

Methods for Filling Municipal Vacancies

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Issue

Describe how vacancies are filled on various municipal boards and commissions, including whether appointing authorities must appoint a replacement belonging to the same political party as the vacating member.

Summary

Generally, the method for filling vacancies on municipal boards and commissions depends on whether a town operates under the state statutes (i.e., statutory town) or under a charter (i.e., charter town). For statutory towns, state law establishes the vacancy-filling methods. For charter towns, the charter establishes the methods. Except as otherwise provided by law, if a town board or commission has the power to fill a vacancy but fails to do so within 30 days, the board of selectmen or chief executive authority may appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy until the next municipal election ([CGS § 7-107](#)).

The statutes do not appear to explicitly require appointing authorities to appoint a replacement belonging to the same political party as the member vacating a municipal board or commission. However, in most cases the appointment must comply with minority representation requirements. Table 1 lists statutory requirements for filling municipal vacancies.

Table 1: Statutory Methods for Filling Municipal Vacancies

<i>Board or Commission</i>	<i>Members Elected or Appointed</i>	<i>Methods For Filling Vacancies</i>
Conservation Commission (CGS § 7-131a)	Appointed	Chief elected official (CEO) of municipality may fill any vacancy
Municipal Economic Development Commission (CGS § 7-136)	Appointed or Elected	CEO fills vacancy for unexpired portion of the term
Board of Police Commissioners (CGS § 7-275)	Appointed	Board of Selectmen fills vacancy by majority vote until the next town election, at that time a member is elected for the unexpired portion of the term
Board of Finance (CGS § 7-343)	Elected	Remaining board members appoint a temporary replacement at a special meeting called for that purpose; the appointee serves until the next municipal election, at which time a successor is elected to fill the remaining portion of the term
Zoning Commission (CGS § 8-1)	Appointed	Vacancies are filled by vote of the municipal legislative body

Minority Representation Requirements

Regardless of whether a municipality operates under the statutes or a charter, and with certain limited exceptions (e.g., regional boards of education), boards and commissions must comply with state law’s minority representation requirements. These requirements prohibit members from the same political party from comprising more than a specified percentage (generally two-thirds) of a board’s membership. Municipalities may enact a greater degree of minority representation than required by the state through the adoption of a charter provision ([CGS § 9-167a](#)). (For more information on minority representation requirements, see OLR Report [2017-R-0344](#).)

KS:cmg