual Town Meeting (May 2022) followed by town petition to State Legislature for a charter change (timeline unclear though MMA says tends to be the slower option).



*Thank you and Q&A...*





## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **Survey Instrument**

## Should the name of Medfield's governing board be changed to "Select Board"?

The Medfield Board of Selectmen recently created a "Board of Selectmen Name Change Committee" which is charged with "determining if the Town should vote to approve a charter amendment that changes the name of the Medfield Board of Selectmen to reflect the changing use of language." The advisory committee is proposing a change to "Select Board". Please submit your answers by Nov. 1, 2021 at noon. **\*\*All answers are anonymous\*\***

How do you feel about changing the current name of the Board of Selectmen to the "Select Board"? \*

- ☐ In favor -- I support the name change
- ☐ Neutral -- I have no opinion either way
- ☐ Opposed -- I am opposed to the name change

Do you have additional feedback or comments? If so, feel free to elaborate here.

Long answer text

The Name Change Committee is planning a Community Forum on October 27, 2021, at 8 p.m. Would you be interested in attending? \*

- ☐ Yes, via Zoom
- ☐ Yes, in person
- ☐ No, I am not interested in attending

## **ATTACHMENT C**

### **Survey Qualitative Data**

Survey open-response: 96 comments

Facebook/Friends in Medfield: 40 comments (mostly on two threads)

Facebook/Concerned Citizens of Medfield: 12 comments

## SURVEY OPEN RESPONSES

Do you have additional feedback or comments? If so, feel free to elaborate here.

96 responses

No

I do support the name change, I do not find the current name offensive. Although, I do like the proposed name better.

The term is outdated and sexist. I'm happy to volunteer in any way to help make this change happen.

There is NO reason to keep the name "selectmen" and good reason to change it. In most facets of life, gendered terms are changing to be more inclusive (serviceman to service person, mailman to mail carrier). As there is no gender-based requirement to serve as a select person in Medfield, the term selectman is antiquated and not necessary.

It is an appropriate change - and overdue

After hundreds of years, there are more important things to work on than changing a reasonable and historic name. Don't bow to the mob.

This is a fantastic initiative!

Seems like a very sensible and non-controversial change

Medfield Together is radical and intolerant.

Stop the wokeness.

I can't see why this change would be opposed. There's nothing wrong with making the name of the governing body of our town more inclusive.

I'm not sure why this is even a survey question in 2021? Obviously, the current name should be changed.

This is a positive move in the right direction. Words and language matter and signal whether the town leadership is inclusive or not. Select Board removes the obvious gender bias.

whatever

I am a straight female. It's not massively important to me. I am not \*personally\* offended by such terms. I feel the same way about the term "guy(s)" because I don't consider it a purely male gendered term anymore. I.e., I would walk up to a group of female friends and greet them with "Hey guys how are you?" And none of those friends would be offended. Not to mention we are all HuMAN, right? That said, I think it certainly doesn't hurt to change it to "Select Board", as so many other towns have already done, to better reflect the makeup of the entity.

It is hard to believe this is even a discussion, it is after all 2021!

For starters, "Select Board" is a meaningless phrase and does not convey the same thing as "Board of Selectmen". Why wouldn't it be "Board of Selectpeople/persons"? If that had been the proposal I would say yes, go for it. But really....I'm all for changing truly harmful language but this is just silly. Do we really think people are so injured and deterred from participating because of this one part of the word that we needed to form a whole committee about it- and the proposed name change is so devoid of meaning? What's the real impact of this change to our town? If people really cared about our "governance reflecting the diversity of our town" then there would be a committee about how to get more women and POC involved in town government because that's real (albeit hard) work that drives impactful change.

It should be a requirement that at least one of these seats go to a woman. I find the current board too testosterone-laden and not representative of the thoughts and opinions of women. PS. I am a male.

Please change it to anything not sensitive. Is this not crazy that this is a debate? Is it 1755?

Aren't there more important issues to focus on than this?

Don't be woke! So ridiculous all this nonsense.

Thank you for doing this work! It may seem silly to some, but it's an important step forward as a town

The term Select Board has become an accepted and recognized alternative name for this government body as is evidenced by the many neighboring towns who have already changed their Board's name to Select Board. I believe that changing the name to Select Board better represents the spirit and inclusivity of this organization. Names matter.

This is long overdue and it's frankly a little embarrassing that Medfield is so behind on this. Changing the name to select board should not be a controversial matter.

We don't select the board, we select it's members. Select Board is incorrect, it ignores history and it is grammatically no less offensive than Board of Selectmen. Board of Representatives? Select Persons is gender neutral and would give generations to come something to laugh at. Perhaps Town Board?

This is a necessary change.

WAY past time for a name change.

Are t there more important causes to fight

Thank you for tending to this issue.

Putting efforts into changing the name is wasted time. As a woman, am I supposed to feel that I am not represented by the Board of Selectman because the term "selectman" ends in the word "man"? We are all "human", which also ends in "man". Should this term also be changed? Maybe I am missing the point but I feel this is complete nonsense.

Although I don't have a problem with the name being changed, I think that it is a sad statement that society no longer accepts the definition of "man" as a member of the human race. Third definition of man in dictionary.com is "the human individual as representing the species, without reference to sex; the human race;" I am a woman, I worked in what once was a male dominated field and never was offended by the use of the word "man" as in chairman or selectman. I always viewed it as this definition.

nice gender improvement

This name change should have happened YEARS AGO! Language is so important and officially changing the name to the Select Board (as many many neighboring towns already have) will align the Board with the inclusion that it already supports.

Thank you.

It's 2021, if we can't have a gender neutral name, it's because men are afraid of losing the small pet they think they have over everyone else

Just do it! Fast. Its about time!

Well suggested change, probably long overdue

There is no downside to changing the name.

Good idea!

It's time. I don't understand the need for a forum. I can't imagine why anyone would oppose this.

The name Selectmen is antiquated and could be updated without any harm to the group of people who serve.

Changing the name is more respectful and inclusive of woman. I appreciate the consideration, thought, and flexibility for change. :)

Just do it. No committee necessary.

I think it is very important to have a gender-neutral name for the board

why is this requiring a study committee? It's a "no brainer" and the process is antiquated.

This survey in and of itself is unethical. I do not choose to ask or plead to justify my inclusion. With reflection I hope the Committee is able to understand how inappropriate it is to legislate sexism, and to leave that discrimination up to community debate once pointed out.