

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 58**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Bradley H. Jones, Jr.***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to the town of Reading home rule charter.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Bradley H. Jones, Jr.</i>	<i>20th Middlesex</i>
<i>James J. Dwyer</i>	<i>30th Middlesex</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 58**

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By Mr. Jones of North Reading, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 58) of Bradley H. Jones, Jr. and James J. Dwyer (by vote of the town) for legislation to amend the home rule charter of the town of Reading. Municipalities and Regional Government. [Local Approval Received.]

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act relative to the town of Reading home rule charter.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Article 2 of the Town of Reading Home Rule Charter as amended through  
2 January 1, 2015, a copy of which is on file in the office of the archivist of the Commonwealth  
3 pursuant to Chapter 43B of the General Laws, is hereby amended by striking section 2.1 thereof  
4 in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

5 2.1 Composition

6 The legislative body of the Town shall be a representative Town Meeting consisting of  
7 one hundred ninety-two (192) members from eight (8) precincts who shall be elected by the  
8 voters in each precinct. Each precinct shall be equally represented in Town Meetings by  
9 members elected so that the term of office of one-third of the members shall expire each year.

10 SECTION 2. Article 2 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section 2.2  
11 thereof in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

12           2.2 Revision of Precincts

13           When required by law or every ten (10) years, the Board of Selectmen shall review and,  
14 if necessary, re-divide the territory of the Town into eight (8) plainly designated precincts. The  
15 precincts shall be divided into as nearly an equal number of inhabitants as possible. The territory  
16 of each precinct shall be contiguous and as compact as possible. The territory of each precinct  
17 shall be defined, where reasonably possible, by the centerline of known streets or other well-  
18 defined limits. Within ten (10) days of completing its review, the Board of Selectmen shall file a  
19 report with the Town Clerk and the Board of Registrars of Voters, showing any revisions to the  
20 precincts that are being made pursuant to this section. If revisions are being made, the report  
21 shall include a map showing the boundaries of each precinct and a list of its inhabitants' names  
22 and addresses.

23           The Board of Selectmen shall also post the map and list in the Town Hall and in at least  
24 one public place in each precinct. Any such precinct revision shall be effective on the date it is  
25 filed with the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk shall forthwith notify the Secretary of State of the  
26 revision in writing.

27           SECTION 3. Article 2 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section 2.3  
28 thereof in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

29           2.3 Town Meeting Membership

30           At the first Town wide election after any precincts are revised, the voters of each precinct  
31 shall elect twenty-four (24) Town Meeting Members to represent the precinct. Terms of office  
32 shall be determined by the number of votes received. The eight (8) candidates receiving the  
33 highest number of votes shall serve for three (3) years, the eight (8) receiving the next highest

34 number of votes shall serve for two (2) years, and the eight (8) candidates receiving the next  
35 highest number of votes shall serve for one (1) year from the day of election. Upon the  
36 certification of such election, the term of office of all previously elected Town Meeting members  
37 shall cease.

38           At each Annual Election thereafter, the voters in each precinct shall elect eight (8) Town  
39 Meeting Members to represent the precinct for a term of three (3) years, and shall also elect  
40 Town Meeting Members to fill any vacant unexpired terms. After each election of Town  
41 Meeting Members, the Town Clerk shall notify each Town Meeting Member of his election in  
42 writing. In the event of a tie vote, resulting in a failure to elect the full number of Town Meeting  
43 Members in any precinct, the vacancy created thereby shall be filled until the next Annual Town  
44 Election by a vote of the remaining Town Meeting Members of the precinct, provided, however,  
45 that the balance of any unexpired term shall be filled at the next Annual Town Election. In the  
46 event of such a vacancy, the Town Clerk shall give written notice of the tie vote and the vacancy  
47 created thereby, to the remaining Town Meeting Members of that precinct and shall publish such  
48 notice in the local news medium. Such notice shall provide at least seven (7) day's advance  
49 notification of the time and place for a precinct meeting for the purpose of filling the vacancy.

50           SECTION 4. Article 2 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section 2.5  
51 thereof in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

52           2.5 Nomination Procedures

53           Nomination of candidates for Town Meeting Member shall be made by nomination  
54 papers bearing no political designation and signed by not fewer than ten (10) voters from the  
55 candidate's precinct. Nomination papers shall be obtained in person and signed by the candidate

56 in the presence of the Town Clerk or designee. Completed nomination papers shall be filed with  
57 the Town Clerk at least thirty-five days (35) days before the election.

58 SECTION 5. Article 2 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section 2.6  
59 thereof in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

60 2.6 Vacancies

61 A Town Meeting Member may resign by filing a written notice with the Town Clerk. A  
62 Town Meeting Member who terminates residency in the Town shall cease to be a Town Meeting  
63 Member. A Town Meeting Member who moves his residence from the precinct from which he  
64 was elected to another precinct shall serve only until the next Annual Town Election. If any  
65 person elected as a Town Meeting Member fails to attend one-half or more of the total Town  
66 Meeting sessions within one year preceding the most recent Annual Town Election, his seat may  
67 be declared vacant by a majority vote of the Town Meeting. The Board of Selectmen shall place  
68 an Article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to remove any such Town Meeting Member  
69 from office. At least seven (7) days prior to the Annual Town Meeting, the Town Clerk shall  
70 notify any such Town Meeting Member that he may be removed from office, provided, however,  
71 that such notice shall be deemed adequate if mailed postage prepaid to the Town Meeting  
72 Member's last known address. Any vacancy in a Town Meeting position may be filled until the  
73 next Annual Town Election by a vote of the remaining Town Meeting Members of the precinct,  
74 provided, however, that the balance of any unexpired term shall be filled at the next Annual  
75 Town Election. In the event of a vacancy, the Town Clerk shall give written notice thereof to the  
76 remaining Town Meeting Members of the precinct and shall publish such notice in a local news

77 medium. Such notice shall provide at least seven (7) day's advance notification of the time and  
78 place for a precinct meeting for the purpose of temporarily filling the vacancy.

79 SECTION 6. Article 3 of said Charter is hereby amended by striking section 3.2 thereof  
80 in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

81 3.2 Board of Selectmen

82 There shall be a Board of Selectmen consisting of five (5) members elected for three (3)  
83 year terms so arranged that as nearly an equal number of terms as possible shall expire each year.  
84 The executive powers of the Town shall be vested in the Board of Selectmen. The Board of  
85 Selectmen shall have all of the powers and duties granted to Boards of Selectmen by the  
86 Constitution and General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and such additional  
87 powers and duties as may be provided by the Charter, by Town Bylaw, or by Town Meeting  
88 vote. The Board of Selectmen shall cause the laws and orders for the government of the Town to  
89 be enforced and shall cause a record of all its official acts to be kept. The Board of Selectmen  
90 shall appoint a Town Manager, a Town Counsel, a Town Accountant, not more than five (5)  
91 Constables, and any other appointed board or committee member for whom no other method of  
92 selection is provided by the Charter or by Town Bylaw. The Board of Selectmen or its designee  
93 shall be the Licensing Board of the Town and shall have the power to issue licenses, to make all  
94 necessary rules and regulations regarding the issuance of such licenses, to attach such conditions  
95 and restrictions thereto as it deems to be in the public interest, and to enforce the laws relating to  
96 all businesses for which it issues licenses.

97 SECTION 7. Article 5 of said Charter is hereby amended by striking section 5.1 thereof  
98 in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

99           5.1 Appointment, Qualifications and Term

100           The Board of Selectmen shall appoint a Town Manager, who shall be appointed solely on  
101 the basis of his executive and administrative qualifications. He shall be a professionally qualified  
102 person of proven ability, especially fitted by education, training and previous experience. He  
103 shall have had at least five (5) years of full-time paid experience as a City or Town Manager or  
104 Assistant City or Town Manager or the equivalent level public or private sector experience.

105           The terms of the Town Manager's employment shall be the subject of a written contract,  
106 for a term not to exceed three (3) years, setting forth his tenure, compensation, vacation, sick  
107 leave, benefits, and such other matters as are customarily included in an employment contract.  
108 The Town Manager's employment contract shall be in accordance with and subject to the  
109 provisions of the Charter and shall prevail over any conflicting provision of any personnel  
110 bylaw, rule, or regulation. The Town Manager's compensation shall not exceed the amount  
111 annually appropriated for that purpose.

112           The Town Manager shall devote full time to his office and, except as expressly  
113 authorized by the Board of Selectmen, shall not engage in any other business or occupation.  
114 Except as expressly provided in the Charter, he shall not hold any other public elective or  
115 appointive office in the Town; provided, however, that, with the approval of the Board of  
116 Selectmen, the Town Manager may serve as the Town's representative to regional boards,  
117 commissions or similar entities, but shall not receive any additional salary from the Town for  
118 such services. Upon the termination of the Town Manager's appointment, whether voluntary or  
119 otherwise, he may receive termination pay as determined by the Board of Selectmen, not to  
120 exceed twelve (12) months' salary in total. To be eligible for this benefit upon voluntary

121 termination, the Town Manager shall provide the Board of Selectmen a minimum of sixty (60)  
122 days written notice of his intent to leave. This benefit shall not be available if the Town Manager  
123 is terminated for cause.

124 SECTION 8. Article 5 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section 5.4  
125 thereof in its entirety and inserting, in place thereof, the following section:

126 5.4 Acting Town Manager

127 5.4.1 Temporary Absence - By letter filed with the Town Clerk and the Board of  
128 Selectmen, the Town Manager shall designate a qualified individual to serve as Acting Town  
129 Manager during any anticipated temporary absence, not to exceed thirty (30) days.

130 5.4.2 Long-Term Absence - In the event of the absence, incapacity or illness of the Town  
131 Manager in excess of thirty (30) days, the Board of Selectmen shall appoint a qualified  
132 individual to serve as Acting Town Manager until the Town Manager returns.

133 5.4.3 Vacancy - When the office of Town Manager is vacant or the Town Manager is  
134 under suspension as provided in Section 5.5, the Board of Selectmen shall appoint a qualified  
135 individual to serve as Acting Town Manager under terms of employment to be determined by the  
136 Board of Selectmen. In the event of vacancy, the Board of Selectmen shall initiate recruitment  
137 for a new Town Manager without delay and shall appoint a new Town Manager within one  
138 hundred eighty (180) days.

139 5.4.4 Powers – Except as authorized by a four-fifths (4/5) vote of the Board of Selectmen,  
140 the powers of an Acting Town Manager shall be limited to routine matters requiring immediate



141 action and to making emergency temporary appointments to any Town office or employment  
142 within the scope of the Town Manager's responsibilities.

143 SECTION 9. Article 8 of said Charter is hereby amended by striking section 8.11 thereof  
144 in its entirety and inserting as section 8.9, the following section:

145 8.9 Elections

146 8.9.1 Annual Town Elections - The choice of elected Town Officers and Town Meeting  
147 Members, as well as referendum questions, shall be acted upon and determined on the date fixed  
148 by Town Bylaw by voters on official ballots without party or other designation.

149 8.9.2 Procedures - All elections held pursuant to the Charter shall be conducted in  
150 accordance with the election laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

151 8.9.3 Any town wide election shall be held at the same time for each precinct at a place or  
152 places designated by the Board of Selectmen.

153 SECTION 10. Article 8 of said Charter is hereby further amended by striking section  
154 8.13 thereof in its entirety and inserting, as section 8.11, the following section:

155 8.11 Recall Procedures

156 8.11.1 Application - Any holder of an elective office, other than a Town Meeting  
157 Member, with more than six (6) months remaining in the term for which he was elected, may be  
158 recalled therefrom by the voters in the manner provided in this section. No recall petition shall be  
159 filed against a Town Officer within three (3) months after he takes office.

160           8.11.2 Recall Petition - Two hundred and fifty (250) or more voters, including at least  
161 twenty-five (25) voters from each of the precincts into which the Town is divided, may file with  
162 the Town Clerk an affidavit containing the name of the Town Officer whose recall is sought and  
163 a sworn statement of the grounds upon which the affidavit is based. The Town Clerk shall,  
164 within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt, submit the affidavit to the Board of Registrars of Voters  
165 who shall forthwith certify thereon the number of signatures that are names of voters. A copy of  
166 the affidavit shall be entered in a record book to be kept in the office of the Town Clerk.

167           If the affidavit contains sufficient signatures, the Town Clerk shall deliver to the first ten  
168 voters listed upon the affidavit, blank petition forms, in such number as requested, demanding  
169 such recall, with his signature and official seal attached thereto. They shall be dated and  
170 addressed to the Board of Selectmen; shall contain the names of all persons to whom they are  
171 issued, the name of the person whose recall is sought and the grounds for recall as stated in the  
172 affidavit; and shall demand the election of a successor to the office held by such person. The  
173 recall petitions shall be returned and filed with the Town Clerk within twenty-one (21) days  
174 following the date of the filing of the affidavit, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the voters  
175 and containing their names and addresses; provided, however, that not more than twenty-five  
176 percent (25%) of the total number signatures may be from voters registered in any one precinct.

177           8.11.3 Recall Election - If the petition is certified by the Board of Registrars of Voters to  
178 be sufficient, it shall forthwith submit the petition with its certificate to the Board of Selectmen.  
179 Upon its receipt of the certificate, the Board of Selectmen shall forthwith give written notice of  
180 the petition and certificate to the Town Officer whose recall is sought, by mail, postage prepaid,  
181 to his address as shown on the most recent voting list; and shall cause notice of the petition and  
182 certificate to be publicly available. If such Town Officer does not resign his office within five (5)

183 days after the date of such notice, the Board of Selectmen shall order an election to be held not  
184 less than thirty-five (35) nor more than sixty (60) days after the date of the certificate of the  
185 Board of Registrars of Voters; provided, however, that if any other Town Election is to occur not  
186 less than thirty-five (35) nor more than sixty (60) days after the date of the certificate, the Board  
187 of Selectmen shall hold the recall election on the date of such other election. If a vacancy occurs  
188 in said office after a recall election has been ordered, the election shall nevertheless proceed as  
189 provided in this section, and the ballots for candidates shall, notwithstanding a recall provision to  
190 the contrary, be counted to determine a successor in office.

191           8.11.4 Nomination of Candidates - No Town Officer whose recall is sought may be a  
192 candidate to succeed himself in the recall election. The nomination of candidates, the publication  
193 of the Warrant for the recall election, and the conduct of the election shall all be in accordance  
194 with the provisions of law relating to elections.

195           8.11.5 Propositions on Ballot - Ballots used in a recall election shall state the following  
196 propositions in the order indicated:

197           For the recall of (name of Town Officer)

198           Against the recall of (name of Town Officer)

199           Adjacent to each proposition, there shall be a place to vote for either of the said  
200 propositions.

201           After the proposition shall appear the word "candidates" and the names of candidates  
202 nominated pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 54, Section 42. If a majority of the  
203 votes cast upon the question of recall is in the affirmative, the candidate receiving the highest

204 number of votes shall be declared elected and the incumbent shall be deemed removed upon the  
205 qualification of his successor, who shall hold office during the unexpired term; provided,  
206 however, that, if the successor fails to qualify within five (5) days after receiving notification of  
207 his election, the incumbent shall thereupon be deemed removed and the office shall be deemed  
208 vacant. If a majority of votes cast upon the question of recall is in the negative, no candidate  
209 shall be declared elected, and the Town Officer whose recall was sought shall continue in office  
210 for the remainder of his unexpired term, subject to recall as before.

211           8.11.6 Repeat of Recall Petition - No recall petition shall be filed against a Town Officer  
212 subjected to a recall election and not recalled thereby, until at least six (6) months after the  
213 election at which his recall was submitted to the voters.

214           SECTION 11. The Town Clerk is hereby authorized to make non-substantive changes to  
215 the numbering of the sections of the Town of Reading Home Rule Charter.

216           SECTION 12. This Act shall take effect upon approval by the voters, at a local election,  
217 of the further amendments to the Town of Reading Home Rule Charter adopted pursuant to  
218 Article 7 of the January 5, 2015 Special Town Meeting.