



Ophir Charter Review Committee

Guide to Governance Options (June 2026)

What This Document Is

If you are coming to this document fresh, the [Governance Options Primer](#) for Community Deliberations is worth reading first. It is about a dozen pages, structured for community deliberation, and designed to be accessible before any deep reading. The Guide to Governance Options is the full record behind it.

The Guide to Governance Options is the committee's complete deliberative record. It contains everything the committee examined, discussed, debated, and deliberately left open for the community to decide: the legal and charter implications of each model, the design questions that would need to be resolved if a model is chosen, the survey findings that informed committee discussion, the attorney's observations on specific proposals, and the threads the committee identified but did not have the authority or the mandate to settle on the community's behalf.

The [Governance Options Primer](#), released ahead of this document, is intended as the entry point: four-option summaries, side-by-side comparison tables, and the scenarios and questions the committee developed to help residents think through the choices ahead. The Guide to Governance Options is the next layer down.

This is not a polished narrative document and it is not a set of recommendations. It is a reference. It is meant to be used the way you would use an encyclopedia: go to the section you need, read as deeply as you want, and use it to form your own questions and judgments. The committee's goal in releasing it is to make sure that every resident who wants access to the full picture of what was considered has it, without having to take anyone's word for what the committee found.

How This Document Is Organized

The document contains four parts, one for each governance option or reform pathway, followed by a shared section at the end. Each part follows the same six-section structure:

Section 1: What This Governance Option Is (What This Reform Pathway Is for GA 2.0). A plain description of the option or pathway, what it replaces or modifies, and the context in which the committee examined it.

Section 2: How This Governance Option Works in Ophir. How the option would apply to Ophir's actual governance responsibilities: water, roads, land use, budget, legal matters, external relations.

Section 3: Committee Findings and Research. The committee's findings from research, survey data, comparable town analysis, and deliberation. This is the evidentiary core of each model's notes.

Section 4: Design Questions for the Community. The questions the committee identified but deliberately did not answer, because they require community input before they can be responsibly resolved. This section is not a record of committee oversights. It is an inventory of the decisions that belong to Ophir's residents.

Section 5: Charter and Legal Implications. The specific charter articles that would need to be amended or replaced, the legal questions requiring attorney review, and the Colorado statutory context that applies to each model.

Section 6: Additional Observations and Open Threads. Substantive items the committee surfaced that did not fit cleanly into the sections above: longer-range governance questions, institutional observations, process context, and related threads preserved for future community consideration.

How to Read This Document

You do not need to read it front to back. If you are primarily interested in one model, go directly to that part. Within any part, if you want the committee's bottom-line working positions before reading the full analysis, Section 3 and Section 4 are the most direct path. If you want to understand the legal mechanics and what would actually need to happen to implement a model, Section 5 is where that lives.

If you are moving between this document and the [The Governance Options Primer](#), the section structure above provides a map for deeper reference: legal and charter specifics are in Section 5, unresolved design questions are in Section 4, and committee findings and comparative research are in Section 3.

A Note on Language and Status

Throughout this document, the committee distinguishes between different kinds of statements:

- **Working position:** A direction reached through deliberation without closing the question; reflects the committee's collective judgment at this stage rather than a final conclusion.
- **Attorney review note:** A legal observation or concern raised by the town attorney that remains unresolved by the committee.
- **Implementation note:** A practical consideration about how a reform would function in practice that was identified but not fully analyzed.

Where questions are identified as unresolved, that is a deliberate categorization, not an oversight. The committee's mandate was to explore and document, not to decide. The decisions belong to the community.

Charter Updates Regardless of Governance Option and Community Survey

The final section of this document, after all four model parts, is a shared cross-cutting section covering items the committee identified as warranted regardless of which governance model or pathway Ophir ultimately chooses. It includes two components: general charter housekeeping updates that apply independently of any structural reform, and the full survey results, including headline findings and free-form respondent comments released here for the first time.

These items represent baseline work the community should expect any path forward to address. If you want to understand what the charter review will produce at minimum, regardless of direction, that section is worth reading.

PART 1: GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This part covers the current General Assembly system, Ophir's existing form of government. If you are coming from the Governance Options Primer for Community Deliberations, this section contains the expanded record behind the General Assembly summary in that document. Section 3 contains the committee's findings on how the current system operates in practice. Section 4 identifies structural questions that would need to be addressed in any reform process.

Section 1: What This Governance Option Is

The General Assembly is Ophir's current form of municipal government. It is a direct democracy in which registered GA members vote directly on municipal decisions rather than delegating authority to elected representatives.

The charter establishes this structure explicitly. It states: "This Charter is intended to be as simple and brief as possible, while including all the necessary and legal provisions for governance. This has been achieved by assuming the broadest powers available, and vesting them in a General Assembly of the People."

The charter further identifies the governing intent as municipal self-determination, autonomy from outside authorities, and protection of natural resources and the environment.

Under this system, legislative authority is vested in the General Assembly as a whole. Elected officials, including the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Town Clerk, and Town Treasurer, perform defined administrative and procedural functions. They do not hold independent policy-making authority between GA meetings. The Town Manager is responsible for day-to-day administration and implementation of GA decisions.

GA membership requires voter registration with the Town Clerk and separate registration to participate in the General Assembly. Membership is distinct from eligibility to vote in state and county elections. Approximately 150 registered GA members were recorded as of late 2025.

Any registered GA member may attend monthly meetings, participate in deliberation, and vote on matters before the assembly, including ordinances, contracts, and the annual budget. Decisions are made collectively in public meetings rather than through a standing council or board.

The current charter was adopted in 1979 and amended in 2000 and 2015. It has remained Ophir's governing structure throughout that period.

Section 2: How This Governance Option Works in Ophir

The following describes how the current GA structure handles each of Ophir's governance domains, based on the 2015 Home Rule Charter and observed practice.

Budget and Finances

The Town Treasurer prepares the proposed annual budget. Input is solicited from town departments, boards, commissions, and citizens by August 1 each year.

The Treasurer submits the proposed budget to the GA no later than 45 days before the mill levy certification deadline. The GA holds a public hearing at least 15 days before that deadline. The GA adopts the budget by resolution.

Colorado law requires mill levy certification to the county by December 15. If the GA fails to adopt a budget by that deadline, the prior year's amounts are deemed adopted on a month-to-month basis until a budget is passed. (Article VI, Sections 2, 6, 8; C.R.S. Section 39-5-128(1))

Supplemental appropriations, emergency appropriations, and budget amendments require GA action by ordinance or resolution. The Treasurer may transfer appropriations within a department without GA action. Transfers between departments require GA ordinance. An independent audit is required annually. (Article VI, Sections 12, 12D, 13)

Ordinances and Resolutions

All legislative enactments are adopted as ordinances. Other actions may be taken by resolution or motion.

The standard ordinance process requires two readings with a public hearing between them. Emergency ordinances may be adopted in a single meeting by majority vote when urgency is stated in the ordinance. Emergency ordinances may not be used for tax levies, utility rate changes, or grants of special privilege. (Article III, Sections 5, 11, 12)

Certain actions require ordinance by default. These include appropriations, contracts over \$5,000, borrowing, tax levies, penalty rules, and disposal of real estate. The \$5,000 threshold was established in 1979 and has not been updated. (Article III, Section 9)

Ordinances may be placed on the agenda through three paths: petition by at least seven GA members, motion approved by one-third of members present, or submission by staff, elected officials, or standing committee chairs. (Article III, Section 10)

Water Infrastructure and Water Rights

Water system decisions fall under the GA's legislative authority.

Capital expenditures and contracts over \$5,000 require ordinance. The Town Manager coordinates day-to-day operations between meetings. Policy decisions and major expenditures are addressed at monthly GA meetings unless an emergency ordinance is required.

Ophir's water system includes aging infrastructure and ongoing water rights management. These conditions require ongoing coordination between staff execution and GA-level approval.

Roads, Snow Removal, and Public Works

Public works contracts over \$5,000 require ordinance.

The Town Manager coordinates routine maintenance and operations between meetings. Emergency public works actions may be authorized through emergency ordinance or emergency meeting with 24-hour notice. (Article III, Section 3)

Land Use, Planning, and the Avalanche Hazard Overlay

The GA holds final authority over the Land Use Code, zoning amendments, and development applications requiring ordinance.

The Planning and Zoning Commission operates as an advisory and quasi-judicial body that makes recommendations to the GA. LUC changes and significant land use decisions follow the standard two-reading ordinance process. (Article V)

Ophir's avalanche hazard overlay involves technical mapping and has been the subject of recent litigation. Land use decisions proceed through standard GA procedures in consultation with Planning and Zoning and legal counsel.

Wildfire Mitigation

Wildfire mitigation policy is adopted by ordinance using the standard two-reading process.

Emergency wildfire response may be authorized through emergency ordinance or emergency meeting. The Town Manager coordinates wildfire planning with USFS and San Miguel County between meetings.

External Relations: USFS, San Miguel County, Intergovernmental Agreements

The Mayor executes authorized documents on behalf of the town and serves as the ceremonial head of government. (Article II, Section 8a)

The Town Manager may coordinate with external agencies between meetings. Intergovernmental agreements requiring formal commitment are handled through ordinance or resolution at a GA meeting.

There is no formal liaison function in the charter beyond the Mayor's execution authority and the Town Manager's administrative coordination.

Open Space and Green Energy

Open space and green energy decisions requiring expenditure, policy adoption, or formal agreement are handled through ordinance or resolution at a GA meeting.

The OEC provides advisory input. The Town Manager and relevant committees coordinate implementation between meetings.

Legal Matters and Executive Sessions

The current charter does not include explicit provisions for executive sessions.

Legal matters requiring GA action, including settlements and major litigation decisions, are brought to a GA meeting. The Town Manager coordinates with the town attorney between meetings on routine matters.

GA membership varies by meeting attendance. As a result, members who were not present for prior legal discussions may participate in later related decisions.

Emergency Decision-Making

Emergency meetings may be held with 24-hour notice for the immediate preservation of public health, safety, or property. A good-faith effort must be made to notify all GA members. (Article III, Section 3)

Emergency ordinances may be adopted at such meetings by majority vote. The Mayor and Town Manager may also act within their existing authority in genuine emergencies.

Typical Governance Cadence

The GA meets at least once per month. Regular meetings occur on the third Tuesday of each month. A monthly staff meeting also occurs, creating a baseline governance rhythm of approximately two structured meetings per month.

The Mayor sets the agenda for regular meetings, subject to modification by the GA. Special meetings may be called by the Mayor, Town Manager, or any three GA members with two days notice. Officer elections occur annually at the January municipal election.

Section 3: Committee Findings and Research

Survey Findings

The November 2025 community survey was the committee's main window into how residents experience the current GA system. The survey received 63 responses in total, representing approximately 42% of registered GA members.

- **Respondent profile:** 59 of 63 were verified registered Ophir voters; 4 were not yet registered (a part-time resident, a future resident finishing construction, a landowner not yet registered, and one who intends to register).
- **Attendance:** 41 of 62 (66%) attend meetings at least three times per year; 21 of 62 (34%) attend once or twice a year or never.
- **Satisfaction:** 40 of 61 (65%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the current form of government; 17 of 61 (28%) reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- **Reasons for not attending:** 21 respondents cited timing or scheduling conflicts; 18 said they prefer to stay informed without attending; 8 said they did not feel their input would make a difference.

When asked about strengths and weaknesses, two patterns appeared consistently across responses. The first, from 36 of 51 respondents on the strengths question, centered on the value of direct democracy: every resident has an equal voice and vote; decisions are made by the community rather than by a small group; the system creates direct accountability. The second, from 23 of 50 respondents on the weaknesses question, centered on the concern that who attends determines who governs: the GA leaves out residents who cannot attend; a small number of regular attendees effectively controls most decisions; turnout on specific issues can shift outcomes significantly.

The committee noted that these two patterns are not fully contradictory. The direct democracy value and the concern about who attends determining outcomes both describe the same structural feature: that voting authority is held by whoever shows up to a given meeting.

The full survey results, including headline findings and free-form respondent comments not included in prior releases, are in the Community Survey section at the end of this document.

Quorum and Voting Structure

The current charter sets quorum at 7 members. With approximately 150 registered GA members, 7 constitutes less than 5% of the eligible voting pool. Decisions are made by majority vote of members present, meaning that a quorum of 7 decides by 4 votes. The charter's voting rule treats non-voting attendees as no votes because a majority of "members present" includes everyone in the room, not only those who cast a vote. (Article III, Sections 4, 6)

The committee identified the non-voting-attendee counting rule in practice: a member who abstains or chooses not to vote effectively registers as a no vote by their presence, which may not reflect their actual position.

Between-Meeting Authority

The current charter provides no mechanism for the GA to act between monthly meetings except through emergency meetings or the Mayor's execution authority on already-authorized matters. Time-sensitive decisions, contract management above the \$5,000 threshold, and staff oversight that requires policy direction generally require either waiting for the next regular meeting or calling an emergency meeting with 24-hour notice. (Article III, Section 3; Article II, Section 8a)

The committee noted that in practice, the Town Manager exercises considerable discretion in managing day-to-day operations between meetings. The committee noted that the charter does not define the boundary between what the Town Manager may do independently and what requires GA authorization.

The \$5,000 Contract Threshold

Any contract over \$5,000 requires a full ordinance with two readings. (Article III, Section 9) This threshold was set when the charter was originally adopted in 1979. The committee noted that it has not been adjusted for inflation in the intervening 46 years and captures a much wider range of routine contracts than it did at the time of adoption. The town attorney's memo flagged this as an operational bottleneck.

The Town Manager Role

The Town Manager is mentioned in the charter only in passing: the position may call special meetings. The position's powers, scope of authority, hiring process, and removal process are not defined in the charter. In practice, the Town Manager performs a wide range of administrative functions. The committee identified the absence of a formal charter definition as a structural gap regardless of which governance model is ultimately chosen.

Legal Continuity and Executive Sessions

The GA's composition varies from meeting to meeting. Members who did not attend a prior meeting where legal matters were discussed in executive session are not part of that prior deliberation; a subsequent meeting may include different members who were not present for earlier confidential discussions. During the recent land use litigation, the town attorney was required to re-brief members at successive executive sessions as attendance shifted. The committee noted this as a structural characteristic of a rotating-composition body managing ongoing legal matters.

The Representation Question

A committee member observed that the survey's attendance data raises a question about who the GA represents in practice. The 34% of survey respondents who attend once or twice a year or never cited scheduling conflicts, preference for being informed without attending, and a belief that their input would not make a difference as reasons. The committee did not reach a conclusion about whether these non-attendance patterns constitute a representation gap or reflect a community that is broadly satisfied with outcomes and chooses when to engage.

Reactive vs. Proactive Governance

The committee observed that across multiple meeting cycles, reactive matters requiring immediate attention or generating high community interest occupied agenda time and deliberative attention while proactive work on water infrastructure and avalanche hazard mapping was deferred during the same cycles. The recent land use litigation was cited as an example: it occupied executive session time and deliberative attention across multiple meeting cycles. The committee noted that the pattern was particularly visible during the land use litigation period when between-meeting coordinating capacity was absent.

Demographic Trajectory

A committee member raised a forward-looking question about how each governance model holds up if Ophir's population composition shifts significantly over time, specifically if the share of second homeowners grows relative to full-time residents. The structural implications of that question differ by model. (Full treatment in Section 6.)

Section 4: Design Questions for the Community

The questions below identify structural characteristics of the current system that the community would need to address in any reform process. Unlike the other three governance options, this section does not contain unresolved design choices because the current model is not being designed; it exists. These entries record what the committee examined but deliberately left for the community and any reform process to answer.

Quorum Threshold. The current charter sets quorum at 7 members. With approximately 150 registered GA members, that threshold represents less than 5% of the eligible pool. The committee examined whether this threshold reflects the community's current governance expectations but did not assess what an alternative threshold should be. This question applies to any reform process that addresses the charter's voting structure.

Non-Voting Attendee Counting. The charter's majority-of-members-present rule means that a member's physical presence without casting a vote is counted as a no vote. The committee examined whether this rule operates as intended but did not determine what the intended rule should be or whether a change is warranted.

The \$5,000 Contract Threshold. The current contract threshold requiring a full ordinance was set in 1979 and has not been adjusted since. The committee examined whether the threshold still reflects the range of decisions the community intends to require full ordinance treatment for, but did not specify a replacement value or mechanism. That determination is model-dependent and belongs to any reform process.

Town Manager Authority. The current charter does not define the Town Manager's powers, scope of authority, hiring process, or removal process. The committee examined whether a formal charter definition is warranted but did not specify what it should contain. This question applies regardless of which governance model is ultimately chosen.

Between-Meeting Authority. The current charter provides no mechanism for the GA to act between monthly meetings except through emergency procedures. The committee examined whether and how that gap should be addressed but did not reach a position. How different models answer this question is one of the primary structural distinctions among the four options under review.

Non-Attendee Participation. The survey identified scheduling conflicts and preference for remote engagement as reasons for non-attendance among a portion of respondents. The committee examined whether procedural mechanisms such as asynchronous written comment or post-meeting summaries should be created, but did not adopt a position on whether they should be implemented or how.

Administrative vs. GA-Level Decisions. The current charter requires a full two-reading ordinance process for contracts above \$5,000 regardless of their nature. The committee examined whether some categories of decisions currently requiring full GA action should be handled administratively or through a lighter process, but left that determination to any reform process.

Section 5: Charter and Legal Implications

Overview

The current GA model requires no charter changes to continue operating. This section records the charter's existing structure for reference and identifies legal questions the committee raised but did not resolve. Charter housekeeping updates the committee identified as warranted regardless of which governance model is chosen are consolidated in the shared section at the end of this document: Charter Updates Applicable Regardless of Governance Option.

The charter was originally adopted in 1979 and amended in 2000 and 2015. The prefatory synopsis notes that the charter is designed to be as simple and brief as possible. At 15 pages, it is a spare document that leaves significant operational detail to ordinance and practice rather than charter text.

Key Charter Provisions Relevant to Current GA Operations

The following charter provisions are most directly relevant to how the GA functions as a governing body:

- Article II, Section 2: GA membership qualifications (18 years old, 22-day residency, Clerk registration)
- Article II, Section 8: Annual officer elections (Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Clerk, Treasurer); one-year terms; Mayor's agenda authority and execution authority
- Article III, Section 4: Quorum of 7 members
- Article III, Section 6: Majority vote of members present; conflict of interest prohibition; paper ballot authority
- Article III, Section 7: Majority-plus-one required for debt and borrowing
- Article III, Section 9: Ordinance required for contracts over \$5,000 and other specified actions
- Article III, Section 10: Three methods for placing items on the agenda
- Article III, Section 11: Two-reading ordinance procedure
- Article VI, Section 2: Treasurer prepares and submits budget by August 1
- Article VI, Section 8: GA adopts budget by resolution before mill levy deadline

Open Legal Questions

December meeting timing and mill levy certification compliance. The committee raised but did not resolve whether the current practice of holding the December GA meeting after December 15 complies with the Colorado mill levy certification deadline. Whether an exception or alternative mechanism applies has not been confirmed. (C.R.S. Section 39-5-128(1))

Remote participation and Zoom attendance. The current charter predates remote meeting technology and contains no provision addressing remote attendance or voting. The legal status of Zoom participation under the existing charter has not been formally determined.

Executive session authority. The charter contains no executive session provision. The committee identified but did not resolve what executive session rights and obligations the GA holds under Colorado Open Meetings Law given that silence.

Section 6: Additional Observations and Open Threads

The two-step GA membership requirement. GA membership requires both voter registration and a separate registration with the Town Clerk. The committee noted that this two-step requirement may not be widely known among residents and may itself function as a participation barrier. The relationship between Ophir's GA membership list and the broader registered voter list for state and county elections means that some residents who are eligible to vote in state elections may not be registered to participate in the GA. The committee did not assess how many residents fall into this gap or whether the two-step requirement serves a governance purpose that justifies its friction.

The speed-of-governance tension. Survey respondents who identified the GA's pace as a weakness and those who identified it as a strength were often describing the same structural feature: that significant decisions require broad deliberation and cannot be made quickly by a small group. The committee noted this as a persistent value tension within the community. Whether governance speed functions as a virtue or a risk depends on what kind of decision is being made and who benefits from delay or urgency. The committee did not resolve this tension.

The proactive-versus-reactive governance gap. The committee observed that across multiple meeting cycles, reactive matters requiring immediate attention occupied agenda time and deliberative attention while proactive work was deferred. The land use litigation period was cited as a concrete example: water infrastructure and avalanche hazard work accumulated as deferred items during that period. The committee noted that the absence of between-meeting coordinating capacity in the current structure reduces the visibility of deferred work, producing conditions in which important but non-urgent work accumulates without a formal tracking mechanism. This thread persists across governance domains and is not resolved by any single charter provision.

The regular-attendee overlap with potential future officeholders. A committee member noted that the individuals who attend GA meetings most regularly overlap substantially with the individuals who would be most likely to run for office under any representative model. The committee did not assess the implications of this observation. It is recorded here as a persistent structural thread that reappears across governance models with different implications depending on the model's authority structure.

Demographic change and governance resilience. A committee member raised the question of whether Ophir's governance structure is resilient to demographic change, specifically a scenario where the ratio of second homeowners to full-time residents shifts significantly over time. The concern is that a small fixed governing body is easier to capture by organized interests than a large variable one. The hypothetical given was ski area expansion into Ophir: if second homeowners came to hold a majority of council seats through entirely legitimate elections, community values reflected in the current master plan could be overridden by interests oriented more toward property ROI. The GA structure and any hybrid model retaining a GA layer require broader mobilization across a larger registered voter pool to produce an equivalent shift in governance direction, because no fixed small body controls the outcome. The committee did not resolve this question or assess whether any specific charter provision adequately addresses it. It is recorded as a forward-looking structural concern that applies across all four models with different implications. (First raised in Section 3.)

The institutional memory gap. The committee noted that the GA's rotating composition produces a recurring institutional memory challenge: issues deliberated at prior meetings must be re-explained when different members are present, consuming meeting time and creating conditions for inconsistent decision-making. The committee observed this dynamic in the survey responses and in its own deliberations about the litigation period. No formal mechanism in the current charter addresses institutional memory. Meeting minutes are the primary record; accessibility and continuity of those records in practice varies.

The charter's prefatory framing. The charter's preamble names three purposes: municipal self-determination, autonomy from outside authorities, and protection of natural resources and the environment. The committee noted that these purposes are not merely historical; they reflect values that survey respondents identified as central to why the GA model is valued. Any governance reform that appears to compromise these purposes is likely to face

significant community resistance regardless of its administrative merits. The committee did not assess which, if any, of the models under review are more or less consistent with the charter's stated purposes.

PART 2: GA 2.0 (Reformed General Assembly)

This part covers GA 2.0, a pathway of structural and procedural reforms to the existing General Assembly rather than a replacement of it. If you are coming from the Governance Options Primer for Community Deliberations, this section contains the expanded record behind the GA 2.0 summary in that document. Unlike the other three parts of this document, GA 2.0 does not describe a fixed governance model; it describes a set of reforms the community could adopt in whole or in part. Section 3 contains the full reform inventory. Section 4 identifies the design questions and combinations the community would need to resolve.

Section 1: What This Reform Pathway Is

GA 2.0 is not a single defined model. It is a set of structural and procedural reforms to the existing General Assembly system. Unlike the Town Council and Hybrid models, which replace or substantially restructure the GA, GA 2.0 preserves the GA as the governing body while changing specific aspects of how it operates.

Reforms fall into two categories:

- **Structural reforms** require charter amendments and a community ballot. They address the GA's core architecture: quorum, voting thresholds, between-meeting authority, the contract threshold, the Town Manager role, and the ordinance process.
- **Procedural reforms** can be implemented by ordinance or GA resolution without a charter amendment. They address how meetings are conducted, including parliamentary rules, comment limits, agenda structure, participation methods, and record-keeping.

The committee's role for GA 2.0 was to identify and evaluate the range of reform options, not to design a single preferred configuration. Any implementation of GA 2.0 would require the community to choose among these options, and those choices would determine how the system functions in practice.

The November 2025 survey found that:

- 21% of respondents were very open to significant changes
- 19% were somewhat open
- 19% were neutral
- 29% preferred the current system with minor adjustments
- 11% preferred no change

Combined, roughly 59% expressed openness or neutrality toward reform. The committee treated these figures as context for the reform inventory, not as a mandate for any specific configuration. The survey received 63 responses; those figures are the source for all survey data cited in this document.

Part 1 of this document describes the current GA system in full and serves as the baseline for this section. Where GA 2.0 is unchanged from the current GA, this document does not repeat those mechanics.

To navigate this document: Section 2 describes how the GA's operating logic shifts under GA 2.0. Section 3 presents each reform as a standalone unit with a plain definition and a bounded example. Section 4 addresses reform combinations, dependencies, and unresolved design questions.

Section 2: How This Governance Option Might Work in Ophir

Unlike the Town Council and Hybrid options, GA 2.0 is not a single defined structure. The reforms described below can be adopted in different combinations. Even so, they share several common directional shifts in how the General Assembly operates.

Meetings become more structured and focused. The GA continues to meet monthly, but meetings are designed to focus deliberation on decisions that require full GA involvement. Routine items move more efficiently through the agenda. Discussion is more focused and time-limited. Agendas are prepared and distributed in advance. The specific mechanisms that produce this shift are part of the reform inventory in Section 3 rather than fixed features of any single configuration.

Between-meeting administrative capacity may be introduced. Depending on which reforms are adopted, GA 2.0 may introduce a small Administrative Executive Committee with defined authority to act between monthly meetings on routine matters within specified thresholds. Major decisions remain with the full GA. This is the most significant structural option in the reform set; its presence or absence materially changes how the system operates day to day.

Participation outside of in-person attendance becomes more structured. GA 2.0 introduces additional ways for residents to engage outside of attending meetings in person, including written public comment before meetings, structured remote participation under defined rules, and plain-language summaries after meetings. Voting authority remains with members present at meetings. Any expansion of voting beyond in-person attendance would require charter amendment and is addressed in the structural reform inventory.

Governance becomes more explicitly cyclical and forward-looking. GA 2.0 introduces the possibility of a structured annual review cycle combining committee reports, community input, and review of deferred work. This creates a more explicit way to identify, track, and revisit long-term work that might otherwise accumulate between meetings without formal acknowledgment.

Section 3: Reform Inventory

This section presents the reforms identified and evaluated during the committee's review of the current General Assembly system. Unlike the other governance options discussed in this document, GA 2.0 is not a single governance structure. It is a set of potential reforms that could be adopted individually or in combination.

Each reform is presented as a standalone item consisting of a plain-language description followed by a bounded example. The examples are illustrative only and do not represent committee recommendations or preferred implementation choices.

Structural reforms require charter amendment and voter approval before they can take effect. Procedural reforms can generally be implemented through ordinance or General Assembly action without a charter amendment. How reforms interact, where dependencies exist, and which combinations may create unintended effects are addressed in Section 4.

Structural Reforms

- SR-1: Raise and redefine quorum
- SR-2: Create an Administrative Executive Committee (AEC)
- SR-3: Establish a standing Finance and Budget Committee
- SR-4: Raise the contract threshold
- SR-5: Formalize the Town Manager role

- SR-6: Establish remote participation rights with guardrails
- SR-7: Introduce differentiated voting thresholds
- SR-8: Create a mandatory continuance mechanism
- SR-9: Formalize an Annual Town Meeting
- SR-10: Introduce a secret ballot option

Procedural Reforms

- PR-1: Adopt parliamentary rules by ordinance
- PR-2: Implement per-agenda-item comment limits
- PR-3: Require pre-meeting packet acknowledgment
- PR-4: Create a consent agenda
- PR-5: Establish a public comment period separate from GA deliberation
- PR-6: Require a waiting period before voting on newly introduced information
- PR-7: Publish a standardized agenda template with time allocations
- PR-8: Establish a conflict of interest disclosure procedure
- PR-9: Create an asynchronous written comment option
- PR-10: Require post-meeting plain-language summaries

Structural Reforms

Structural reforms would change the governing framework itself and require charter amendment before implementation.

SR-1: Raise and redefine quorum

Amend Article III, Section 4 to raise the quorum threshold above the current 7 members and clarify that only active voters, not all members present, count toward the majority required for passage. The current rule treats non-voting attendees as no votes because the majority is calculated from all members present rather than from those who cast a vote.

Example: A monthly GA meeting with 12 members present and 2 abstaining would under the current rule count the 2 abstentions as no votes. Under SR-1, abstentions would not count against passage, and the quorum threshold itself would be higher, requiring more members to be present before business can be transacted.

SR-2: Create an Administrative Executive Committee (AEC)

Add a new charter provision establishing a small Administrative Executive Committee with defined authority to act between monthly GA meetings on routine matters within a specified financial and procedural threshold.

The AEC is not a separate governing body. It operates inside the existing GA system as a delegated leadership layer that carries out limited, pre-defined functions between meetings, while the GA remains the primary governing authority.

Under the concept discussed, the AEC would be composed of existing elected or appointed officers (such as the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and potentially the Planning and Zoning Chair). It would formalize and extend the authority of the current leadership group that already coordinates between meetings, rather than creating a new elected institution.

The GA retains full authority over the AEC, including the ability to define its limits, review its actions, and override or revise decisions where appropriate.

Example: A time-sensitive water system repair contract below the AEC threshold could be approved between monthly GA meetings without calling an emergency GA session. The action would be reported to the GA at the next regular meeting.

SR-3: Establish a standing Finance and Budget Committee

Amend Article VI and Article V to create a standing committee with rotating GA member appointments that participates in budget preparation and provides advisory input to the Treasurer and the full GA during the annual budget cycle.

Example: Committee members with prior budget experience would carry institutional knowledge from one budget cycle to the next, reducing the re-explanation burden at annual budget meetings and distributing financial oversight beyond the Treasurer alone.

SR-4: Raise the contract threshold

Amend Article III, Section 9 to raise the current \$5,000 contract approval threshold, set in 1979, to a higher amount. Routine contracts below the new threshold would fall within Town Manager or AEC authority by resolution rather than requiring a full two-reading ordinance.

Example: A routine snow removal contract at \$18,000, currently requiring a two-reading ordinance process, would under a \$25,000 threshold be approvable administratively without a GA meeting.

SR-5: Formalize the Town Manager role

Add a charter section formally defining the Town Manager position, its scope of authority, hiring and removal process, and spending discretion limits. The current charter mentions the Town Manager only in passing (Article III, Section 2).

Example: A defined spending limit in the charter would clarify whether the Town Manager may independently authorize a \$3,000 emergency repair or must seek GA or AEC approval, removing the current ambiguity that places informal discretion on the Town Manager without charter backing.

SR-6: Establish remote participation rights with guardrails

Add a charter provision creating a right to participate in GA meetings remotely, with defined requirements for voting members including camera-on participation. The current charter contains no remote participation provision.

Example: A GA member working a Tuesday evening shift could participate remotely with camera on and cast votes under defined rules that apply equally to all remote participants, without the current ambiguity about whether remote voting is legitimate.

SR-7: Introduce differentiated voting thresholds

Amend Article III, Sections 6 and 7 to require supermajority votes for defined categories of major decisions, including land use ordinances, significant fiscal commitments, and charter-adjacent matters, while preserving simple majority for routine decisions. The current charter has only one special threshold: majority-plus- one for debt and borrowing.

Attorney review note: The town attorney reviewed this reform and advised that defining the boundary between routine matters and major matters with sufficient precision for charter language would be difficult in practice. The committee noted this as a design challenge rather than a reason to exclude the reform from consideration; the definitional question is itself the work that would need to be done before SR-7 could be responsibly drafted.

Example: An LUC amendment affecting avalanche hazard mapping would require a supermajority rather than a simple majority, raising the bar for passage on high-stakes land use decisions.

SR-8: Create a mandatory continuance mechanism

Add a charter provision allowing a defined threshold of registered voters, the committee discussed 10%, to petition for a 30-day continuance on major decisions. The continuance would require the matter to return at a subsequent meeting, allowing time for broader community engagement before a final vote.

Attorney review note: The town attorney reviewed this reform and raised a practical implementation concern: the petition mechanism could not realistically operate in real time during a GA vote. The logistics of gathering signatures from 10% of registered voters between the introduction of a matter and a vote on it are not workable within the monthly meeting structure. The committee noted this as an unresolved implementation problem; SR-8 addresses a genuine risk (shifting vote composition between readings) but requires a workable petitioning procedure before it can be drafted as charter language. (Full treatment in Section 4.)

Example: A contentious land use ordinance that drew unusually high attendance from one organized group could be paused by petition, requiring it to return at a meeting with more typical attendance patterns before final passage.

SR-9: Formalize an Annual Town Meeting

Amend Article III, Section 1 to designate one meeting per year as an Annual Town Meeting with higher notice requirements, mandatory agenda items including budget preview and capital planning, and materials published and distributed in advance.

Attorney review note: The town attorney reviewed this reform and recommended against formalizing it as a mandatory charter-level requirement. The concern: if an Annual Town Meeting is a required legal event, failure to hold it on the designated date due to weather, power outage, or other contingency creates a rescheduling problem that could leave the town unable to conduct required business without a formal continuance process. The attorney's suggestion was to make the anchor meeting more social and less formally required. The committee noted this points toward an alternative implementation: a GA resolution establishing an annual anchor meeting with higher preparation standards and mandatory agenda items, rather than a charter amendment. If that approach is taken, SR-9 may belong in the procedural reforms category rather than the structural category, or it may warrant a hybrid treatment. This reclassification question is addressed in Section 4.

Example: Each October, before budget season, the GA would hold an Annual Town Meeting where committee chairs report on each governance domain, the community reviews a priority map from the prior year, and the GA explicitly names items being consciously deferred rather than allowing them to disappear between monthly agendas.

SR-10: Introduce a secret ballot option

Amend Article III, Section 6 to add a charter-level trigger for secret ballot voting: a secret ballot is available on the request of any defined number of GA members present. The current charter authorizes paper ballot voting by ordinance but does not establish a trigger mechanism at the charter level.

Example: On a contentious matter where members have expressed concern about social pressure, any 5 members present could request a secret ballot, shifting the vote to paper without requiring a prior ordinance authorizing it for that specific item.

Procedural Reforms

Procedural reforms focus on how meetings are conducted and how participation occurs. These reforms can generally be implemented without charter amendment and can generally be adopted on their own without broader structural changes.

PR-1: Adopt parliamentary rules by ordinance

Adopt a recognized parliamentary authority by ordinance to provide a neutral framework for managing debate, limiting repeat comments, and calling the question. Options explored include Robert's Rules of Order, the AIP Standard Code, Rosenberg's Rules, and modified consensus with majority fallback.

Example: Under an adopted rule set, the presiding officer would have clear procedural authority to limit a member who has already spoken twice on an agenda item from speaking again until others have had the opportunity, without requiring a GA vote each time to enforce the limit.

PR-2: Implement per-agenda-item comment limits

Establish by ordinance a limit of two to three comments per GA member per agenda item, with a defined time limit per comment.

Example: On a contested water system repair authorization, each member present would have two opportunities to speak for a defined period, after which the presiding officer could call the question regardless of whether every member who wished to speak had done so.

PR-3: Require pre-meeting packet acknowledgment

Establish by ordinance a requirement that GA members affirmatively acknowledge receipt of the meeting packet before the meeting, combined with a moderator authority to decline explanatory questions that are addressed in the distributed materials.

Example: A member who did not read the packet would not be entitled to have staff re-explain background covered in distributed documents during meeting time. The presiding officer could redirect the member to the packet and proceed with discussion.

PR-4: Create a consent agenda

Establish by ordinance a consent agenda mechanism: routine, non-controversial items are bundled for single-vote approval at the start of the meeting. Any member may pull an item from the consent agenda for individual discussion before the vote.

Example: Minutes approval, standard annual contracts, and routine administrative resolutions could be grouped as a single consent vote, clearing them from the agenda in under two minutes unless a member requests individual discussion.

PR-5: Establish a public comment period separate from GA deliberation

Establish by ordinance a two-stage meeting structure: a public comment period open to any resident, followed by a GA deliberation period restricted to verified GA members. The boundary between the two stages is formally marked and enforced by the presiding officer.

Example: A non-GA-member property owner with an interest in a pending land use decision could speak during public comment but would not participate in the deliberation phase that follows.

PR-6: Require a waiting period before voting on newly introduced information

Establish by ordinance that any motion incorporating substantively new information not included in the pre-meeting packet is automatically tabled for one meeting, unless the GA votes by supermajority to waive the delay.

Example: If a member introduces a new legal opinion at the meeting itself that changes the terms of a pending ordinance, the vote on that ordinance would be automatically deferred to the following month unless a supermajority waives the delay.

PR-7: Publish a standardized agenda template with time allocations

Establish by ordinance a standardized agenda format with estimated time blocks per item, prepared and published by the Mayor in advance of each meeting.

Example: The agenda for a standard monthly meeting would show budgeted time for each item, giving both the presiding officer and GA members a shared framework for pacing and a basis for moving on when an item runs over.

PR-8: Establish a conflict of interest disclosure procedure

Establish by ordinance a verbal disclosure requirement and formal recusal process for the conflict of interest prohibition that already exists in Article III, Section 6. The current charter prohibits voting on conflicts but provides no disclosure or recusal procedure.

Example: A GA member with a financial interest in a land transaction before the GA would verbally disclose the interest at the start of that agenda item, formally recuse, and leave the voting area for that item's deliberation and vote.

PR-9: Create an asynchronous written comment option

Establish by ordinance a mechanism allowing any resident to submit written comments on agenda items before the meeting. Comments are distributed to GA members with the packet and read into the record before deliberation begins.

Example: A full-time working resident who cannot attend Tuesday evening meetings could submit a written position on a pending ordinance that is read aloud to the GA before deliberation, ensuring their perspective is part of the deliberative record.

Implementation note: the Town Manager has observed that an informal written comment mechanism already exists; comments can currently be submitted and are brought to meetings. The reform's value is formalizing this as a structured right by resolution rather than an informal accommodation.

PR-10: Require post-meeting plain-language summaries

Establish by ordinance a requirement that the Clerk or a designated volunteer publish a brief plain-language summary of decisions made within 48 hours of each meeting. The summary is an accessibility tool distinct from formal minutes, which are legal records.

Example: A resident who missed the meeting could read a short summary the following day explaining what was decided on each agenda item, without needing to parse formal minutes or wait for the next meeting to find out what happened.

Implementation note: production of post-meeting summaries would depend on the Clerk's agreement to take on this function or on identifying a designated volunteer. The committee did not confirm this capacity before including the reform in the inventory.

Community-Generated Reform Suggestions

In addition to the reforms developed through committee analysis, community members contributed ideas through survey responses, public comments, and committee correspondence. Some of those ideas overlap directly with reforms included above, while others remain less developed.

These items are included for transparency regarding the committee's source materials and should not be interpreted as committee recommendations or evaluated reforms. They are presented here as community-generated concepts that informed the committee's broader discussion.

Survey responses included repeated support for secret voting (reflected in SR-10), camera-on requirements for remote voting participants (reflected in SR-6), and time limits on discussion (reflected in PR-2).

Additional ideas raised through committee communications included expanding the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem job descriptions to more clearly define administrative responsibilities and the working relationship with the Town Manager, and exploring consensus-based decision-making approaches as an alternative to traditional majority voting.

Section 4: Design Questions for the Community

The questions below are the ones the committee identified but deliberately did not answer, because GA 2.0 is a set of reforms rather than a single defined model. The community must determine which reforms to adopt and how they should be combined. This section also addresses how reforms interact when combined, because reforms that make sense individually may produce unintended interactions when implemented together.

REFORM PACKAGE DESIGN

Which Reforms to Adopt as a Package. GA 2.0 is a set of reforms, not a blueprint. The committee identified the options but did not specify which combination constitutes a recommended configuration. That choice requires community deliberation and depends on which problems the community most wants to address.

Sequencing of Structural vs. Procedural Reforms. The committee discussed whether procedural reforms should be implemented first, given that they require no charter amendment and can be adopted more quickly, with structural reforms addressed through a subsequent charter amendment process. This sequencing question was not resolved.

Reform Interaction Effects. Several reforms interact in ways that affect how they should be designed together:

- Create an Administrative Executive Committee (SR-2) and Raise the Contract Threshold (SR-4) together determine the practical scope of between-meeting administrative authority. Their thresholds must be calibrated against each other; a high contract threshold with a low AEC threshold creates redundancy, while the reverse leaves a gap in administrative coverage.
- Raise and Redefine Quorum (SR-1) and Introduce Differentiated Voting Thresholds (SR-7) together determine the baseline and elevated voting requirements. The supermajority required under SR-7 is only meaningful relative to the quorum level defined under SR-1.
- Establish Remote Participation Rights (SR-6) and Introduce a Secret Ballot Option (SR-10) together create a design dependency: secret ballot procedures for remote participants require separate technical design that neither reform specifies independently.
- Formalize an Annual Town Meeting (SR-9) and Establish a Standing Finance and Budget Committee (SR-3) together constitute the annual review cycle. Both reforms are needed for the full annual portfolio review concept to function as a system.
- Adopt Parliamentary Rules by Ordinance (PR-1) is a functional prerequisite for most other procedural reforms. Without an adopted parliamentary authority, enforcement mechanisms for Comment Limits (PR-2), Packet Acknowledgment (PR-3), the Waiting Period (PR-6), and the Conflict of Interest Procedure (PR-8) lack procedural grounding.

That analysis remains to be done before any specific configuration is selected.

AEC DESIGN

AEC Design Specifics. Size (3 vs. 5 members), selection method (elected vs. appointed), term length, compensation, and the financial threshold framework defining AEC authority were all identified as requiring further design work if SR-2 is adopted. The AEC is the most structurally significant reform in the inventory and also the most incompletely designed.

AEC Relationship to the Mayor Role. If an AEC is created, whether the Mayor chairs the AEC, serves as one of its members, or operates separately from it affects both the AEC's authority and the Mayor's continuing role. This was not resolved.

CHARTER AND THRESHOLD QUESTIONS

Quorum Replacement Threshold. The committee identified the current 7-member quorum as warranting reconsideration but did not specify a replacement number or formula. Options include a fixed higher number, a percentage of registered GA members, or a tiered threshold varying by decision type.

Contract Threshold Replacement Amount. The range of \$25,000 to \$50,000 was discussed but not settled. The appropriate amount should be calibrated against Ophir's actual budget and typical contract patterns before being written into charter language.

SR-8 Petitioning Procedure. The continuance mechanism depends on a workable petitioning procedure that does not yet exist. The 10% threshold was discussed but the timing and logistics of gathering signatures between the introduction of a matter and a vote were identified by the town attorney as a practical obstacle. Alternative approaches might include pre-registered standing objections, a defined cooling-off period triggered by a specified number of members present rather than a petition, or a petition window that opens after a first reading rather than at the point of vote. None of these alternatives were developed.

SR-9 Classification: Structural vs. Procedural. The town attorney's recommendation that the Annual Town Meeting be kept informal rather than mandated by charter raises the question of whether SR-9 belongs in the structural reforms category. If the annual anchor meeting is implemented by GA resolution rather than charter amendment, it becomes a procedural reform rather than a structural one, with meaningfully different stability. A resolution can be modified by a future GA vote, while a charter provision requires a community ballot. The committee did not resolve whether the resilience of a charter mandate outweighs the legal concerns identified by the attorney, or whether a resolution-based approach adequately achieves the goal of creating a durable annual accountability cycle.

GOVERNANCE PROCESS DESIGN

Parliamentary Procedure Authority. The committee examined modified consensus with majority fallback, Robert's Rules of Order, the AIP Standard Code, Rosenberg's Rules, and other approaches, but did not reach a conclusion regarding which parliamentary framework would be most appropriate for Ophir.

Annual Portfolio Review Design Details. The committee developed the annual portfolio review concept but did not determine what information should be collected, how committee findings should be presented, or how annual results should be documented and carried forward from year to year.

MAYORAL ROLE QUESTIONS

Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem Job Description Expansion. The current charter's description of the Mayor's role is brief (Article II, Section 8a). Expanding it to define administrative responsibilities and the working relationship with the Town Manager was raised as a discrete reform but not developed.

Section 5: Charter and Legal Implications

OVERVIEW

GA 2.0 contains both procedural reforms and structural reforms, with distinct legal implications depending on which reforms are selected.

Procedural reforms may be implemented through ordinance or resolution under existing charter authority and do not require voter approval. Structural reforms require charter amendments and must be approved by a majority of Ophir voters under C.R.S. Section 31-2-210 and Article XX of the Colorado Constitution.

Because GA 2.0 is a modular reform system, the final charter impact cannot be determined until specific reform combinations are selected. Different combinations produce materially different charter amendment scopes.

A central implementation question is whether structural reforms are presented as a single bundled charter amendment or as separate ballot questions. Bundling creates one comprehensive yes/no decision on the reform package, while separate questions allow partial adoption. This decision affects legal coherence across the final charter depending on which reforms are approved.

Some reforms may be sequenced over time, with procedural changes implemented first and structural amendments brought forward in subsequent election cycles. This sequencing option was noted but not resolved.

CHARTER PROVISIONS REQUIRING AMENDMENT BY REFORM

- SR-1: Article III, Section 4
- SR-2: New article required; consequential amendments to Articles II, III, and VI
- SR-3: Article VI, Sections 2 and 5; Article V
- SR-4: Article III, Section 9
- SR-5: New section or article; no current provision
- SR-6: New provision; could be added to Article III
- SR-7: Article III, Sections 6 and 7
- SR-8: New provision; could be added to Article III
- SR-9: Article III, Section 1
- SR-10: Article III, Section 6; attorney review needed on whether charter amendment is required or existing ordinance authority is sufficient

LEGAL UNCERTAINTY QUESTIONS (ATTORNEY REVIEW REQUIRED)

AEC authority and accountability. Can the AEC be granted authority to act between GA meetings under Colorado home rule law, and what form of accountability to the GA is legally required?

SR-10 implementation pathway. Does SR-10 require a charter amendment, or can it be implemented under existing ordinance authority granted in Article III, Section 6?

Separate ballot questions. Can structural reforms be presented as separate ballot questions, and how should conflicting or partially adopted reforms be resolved in charter language?

Executive session authority. What executive session authorities and limitations apply to the GA and any newly created AEC under Colorado Open Meetings Law?

Modified consensus procedure. Is a modified consensus procedure with majority fallback legally valid for a home rule municipality, and does its adoption require charter amendment or ordinance-level authorization?

Routine vs. major decision thresholds. What legally sufficient methods exist to define thresholds distinguishing routine and major decisions under SR-7, and what approaches have been used in comparable home rule charters?

SR-8 continuity mechanisms. What mechanisms are legally available to preserve continuity objectives under SR-8 without requiring real-time procedural action during GA meetings?

SR-9 resolution durability. If SR-9 is implemented via resolution rather than charter amendment, what is the legal durability of that structure, and does it satisfy the intended governance function?

REFORM DEPENDENCY SCOPE (CONDITIONAL LEGAL MAPPING)

Procedural reform scope. Procedural reforms (PR-1 through PR-9) may be implemented through ordinance or resolution under existing authority. Implementation does not require charter amendment, but may require sequencing decisions depending on which reforms are adopted together.

Structural reform scope. Each structural reform (SR-1 through SR-10) represents a discrete charter amendment requirement. The total scope of charter change depends on which reforms are selected by the electorate. Because GA 2.0 is a modular system, the charter impact is not a single unified rewrite but a selection-dependent combination of amendments. Different combinations may produce materially different governance structures.

Ballot structuring scope. The legal implementation pathway depends on whether reforms are bundled into a single charter amendment package, separated into multiple ballot questions, or staged across multiple election cycles. Each approach affects how partial approval outcomes are reconciled in final charter language.

Section 6: Additional Observations and Open Threads

Relationship to the GA with Select Board Model. The Administrative Executive Committee (SR-2) and the Select Board described in Part 4 both address the same structural gap: the absence of a continuously operating body to manage between GA meetings. In functional terms, both are designed to support routine contracting, Town Manager coordination, intergovernmental liaison, and administrative continuity between assemblies. The difference is institutional structure. The AEC operates as a delegated body within the existing GA framework, composed of current office-holders and exercising authority through GA delegation. The Select Board is a separately elected charter body with independent electoral mandate and standing authority defined at the charter level. Readers evaluating GA 2.0 and the GA with Select Board model should read these sections together to understand the alternative institutional approaches to the same governance function.

The menu problem: how different reforms interact when combined. GA 2.0 is best understood as a menu of reforms rather than a single fixed structure. The difficulty is that these reforms do not operate independently: each one affects how the others function once combined. Selecting individual reforms in isolation can produce unexpected outcomes when the full system is assembled. The real design question is not which reforms to choose, but whether the chosen combination works together as a whole.

Parliamentary rules as the foundation for all other reforms. PR-1 is the starting point for how meetings actually function. It sets the rules for how the GA runs its discussions, including agendas, speaking time, how motions move forward, and how votes are handled. These are not minor details; they determine whether any of the other procedural reforms can be applied consistently. Without a shared baseline for running meetings, other reforms risk working differently from meeting to meeting depending on interpretation or circumstance.

How governance handles work that gets delayed or carried forward. Across governance cycles, important work often does not get formally finished. Some items are intentionally postponed, some are set aside because they are lower priority, and some simply fall out of view without a clear decision being made about them. GA 2.0 highlights the need to distinguish between these cases so that deferred work is not treated as a single undifferentiated category.

A structured annual portfolio review addresses this by making deferred work visible, clearly labeled, and carried forward in an organized way rather than allowing it to disappear between meetings or cycles. This creates a simple

record of what was set aside and why, and it can be implemented on its own without requiring any broader structural change to the system.

Why people need to understand how the system works. As governance systems become more complex, it becomes more important that people can understand how they work and how to take part in them. If the rules, structure, or decision paths are too difficult to follow, participation tends to drop or become uneven, which can affect how well the system reflects the community.

One idea raised in discussion was the need for a simple public-facing explanation of how Ophir's government functions, sometimes referred to as "Ophir 101." This would not change the structure itself, but would help residents understand how decisions are made and how they can engage with the process. It remains an undeveloped idea, but it is relevant across all versions of the governance models being considered.

Why systems with many options can become harder to keep aligned. The flexibility of GA 2.0 introduces a structural risk: certain combinations of reforms may not function well together once implemented. Some combinations may create unclear lines of responsibility, slow decision-making, or produce gaps between authority and process. This means that validity at the component level does not guarantee coherence at the system level. The final configuration must work as a whole, not just as a collection of individually reasonable parts.

PART 3: TOWN COUNCIL

This part covers the Town Council governance option, which would replace Ophir's General Assembly with an elected representative council. If you are coming from the Governance Options Primer for Community Deliberations, this section contains the expanded record behind the Town Council summary in that document. Section 3 contains the committee's research on comparable Colorado towns and the deliberations on council design. Section 4 identifies the specific design questions that would need to be resolved before a new charter could be drafted.

Section 1: What This Governance Option Is

The Town Council model is the most widely used form of municipal government in Colorado and across the United States. It is a representative democracy: voters elect neighbors to serve on a governing council, and those council members make legislative and policy decisions on behalf of the community. Each resident is not required to attend meetings or vote on individual municipal matters; that function is delegated to elected representatives.

In Colorado, the formal terminology varies by municipal type. Statutory municipalities, those governed by state statute rather than a home rule charter, typically use a Board of Trustees. Home rule municipalities like Ophir typically use a Town Council. The distinction is legal rather than functional; both are elected governing bodies with broadly similar responsibilities. This document uses Town Council throughout, consistent with Ophir's home rule status.

A note on Colorado size definitions: a town is generally a municipality with 2,000 or fewer residents at the time of incorporation. A city has more than 2,000 residents at incorporation, with exceptions (Ouray, Black Hawk, Central City, and Leadville are designated cities despite small populations). Ophir is a town.

If Ophir were to adopt the Town Council model, the General Assembly as a governing body would cease to exist in its current form. Legislative and policy-making authority would vest in the elected council. Day-to-day administration would continue under the Town Manager and staff, working under council direction.

Resident participation would shift from monthly voting at GA meetings to public comment at council meetings and to elections. The committee also discussed whether a Town Council charter should include a petition-triggered community meeting provision that would allow residents to call a community assembly under defined conditions, similar to a mechanism used in Telluride. That provision, including what conditions would trigger it and what authority the resulting meeting would hold, is addressed in Section 4.

Section 2: How This Governance Option Might Work in Ophir

The following maps the Town Council structure onto Ophir's actual governance responsibilities, organized by domain. Because this model would require a new charter, specific thresholds, procedures, and authority boundaries would be defined in that document. What appears here describes how authority would be distributed and how the model would function operationally.

Under a council structure, the general operating principle is that the council sets policy and approves decisions above a charter-defined threshold (typically expressed as a dollar amount for contracts or a percentage of annual revenue), while the Town Manager executes policy and manages operations below that level. Decisions below this level are administrative and do not return to the electorate for approval. The electorate re-enters the process only through elections, charter amendments, or any petition-triggered override mechanism defined in the charter. This split applies across all domains below unless noted otherwise.

Budget and Finances

The council adopts the annual budget by resolution, sets the mill levy, approves supplemental appropriations, and authorizes transfers between departments. The Town Manager or Treasurer prepares the proposed budget and presents it to the council. A public hearing is required before adoption. Colorado law requires mill levy certification to the county by December 15; the council must adopt the budget before that date. Routine spending within adopted budget lines falls within Town Manager authority. (C.R.S. Section 39-5-128(1))

Ordinances and Resolutions

The council enacts local laws by ordinance and takes administrative actions by resolution. A standard two-reading process applies to ordinances, with a public hearing between readings. Emergency ordinances may be adopted in a single meeting under conditions specified by charter. The council would set by charter the contract threshold above which council approval is required, replacing the current \$5,000 floor. All council meetings where public business is discussed must be noticed, open to the public, and recorded under Colorado Open Meetings Law.

Water Infrastructure and Water Rights

Water system policy, major projects, and contracts above the charter-defined threshold fall within council jurisdiction. The Town Manager coordinates day-to-day operations and reports to the council. Ophir's water system involves aging infrastructure, water rights management, and ongoing maintenance obligations. Staff and relevant committees provide technical support.

Roads, Snow Removal, and Public Works

Public works policy and contracts above the charter-defined threshold require council approval. The Town Manager manages routine maintenance within those limits. Capital or infrastructure decisions above the threshold require council authorization.

Land Use, Planning, and the Avalanche Hazard Overlay

Final authority over the Land Use Code, zoning amendments, and development applications above the administrative level rests with the council. The Planning and Zoning Commission continues as an advisory and quasi-judicial body, making recommendations the council approves, modifies, or denies. Public hearings on land use matters are required under Colorado law. Council members must avoid ex parte communications on pending quasi-judicial applications. Ophir's avalanche hazard overlay involves complex technical mapping and has been the subject of recent litigation; those decisions would require council action in consultation with P&Z and legal counsel.

Wildfire Mitigation

The council adopts wildfire mitigation policy by ordinance, including defensible space requirements, building material standards, or vegetation management obligations applicable to private property within town boundaries. The Town Manager coordinates with USFS and San Miguel County on wildfire planning. Implementation falls to staff and property owners under the adopted policy.

External Relations: USFS, San Miguel County, Intergovernmental Agreements

The Mayor or Town Manager serves as Ophir's primary liaison with outside agencies between meetings, under council direction. Council members serve fixed terms; the same members participate in ongoing agency relationships for the duration of those terms. Major intergovernmental agreements require council approval by resolution or ordinance. Routine correspondence and coordination fall within Town Manager authority.

Open Space and Green Energy

The council adopts open space policy and approves related agreements. Green energy initiatives require council authorization for contracts, expenditures, or policy commitments above the charter-defined threshold. Environmental stewardship commitments expressed in Ophir's master plan would be carried forward through council policy and ordinance.

Legal Matters and Executive Sessions

Significant legal matters, including major settlements and precedent-setting litigation, require council action. Routine legal matters are handled by the Town Manager in consultation with the town attorney within charter-defined limits. Colorado Open Meetings Law permits executive sessions only for specific exemptions, including receipt of legal advice, property negotiation, and personnel matters; no final legislative action may be taken in executive session. Council members serve fixed terms and participate in legal discussions continuously for the duration of those terms.

Emergency Decision-Making

The Mayor, Town Manager, or council may act in genuine emergencies without a noticed meeting, subject to Colorado statutory emergency provisions and charter requirements. Emergency expenditures and emergency ordinances are available tools. Emergency actions must be ratified by the council at its next regular meeting.

Typical Governance Cadence

Comparable small Colorado towns typically hold monthly council meetings, with special meetings called as needed. Meeting frequency for Ophir's council would be defined in the new charter. The council model would also require a new election structure; the current charter's January election date and annual cycle may or may not carry forward depending on how staggered terms are designed.

Administrative Support and Enforcement

Two categories of administrative infrastructure that the current charter addresses only in passing would require explicit definition in a new charter.

The council would appoint a Municipal Clerk responsible for official records, meeting facilitation, election coordination, and public records compliance. The council would retain or hire a Town Manager responsible for daily administrative operations, staff management, and budget execution under council direction. Both roles require defined authority, accountability structures, and removal procedures.

The council would adopt enforcement mechanisms for town ordinances and resolutions by charter provision or ordinance. The current charter is largely silent on enforcement; a new charter would need to define how ordinance violations are handled, what remedies are available, and what role staff versus elected officials play.

Section 3: Committee Findings and Research

Comparable Colorado Towns

Ten Colorado towns with populations between 120 and 350 were researched for comparison; one committee member contacted several towns directly to gather information beyond what is publicly available. The full data is in the committee's working spreadsheet.

Town	Population	Home Rule	Gov Type	Members	Term Length	Term Limits	Compensation
Rico	350	Yes	Board of Trustees	7	3 years	None	None (volunteer)
Alma	296	No	Board of Trustees	7	–	–	–
Creede	281	No	Board of Trustees	5	–	–	–
Rye	203	No	Board of Trustees	7	–	–	–
Bethune	185	No	Town Council	5	–	–	–
Silver Plume	184	No	Board of Trustees	7	2 years	None	None
Larkspur	180	Yes	Town Council	5	4 years	None	Mayor \$15K/yr; council \$75/meeting
Marble	135	No	Board of Trustees	5	–	–	–
Ward	127	Yes	–	–	–	–	–
Black Hawk	120	Yes	City Council	7	4 years	Two terms	\$20/meeting

Rico's mayor pro tem is appointed by the council rather than separately elected. This is one design option for how the Mayor Pro Tem role could be structured in a new Ophir charter.

Most small Colorado towns use Boards of Trustees (statutory) or Town Councils (home rule), with minor functional differences between the two. Council or trustee bodies in the comparison set range from 5 to 7 members; towns contacted directly reported 5-member bodies as workable for combining diversity of opinion with a realistic candidate pool. Four-year terms are most common; Rico uses three-year terms. Term limits are uncommon in the comparison set. Compensation varies widely, from volunteer service in Rico to a \$15,000 annual mayoral salary in Larkspur. Most mayors hold some administrative authority between meetings beyond purely ceremonial functions.

Committee discussion noted that Larkspur is the closest structural analog: a small home rule municipality that was actively seeking to reduce its council from 7 to 5 members at the time of research, citing the same candidate pool concerns raised for Ophir.

Council Size

The question of council size centered on the range of 3 to 7 members, with comparable town data and Ophir's candidate pool both bearing on the discussion. The concerns discussed: 3 members concentrates authority in too few hands and represents a large departure from the current GA's distributed decision-making; 7 members may exceed the realistic candidate pool given Ophir's population; comparable towns reported 5-member bodies as manageable while providing adequate diversity of opinion. Committee discussion referenced 5 members as a reasonable configuration to examine further, while leaving the range of 5 to 7 open. No settled position was reached pending community input. (Full treatment in Section 4.)

Term Length and Staggering

Three-year and four-year terms were both examined without reaching a settled position. The argument for 3 years: lower barrier to service and adequate continuity if re-election is permitted. The argument for 4 years: more time to develop institutional knowledge within a term. The interaction with term limits was noted explicitly: if members may serve indefinitely, shorter terms are acceptable; if term limits guarantee turnover, longer terms preserve institutional knowledge at any given moment. A transition period mixing 2 and 4-year initial terms was discussed as a mechanism to enable staggering from the outset. Both 3 and 4-year terms remain open pending resolution of the term limits question.

Compensation

Comparable town research produced a wide range of compensation approaches, from volunteer service to a \$15,000 annual mayoral salary; committee discussion referenced \$500 per month for the Mayor and \$100 per month per council member as a range drawn from that research. These figures were treated as illustrative reference points, not recommendations. Total compensation would need to fit within the town's budget; the funding source requires definition. No position on approach or amount was reached. (Compensation philosophy thread: see Section 6.)

Mayor Authority Between Meetings

Whether the Mayor should hold substantive authority between council meetings, beyond ceremonial and emergency functions, was examined without reaching a settled position. The committee noted that under a council structure this question is different in character from the same question under the current GA: the council meets regularly and establishes ongoing direction, so between-meeting mayoral action fills gaps in administrative continuity rather than substituting for a governing body that meets infrequently. Views in discussion included that some between-meeting mayoral authority would be useful; scope and limits were not specified and were identified as requiring further research into comparable-town practice.

Primary Residency Qualification

The question of whether council membership should require primary Ophir residency arose in connection with the demographic trajectory concern. The purpose discussed was to create a structural safeguard against future governance influence by non-resident property owners if the ratio of full-time residents to second homeowners were to shift significantly over time. Views in discussion included that primary residency should be an explicit qualification; this was not resolved as a committee position. (Full treatment in Section 4.)

Petition-Triggered Community Meeting Provision

A provision allowing residents to call a community meeting under defined petition conditions, similar to a mechanism in use in Telluride, was examined as a way to preserve direct community voice within an otherwise representative structure. Views in discussion included support for including such a provision; specific threshold, procedure, and the question of whether such a meeting would hold advisory or binding authority were not resolved. (Full treatment in Section 4.)

The “Same People” Observation

A committee member observed that the individuals most likely to run for council seats are the same individuals who already attend GA meetings regularly. This raises the question of whether the Town Council model changes how decisions are made without substantially changing who makes them. The committee did not reach a position on this observation. (Full treatment in Section 6.)

Survey Context

The November 2025 survey assessed community experience with the current GA system and did not ask respondents to evaluate the Town Council model directly. The survey received 63 responses. Survey findings relevant to this model as context: 36 of 51 respondents identified direct democracy as the current system’s primary strength; 23 of 50 respondents identified who attends determining who governs as a primary weakness; 17 of 61 respondents (28%) reported dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction with the current system. These figures are cited here as deliberative context, not as evidence for or against the Town Council model.

Charter Inflexibility as a Design Caution

Under Colorado home rule law, amending a charter once adopted requires a full community ballot; there is no simpler path. This applies to all threshold amounts, compensation figures, council size, term structure, and procedural rules written into the new charter. The committee identified this as relevant to how completely the design questions in Section 4 need to be resolved before a charter goes to a community vote. (Full treatment in the shared Charter Updates section at the end of this document.)

Section 4: Design Questions for the Community

The questions below are the ones the committee explored but deliberately did not answer, because they require community input and would need to be resolved before a new charter could be responsibly drafted. These are not gaps the committee overlooked; they are the decisions that belong to Ophir's residents.

Council Size. The range examined was 3 to 7 members. Comparable town data and Ophir's candidate pool both bear on this question. The committee did not close it.

Term Length. Both 3-year and 4-year terms remain open. The appropriate length depends in part on how the term limits question is resolved; neither was settled in isolation.

Term Limits. Whether limits should apply, what the limit should be, and whether a waiting period before re-election would be required were all examined without resolution.

Staggering Structure. Initial terms of mixed lengths would be needed to create staggered elections from the outset. The specific structure was not designed.

Mayor's Between-Meeting Authority. The scope and limits of mayoral authority between council meetings, beyond ceremonial and emergency functions, require both research into comparable-town practice and attorney review of what a new charter may authorize.

Primary Residency Qualification. Whether primary Ophir residency should be an explicit enumerated qualification for council membership, and if so how primary residency would be defined and verified, were both examined without resolution.

Petition-Triggered Community Meeting. Whether such a provision should be included, and if so how it would be structured, remain open. Specific unresolved elements: the petition threshold, the scope of matters that may be brought, the authority of the resulting meeting (advisory vs. binding), and the procedure for calling and conducting it. Attorney review of what is permissible under Colorado home rule law is a prerequisite to any charter language.

Representation Structure. Whether seats should be at-large, geographically distributed, or a combination was examined. Options discussed included guaranteed representation for east Ophir and old Ophir, ranging from one seat per district to two per district with one at-large. No position was reached.

Compensation. The approach, structure, and amounts for council compensation require community deliberation and budget analysis before any figure can be responsibly recommended. Compensation design affects who can realistically afford to serve and is a factor in how the question is framed for community input. The funding source within the town budget requires definition.

Meeting Frequency. Monthly meetings with special meetings as needed is the pattern in comparable towns. The appropriate frequency for Ophir and its effect on total annual meeting load was not specified.

Election Mechanics. How council elections would be conducted, whether the existing January election date structure would carry forward, whether mail balloting would be used, and how the transition from the current GA officer election structure would be managed all require definition.

Vacancies. How mid-term council vacancies would be filled: by council appointment, special election, or advancing the next highest vote-getter. Each approach carries different legitimacy implications.

Recall Provisions. Whether and how the new charter would provide for recall of elected council members. The current charter provides for recall by GA petition with 20 signatures; a council-model equivalent would need to be designed.

Quorum and Supermajority Thresholds. Quorum and any supermajority requirements would need to be specified in the new charter. Under a 5-member council, these thresholds carry significant weight.

Administrative Infrastructure. The Town Manager and Municipal Clerk roles, their authority, accountability structures, and removal procedures, would require explicit definition in the new charter. Whether existing administrative capacity is sufficient or whether additional capacity would be needed is a related question.

Section 5: Charter and Legal Implications

Overview

The Town Council model requires a complete replacement of Ophir's Home Rule Charter. Every article of the current charter is built around the General Assembly as the sole governing body; a Town Council charter cannot be achieved by amendment of the existing document. A wholesale replacement is required.

The article-by-article mapping below is not a surgical amendment list. It describes which current articles would be superseded and what new articles would need to be drafted, to give the committee and the community a sense of scope. All charter replacement requires majority approval by the full Ophir electorate under C.R.S. Section 31-2-210 and Article XX of the Colorado Constitution.

Because charter changes require a community ballot, decisions embedded in the new charter would be difficult to modify later. This gives the unresolved design questions in Section 4 more than ordinary significance.

Charter Articles Requiring Replacement or Substantial Revision

Article II (Elections and Electorate). The current article governs GA member qualifications and election procedures. A new article would define council member qualifications, the election cycle for council seats and the Mayor, and any transition provisions from the current officer structure. The January election date in Article II, Section 6 may require adjustment depending on how staggered terms are structured.

Article III (General Assembly Procedure). Would be replaced in its entirety by a new Town Council Procedure article. The new article would define meeting frequency and notice requirements, quorum, voting thresholds, the ordinance and resolution adoption process, executive session rules under Colorado Open Meetings Law, and consent agenda provisions if adopted.

Article IV (Recall of Elected Official). Would need to be rewritten to define recall procedures applicable to council members. The current 20-signature GA petition threshold would need a council-model equivalent calibrated to the representative structure.

Article V (Boards and Commissions). Would need updating to reflect that boards and commissions are appointed by and report to the council rather than the GA. The current charter is sparse on boards and commissions governance regardless of model; a charter rewrite would require determining whether additional provisions should be included.

New Article (Town Council). A new article would define the council's existence, composition, election structure, terms, internal roles (Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, council members), authority, compensation, relationship to the Town Manager, accountability mechanisms, and any petition-triggered community meeting provision if adopted.

Article VI (Finance). Would need to redefine the budget preparation and adoption process. Under the current charter the Treasurer prepares the budget; under a council model the Town Manager typically prepares and presents the proposed budget to the council. The December 15 mill levy certification deadline is unchanged.

Article VII (Municipal Borrowing) and Article VIII (Taxation). These articles reference the General Assembly as the authorizing body throughout. The references would be updated to the Town Council. Substantive provisions may remain largely intact.

Article IX, Section 6 (Charter Amendments). The current provision allows amendment “by Town ordinance.” Under a council model, clarification would be needed to specify whether the council initiates amendment by ordinance or by resolution and how proposed amendments are referred to the electorate for approval.

Open Legal Questions

Election cycle compatibility. Attorney review would be required to determine whether Ophir’s existing January election date structure can accommodate staggered council terms or whether a different election cycle would be required.

Petition-triggered community meeting authority. The legally permissible structure for a petition-triggered community meeting under Colorado home rule law, and what authority such a meeting may hold, require attorney review before any charter language can be drafted.

Executive session compliance. How executive session rules should be specified in the new charter to comply with Colorado Open Meetings Law requires attorney review.

RETT credit or property tax credit mechanism. Whether a RETT credit or property tax credit compensation mechanism requires any special legal structure under Colorado municipal finance law has not been confirmed.

Transition provisions. What transition provisions are required to protect existing town contracts, obligations, and pending legal matters during the changeover from GA governance to council governance requires attorney review.

Primary residency enforceability. Whether the primary residency qualification requires specific definitional language to be enforceable under Colorado election law has not been determined.

Section 6: Additional Observations and Open Threads

The “same people” question. A committee member observed that the individuals most likely to run for council seats are largely the same people who already attend GA meetings regularly. If that holds, the Town Council model changes how decisions are made, shifting from direct community voting to elected representatives, without substantially changing who makes them. The committee did not assess whether this observation is accurate or what it would mean for how the model is evaluated. It is recorded here as an open question for community deliberation. (First raised in Section 3.)

Compensation for council service. The committee noted that any council model requires a decision about whether and how council members are compensated for their time. Approaches discussed included direct payment, per-meeting stipends, and tax-based mechanisms such as Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) credits or property tax offsets. None of these was developed beyond initial discussion. The core tension the committee identified is that meaningful compensation may broaden who can realistically serve, while no compensation or token compensation tends to favor people with flexible schedules and financial cushion. Whether a RETT credit or similar tax-based mechanism is permissible under Colorado municipal finance law is flagged in Section 5 for attorney review. The committee did not reach a position on the right approach.

Community override and the petition-triggered meeting. The committee discussed whether a Town Council charter should include a mechanism allowing residents to call a community assembly under defined conditions, similar to a provision used in Telluride. The appeal of such a provision is that it preserves a community-level check on council decisions without requiring the full GA structure. The details of how Telluride’s provision works, including

the signature threshold, the authority of the resulting meeting, and its legal standing under Colorado home rule law, were not fully examined. That research would need to happen before the provision could be designed. The question of what authority such a meeting could legally hold, advisory or binding, is flagged in Section 5 for attorney review.

PART 4: GA WITH SELECT BOARD

This section describes the GA with Select Board governance model. If you are coming from the Governance Options Primer for Community Deliberations, this section contains the expanded record behind that document's summary. Later sections discuss New England Town Meeting research, unresolved design questions, and charter implications.

Section 1: What This Governance Option Is

The GA with Select Board model adds a continuously operating elected Select Board to Ophir's existing General Assembly system. The General Assembly remains the town's sole legislative authority, while the Select Board serves as the town's standing administrative and executive body between GA meetings.

The Select Board operates within defined administrative domains, including:

- Supervision and direction of the Town Manager
- Contracting and routine financial administration within GA-established thresholds
- Implementation of GA-adopted ordinances and policies
- Intergovernmental coordination and external liaison with USFS, San Miguel County, and other agencies
- Emergency operational response when GA action cannot be convened in time
- Administrative planning, agenda coordination, preparation of GA business, and continuity of ongoing projects between meetings

The General Assembly retains authority over all core governing decisions, including:

- All ordinance and legislative authority
- Budget adoption and supplemental appropriations
- Contracts and expenditures above charter-defined thresholds
- Land use decisions and property transactions
- Borrowing, debt issuance, and long-term financial obligations
- Charter amendments and structural governance changes

The model is derived from New England Town Meeting governance, in which a Select Board serves as the community's standing elected governing body between town meetings. In those systems, the Select Board performs governance functions that Ophir currently assigns to individual charter officers, and a separately elected mayor is generally not part of the structure. In practice, much of Ophir's between-meeting governance already occurs through staff coordination, custom, and informal consensus rather than through an explicitly authorized elected body. The Select Board formalizes that layer. Administrative and governance responsibilities currently distributed among Ophir's charter officers would be reorganized within the Select Board framework; the specific translation of existing offices is an open design question addressed in Section 4.

The Town Manager remains the town's chief administrative officer, supervising staff and managing day-to-day municipal operations under the policy direction of the General Assembly and the day-to-day supervision of the Select Board.

A central feature of this model is the separation of legislative and administrative authority. Legislative authority resides exclusively with the General Assembly, while the Select Board serves as a standing administrative and executive body operating continuously between GA sessions. This distinguishes the model from a Town Council system, where legislative authority is centralized in the council itself, and from Ophir's current structure, where no contin-

uous elected governing body exists between assemblies to advance work or maintain institutional memory across meeting cycles.

Section 2: How This Governance Option Works in Ophir

The GA with Select Board model preserves the General Assembly as Ophir’s sole legislative authority while introducing a continuously operating Select Board to manage administrative and executive work between assemblies. The Town Manager carries out daily operations under Select Board supervision.

The current GA system operates in discrete meetings, which can cause ongoing work to accumulate between sessions. The Select Board addresses this by maintaining a continuous agenda, developing proposals over time, tracking deferred work, and preparing materials for GA decision. It acts by resolution within its administrative authority, while all ordinances are adopted by the General Assembly.

This creates a two-stage governance flow: the Select Board advances and prepares work continuously, and the GA makes final legislative decisions at scheduled meetings. Where prepared ordinances reach readiness between regular GA sessions, special meetings provide a mechanism for timely action.

Specific authority assignments, financial thresholds, and procedures would be defined through charter drafting if this model is adopted.

Budget and Finances

The Select Board prepares and recommends the annual budget, monitors spending throughout the year, authorizes routine expenditures within charter-defined thresholds, and manages budget-line transfers within those thresholds. The General Assembly adopts the annual budget, authorizes borrowing, approves contracts and expenditures above the charter thresholds, and acts on supplemental appropriations. Staff and committees provide technical analysis, revenue projections, and departmental recommendations. The annual budget cycle is anchored on November and December GA meetings to accommodate Colorado’s December 15 mill levy certification requirement.

Ordinances and Resolutions

The General Assembly is the sole authority for adopting ordinances. The Select Board identifies issues requiring legislative action, develops proposals, prepares draft ordinances, and conducts initial consideration before presenting matters to the GA for adoption under the two-reading requirement. The Board may adopt administrative procedures needed to implement GA-enacted ordinances, but all lawmaking authority remains with the GA.

Town Manager Supervision

The current GA can hire and remove a Town Manager but does not naturally provide ongoing operational direction between meetings. The Select Board fills that gap. It supervises the Town Manager on a day-to-day basis, provides operational direction within GA-established policy, and evaluates performance. Hiring and removal recommendations go to the GA. The Town Manager implements directives from both bodies and manages daily operations and staff, with the Select Board as the primary operational supervisor between assemblies.

Contracting and Routine Financial Decisions

The Select Board executes contracts, manages vendors, and commits the town to agreements within charter-defined financial thresholds. Contracts and expenditures above those thresholds require GA authorization. The threshold structure distinguishes routine operational decisions the Board can make efficiently from major commitments reserved to the General Assembly.

Water Infrastructure and Water Rights

The Select Board coordinates water system operations between GA meetings, oversees projects within its authority, tracks compliance obligations, and advances planning work on capital needs. The General Assembly approves major capital projects, significant expenditures, and policy decisions. Staff and committees provide technical expertise and operational support.

Roads, Snow Removal, and Public Works

The Select Board oversees routine public works operations, manages contractor coordination and scheduling, and handles maintenance activities within defined limits. The General Assembly approves major infrastructure projects, significant expenditures, and policy changes. Staff manages day-to-day implementation and monitors field conditions.

Land Use, Planning, and the Avalanche Hazard Overlay

The Planning and Zoning Committee continues providing technical review, hazard assessment, and land use recommendations. The Select Board coordinates ongoing work between assemblies, monitors implementation, and prepares matters requiring GA action. The General Assembly retains authority over zoning changes, land use regulations, and major policy decisions. For long-running matters such as the avalanche hazard overlay, the Board provides continuity between meetings while final authority remains with the GA.

Legal Matters

The Select Board oversees routine legal matters within authority granted by the charter, coordinates with the town attorney between GA meetings, and manages ongoing matters requiring continuity. Significant settlements, major litigation decisions, and legal matters with substantial financial or policy implications require GA authorization. Residents retain the ability to petition for GA review of Board actions under procedures established in the charter.

External Relations: USFS, San Miguel County, and Intergovernmental Agreements

The Select Board serves as the town's standing liaison with USFS, San Miguel County, and other external agencies between GA meetings, handling ongoing coordination and communication. Major agreements and commitments require GA authorization.

Open Space, Green Energy, and Wildfire Mitigation

The Select Board coordinates implementation, manages agency interactions, and advances ongoing project work between assemblies. The General Assembly approves major agreements, significant funding decisions, and policy direction. Committees continue providing advisory and technical support.

Emergency Decision-Making

The Select Board and Town Manager may act without a noticed GA meeting during genuine emergencies involving wildfire, avalanche, infrastructure failure, or similar urgent circumstances. All emergency actions are reported to the GA at its next meeting. The Select Board may also call a special GA meeting when operational need requires GA action between regular sessions; this authority is shared with the Mayor and with a GA member petition right.

Typical Governance Cadence

The charter establishes a minimum of four regular GA meetings per year, with two anchored to the November-December budget cycle. The GA may establish additional meetings by resolution at its organizational meeting, allowing future communities to calibrate frequency to experience. The Select Board meets more frequently to conduct ongoing town business between assemblies; Select Board meeting frequency is addressed in Section 4.

Section 3: Committee Findings and Research

NETM Precedent and Comparative Data

Select Board size in New England Town Meeting communities ranges from three to seven members under state statutes. Three is the minimum in Vermont (Title 17, Section 2649), Maine (Title 30-A, Section 2526), and New Hampshire (RSA 41:8). Massachusetts allows three or more members with terms of up to three years.

Committee discussion reviewed how board size interacts with open meeting law requirements. A three-member board operates under a strict quorum constraint, limiting informal coordination outside publicly noticed meetings. A five-member board raises that threshold, allowing communication among up to two members without constituting a quorum under typical state interpretations. Both structures were examined as workable options with different operational effects. Under the revised model, where the Board holds administrative and executive authority rather than ordinance-making authority, the open meeting law constraint on a three-member board bears primarily on between-meeting coordination and responsiveness rather than on legislative workflow.

Meeting Frequency Analysis

NETM Select Boards typically meet every one to two weeks. The committee estimated Ophir's current governance meeting load at approximately 24 meetings per year, reflecting one GA meeting and one staff meeting per month. The three frequency models were compared against that baseline:

- Monthly Select Board + quarterly GA: 16 meetings per year (33% reduction)
- Every-three-weeks Select Board + quarterly GA: approximately 21 meetings per year (13% reduction)
- Bi-weekly Select Board + quarterly GA: 28 meetings per year (17% increase)

Each option reflects a different balance between meeting frequency and overall governance workload. No consensus was reached on preferred frequency.

Ordinance Authority

The committee examined two structural approaches to ordinance-making authority. One allowed Select Board adoption of routine ordinances with GA oversight mechanisms. The other reserved all ordinance authority to the General Assembly, with the Select Board handling drafting, review, and administrative implementation.

The committee selected GA-exclusive legislative authority.

Charter amendment remains available if future experience warrants reconsideration.

Administrative Authority Thresholds

The committee worked with illustrative financial thresholds to define the boundary between Select Board administrative authority and General Assembly authorization. Figures referenced in discussion included contracts under \$25,000, budget line-item transfers under \$10,000 within the same department, and legal settlements under \$15,000 as examples of Board-level authority, with GA approval required above those levels.

These figures are illustrative and were not calibrated against Ophir's actual budget, revenue structure, or contract history. Threshold calibration is addressed in Section 4.

Budget Calendar Considerations

Colorado statute requires mill levy certification by December 15. The committee examined a budget-anchored quarterly GA structure to meet this requirement: November for budget introduction and first public hearing, December for final adoption prior to the statutory deadline, March and July for remaining quarterly sessions. An alternative evenly spaced quarterly model placing first reading in September and final adoption in December was also discussed but not evaluated in detail.

Select Board Composition and Roles

Select Boards in NETM systems typically organize internal roles including Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk, distinct from the municipal Clerk role. Rotation distributes procedural knowledge across members but can reduce leadership continuity; fixed roles increase stability but concentrate procedural expertise. The committee examined both approaches without reaching a preferred position.

Equal pay for all Select Board members was discussed as an option. No specific compensation amounts were settled. The difficulty of drawing meaningful geographic districts at Ophir's scale was noted.

Continuity and Institutional Memory

Select Board members serve fixed terms, meaning the same individuals remain involved in ongoing legal matters, intergovernmental relationships, multi-year infrastructure projects, and other work extending across meeting cycles.

Under the current GA system, participation varies by meeting, which can require repeated re-orientation on long-running matters. The Select Board reduces this variation by maintaining consistent membership across its term.

Continuity affects legal coordination, intergovernmental relationships, and long-horizon infrastructure planning.

Survey Context

The November 2025 survey received 63 responses and assessed perceptions of the current GA system. It did not ask respondents to evaluate the hybrid model directly.

Findings cited as deliberative context: 36 of 51 respondents identified direct community participation as the current system's primary strength; 23 of 50 identified who attends determines who governs as a primary weakness. These findings informed committee discussion of structural design choices but do not constitute conclusions about the hybrid model.

Section 4: Design Questions for the Community

The following items represent unresolved design decisions required to implement the GA with Select Board model. They are decisions that belong to Ophir's residents.

MEETING STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE

Select Board Meeting Frequency. Options include monthly, every three weeks, or biweekly cycles. The decision determines the balance between Board responsiveness and the time commitment placed on members.

General Assembly Meeting Frequency. A decision is required on the minimum and preferred frequency of GA meetings. The charter establishes a floor that may be exceeded through local practice or resolution. GA meeting frequency directly affects legislative throughput and the demand for special meetings under the Select Board drafting model.

Select Board and GA Interface Alignment. A related decision concerns how Select Board agenda throughput and GA meeting frequency are aligned in practice. If Select Board output exceeds the GA's ability to act within scheduled meetings, ordinance ratification shifts toward special meetings as the primary mechanism for legislative action.

SELECT BOARD COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

Select Board Size. A decision is required on whether the Select Board consists of three or five members. This choice affects quorum structure, how members may communicate between meetings, and the Board's day-to-day coordination capacity.

Term Length and Staggering. Three-year terms were discussed in relation to NETM precedent. Whether terms are staggered at inception to preserve continuity across the Board's initial composition is unresolved.

Role Assignment and Rotation. A structure is needed for internal roles including Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk. Options include fixed internal selection or scheduled rotation. No determination has been made.

Compensation Structure. Whether Select Board members receive equal compensation, and at what level, remains open. Compensation design interacts directly with workload expectations and meeting frequency.

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE AND THRESHOLD ARCHITECTURE

Financial Threshold Structure. The charter must define the boundary between Select Board administrative authority and GA authorization. Decisions required include: whether thresholds are expressed as fixed dollar amounts or as percentages of budget or revenue; whether thresholds adjust over time through indexing or periodic recalibration; and whether threshold logic varies by category of decision. Calibration against Ophir's actual budget, revenue structure, and contract history is required before charter language can be finalized.

December 15 Compliance. Whether Ophir's existing December GA meeting practice complies with the mill levy certification deadline, and whether the proposed November-December calendar requires any charter or procedural change to ensure compliance, requires attorney or treasurer clarification.

ELECTORAL AND TRANSITION MECHANICS

Election Structure and Transition. How Select Board elections align with existing municipal election cycles, how the transition from the current governance structure would be managed, and how mid-term vacancies are filled are unresolved design questions.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Officer Structure. The introduction of a Select Board assumes a board-centered governance structure consistent with New England Town Meeting precedent, in which the Board serves as the standing elected governing body rather than operating alongside a separately elected mayor. The open design question is not whether a mayor continues alongside the Select Board, but how functions currently assigned to Ophir's charter officers, including Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Town Clerk, and Treasurer, are translated into the Select Board framework. This includes which functions attach to the Board Chair, whether any ceremonial or statutory functions require a designated officer role, and how Clerk and Treasurer responsibilities are structured within or alongside the Board.

Select Board Resolution Authority. The Select Board acts by resolution on matters within its administrative authority. The charter will need to define the scope of Board resolutions and distinguish them from General Assembly resolutions, which carry broader authority. The committee did not develop specific charter language for this distinction.

Administrative Coordination Between Meetings. How routine administrative coordination between GA and Select Board sessions is structured requires charter definition, including what authority the Town Manager holds between Board meetings and how operational continuity is maintained. A separate structural question concerns whether the Town Clerk functions as Board Clerk or remains organizationally independent.

CONTINUITY AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

Legal and Executive Session Continuity. What procedures govern how ongoing legal matters and executive session context are carried forward across Board membership changes, and how participation records for privileged discussions are maintained across the term of a matter rather than a single meeting.

Intergovernmental Liaison Continuity. Whether liaison responsibility with USFS, San Miguel County, and other agencies is assigned personally to a Board member, attached to a Board role, or defined procedurally, and what happens to those relationships when a member leaves the Board mid-term.

Multi-Meeting Governance Tracking. How ongoing projects, contracts, and long-running administrative actions are formally tracked and reported to the GA across meeting cycles, and what charter obligation ensures continuity of prior commitments across changes in Board composition and meeting cycles.

Section 5: Charter and Legal Implications

OVERVIEW

Implementing the GA with Select Board model would require substantial revision of Ophir's charter. The current charter is structured around the General Assembly as the sole governing authority and does not provide for a separate elected board.

A new Select Board article would need to be created, and multiple existing articles would require amendment or replacement. All charter amendments require approval by a majority of Ophir voters under C.R.S. Section 31-2-210 and Article XX of the Colorado Constitution. Amendments may be initiated by ordinance (two-thirds GA vote) or by registered voter petition.

Because charter amendments are difficult to revise once adopted, unresolved design questions in Section 4 carry legal significance beyond ordinary policy decisions.

CHARTER ARTICLES REQUIRING AMENDMENT OR REPLACEMENT

New Article (Select Board). A new charter article would be required to establish the Select Board, including composition and election method, term length and staggering, internal officer structure, relationship to the Town Manager, reporting obligations to the General Assembly, and mechanisms for accountability and review.

The article must also define the affirmative scope of Board administrative authority, including domains such as: contracting within charter-defined thresholds; Town Manager supervision and direction; implementation of GA-adopted ordinances; budget execution within adopted appropriations; intergovernmental coordination; emergency operational response; and ongoing administrative planning between GA sessions. This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Board resolutions operate within GA-established frameworks and cannot create new public obligations or rules of general applicability; the GA may adjust the scope of Board authority through ordinary governance mechanisms, with charter amendment reserved for structural change.

Article II (Elections and Electorate). Would require revision to reflect the introduction of a Select Board and the resulting changes to governance structure, election sequencing, and governing body composition. Would also require

review for consistency with the revised meeting structure and the interaction between GA sessions and a standing Select Board.

Article III (Ordinances and Resolutions). Would require revision to confirm GA-exclusive ordinance authority, establish the two-reading requirement with a defined minimum interval between readings, address emergency ordinance exceptions, and define the scope of Select Board administrative implementing authority within GA-established frameworks. Under the GA-exclusive legislative model, this article is substantially simpler to draft than it would have been had the Select Board retained ordinance authority.

Article IV (Officers). Would require revision to replace Ophir's current officer structure with one compatible with a board-centered governance model. This includes defining how functions currently assigned to the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Town Clerk, and Treasurer are reorganized within the Select Board framework, and whether any ceremonial or statutory functions require retention of a named officer designation independent of Board membership.

Article V (Town Manager). Would require revision to clarify the Town Manager's reporting structure and supervisory relationships under a two-body governance system, including the day-to-day operational supervision relationship with the Select Board, the policy accountability relationship with the General Assembly, and hiring, evaluation, and removal authority.

Article VI (Budget and Finance). Would require revision to establish Select Board budget preparation authority, General Assembly budget adoption authority, the boundary between Board administrative authority and GA authorization for financial decisions, and the threshold calibration mechanism.

Article IX (Amendments). No structural change is anticipated, but this article must be reviewed for compatibility with the revised governance architecture.

OPEN LEGAL QUESTIONS

Select Board resolution authority. The charter must define the scope of Select Board resolutions and distinguish them from General Assembly resolutions, which carry broader authority. Whether that distinction raises interpretive questions under Colorado home rule law requires attorney review.

December 15 compliance. Does the December 15 mill levy certification requirement impose constraints on Ophir's current or proposed budget calendar, and does the GA with Select Board schedule meet those constraints?

Special GA meeting notice requirements. What constitutes legally sufficient notice and procedural validity for special General Assembly meetings convened outside the regular schedule?

TABOR implications. Does adoption of the GA with Select Board structure introduce TABOR implications beyond those already inherent in charter amendment processes?

Emergency expenditure authority. Can emergency expenditure authority be granted at the Select Board level without statutory limitation under Colorado law, or are there external constraints on scope?

CHARTER DRAFTING DEPENDENCY MARKERS

The following charter elements cannot be finalized until corresponding Section 4 design questions are resolved.

Select Board article dependency. The Select Board article must define a standing governing body with election structure, term structure, administrative authority scope, financial thresholds, Town Manager supervisory relationship, and accountability mechanisms to the General Assembly. The precise threshold calibration and resolution authority scope depend on final resolution of Section 4 design questions. The article must also address Select Board member compensation, as compensation levels interact directly with workload expectations and meeting frequency obligations defined elsewhere in the charter.

Article II dependency. Article II must reflect the GA meeting frequency floor and any resolution mechanism by which the community may exceed that floor, as these parameters affect election sequencing, organizational meeting obligations, and the interface between GA legislative capacity and Select Board drafting output.

Article III dependency. The ordinances and resolutions article requires attorney confirmation of the minimum two-reading interval and the permissible scope of emergency ordinance exceptions before charter language can be finalized. It must also define procedural provisions for special GA meetings sufficient to function as the primary throughput mechanism when Select Board output exceeds scheduled GA meeting capacity.

Administrative coordination dependency. Charter provisions governing administrative coordination between meetings, including Town Manager authority between Board sessions and Town Clerk structural placement, cannot be finalized until the officer structure and inter-meeting operational authority questions in Section 4 are resolved.

Continuity dependency. Charter provisions governing legal and executive session continuity across Board membership changes, intergovernmental liaison assignment, and multi-meeting governance tracking cannot be finalized until the community determines whether these obligations are defined procedurally in the charter or delegated to Board operating rules.

Financial framework dependency. The financial structure must define whether decision thresholds are fixed dollar amounts or percentage-based, whether thresholds adjust over time, and whether thresholds vary by category of decision. These mechanisms depend on final community selections in Section 4 and legal permissibility under charter constraints.

Section 6: Additional Committee Observations

Relationship to the GA 2.0 Administrative Executive Committee. The Select Board and the Administrative Executive Committee described in Part 2 (SR-2) both address the same structural gap: the absence of a continuously operating body to manage between GA meetings. Readers evaluating these two models should read the sections together to understand the alternative institutional approaches to the same governance function.

Ordinance Authority Design Choice. The committee examined two structural approaches to Select Board ordinance authority before settling on GA-exclusive legislative control. The choice was affirmative rather than a reluctant compromise: the GA's unambiguous legislative sovereignty is a feature of the revised model, not a concession. Charter amendment remains available if the community's experience with the model over time creates a basis for reconsidering the scope of Select Board authority.

Two-Reading Interval Design Rationale. The two-reading ordinance requirement is more useful when tied to a minimum number of days between readings than when tied to consecutive regular GA meetings. Under a quarterly GA schedule, consecutive-meeting readings would impose a wait of up to three months between first and second reading regardless of the ordinance's complexity or urgency. A defined minimum interval, on the order of twenty-one days consistent with Colorado practice, decouples the two-reading requirement from the meeting frequency question and allows a special GA meeting to serve as the second reading when the timeline requires it. This reasoning is preserved here as design context; the legal permissibility of the interval approach requires attorney confirmation as noted in Section 5.

NETM as a Reference Governance Model. New England Town Meeting systems in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts provided the primary comparative reference for the GA with Select Board model. NETM documents that a two-body structure combining direct community legislative authority with a continuously operating elected board is a mature, operational governance form with decades of precedent. At the limit, Ophir could adopt a structure substantially similar to a conventional NETM system rather than a customized local variant. Whether that would be legally feasible under Colorado home rule law was not evaluated; the committee did not review specific NETM charters for direct adoption.

Modified Omnibus Budget. A common NETM practice allows GA members to hold specific budget line items for separate debate before voting on the remainder as a block. The committee noted this as a procedural option compatible with a quarterly GA budget cycle. It was not discussed in depth.

Strong Town Manager as Design Premise. The GA with Select Board model assumes a continuing strong Town Manager role. The Select Board supervises and directs the Town Manager but does not replace the administrative capacity the Town Manager currently provides. This premise was not always stated explicitly in early committee documents and is recorded here to prevent ambiguity in future drafting.

Charter Updates Applicable Regardless of Governance Option

The items below were identified as necessary updates to Ophir's Home Rule Charter regardless of which governance option is ultimately selected. They apply across all four models and are consolidated here to avoid repetition elsewhere in the document.

- **Remote participation and Zoom attendance.** The current charter does not address remote attendance or remote voting. A clear provision is needed to define whether and how remote participation is permitted, including voting rules and how remote members are treated for quorum purposes.
- **Abstention handling.** The current voting rule (majority of members present) does not clearly distinguish between abstentions and negative votes. A clarifying provision is needed to define how abstentions are counted when determining outcomes.
- **Contract threshold.** The \$5,000 contract approval threshold in Article III, Section 9 has not been updated since 1979. While the appropriate revised threshold depends on the governance model selected, the need to update the threshold applies in all cases.
- **Boards and commissions governance gap.** The charter provides limited guidance on appointment procedures, term lengths, and oversight of boards and commissions. Any charter revision would need to determine whether and how to address this gap.
- **Newspaper publication requirement.** Article III, Section 1 requires official notice to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in San Miguel County. As this requirement no longer reflects current publication conditions, it requires replacement with a modern notice standard.
- **Charter consistency and provisions no longer in use.** Several provisions in the current charter appear not to be followed in practice. Any charter revision should include a systematic review of existing provisions to distinguish active requirements from those no longer applied before carrying language forward into a new document.
- **Charter durability and amendment constraint.** Because charter changes require a community-wide ballot, design choices written into a charter are difficult to modify once adopted. This applies to all structural thresholds, compensation levels, and procedural rules and should be treated as a core drafting constraint across all governance options.
- **Use of external drafting templates.** Existing municipal charters and established governance frameworks may be used as drafting references to reduce legal complexity and cost. Any template structure would still require adaptation to Ophir's specific conditions.
- **Town Manager role definition.** The current charter does not clearly define the Town Manager's authority, hiring and removal process, or scope of responsibility. Formalizing this role is required regardless of which governance option is selected.

The complete community survey results, including all closed-question tables and verbatim open-ended responses, appear in the Community Survey section at the very end of this document.

How Charter Change Works in Ophir

This section describes the procedural pathway from community deliberation to formal governance change. It applies to all four governance options and explains how any governance direction would be implemented in practice.

How Ophir's Charter Can Be Changed

Ophir's Home Rule Charter can be amended through two pathways, both requiring approval by a community-wide vote.

Pathway 1: GA Ordinance. The General Assembly may initiate a charter amendment by passing an ordinance with a two-thirds vote of members present at a regular or special meeting. If approved, the proposed amendment is placed on the next available municipal election ballot and requires approval by a majority of registered Ophir voters.

Pathway 2: Registered Voter Petition. Registered Ophir voters may initiate a charter amendment through petition. If a sufficient number of registered voter signatures as defined by Colorado law is collected, the proposed amendment is placed on the ballot and requires approval by a majority of registered voters.

In both pathways, no amendment takes effect unless approved by a majority of registered voters at a community election. (C.R.S. Section 31-2-210; Colorado Constitution, Article XX)

What This Means in Practice

Charter change requires both initiation and voter approval. The General Assembly or a petition process can place an amendment on the ballot, but final authority rests with the electorate.

Because of this structure, any rule, threshold, or governance design written into the charter is relatively difficult to change once adopted. Modifying an adopted provision requires repeating the full process of initiation, ballot placement, and voter approval.

This constraint applies to all governance options and is the reason unresolved design questions in Section 4 represent binding constraints rather than abstract preferences.

Procedural Reforms vs Charter Amendments

Not all governance changes require a charter amendment.

Procedural reforms, such as meeting rules, agenda structure, participation formats, and comment procedures, can generally be adopted by GA ordinance or resolution under existing authority. These changes do not require a community ballot and can be revised more easily if needed.

GA 2.0 explicitly distinguishes between:

- **Structural reforms**, which require charter amendment
- **Procedural reforms**, which can be implemented by ordinance or resolution

This distinction applies regardless of which governance option is selected. Even under the current GA structure, procedural improvements may be adopted without a ballot.

Where to Go from Here

The [Governance Options Primer](#) for Community Deliberations contains the committee's summary of the four governance options, including side-by-side comparisons and structured scenarios for discussion. It is intended as the entry point for community deliberation.

The Guide to Governance Options, the document you are currently reading, contains the full deliberative record and is structured for detailed reference once discussion is underway.

Community survey results, including headline findings and open-ended responses, are presented in the Community Survey section that follows.

Community Survey

About the Survey

The Ophir Charter Review Committee distributed a community survey in November 2025 to assess resident experience with the current General Assembly form of government and openness to considering changes. The survey was distributed by email through the Town Manager, on the town’s Facebook page, by text message, and by posted notice in the trash room. It remained open through late November 2025 and received 63 responses in its final closed dataset.

The survey did not ask respondents to evaluate any specific alternative governance option. It assessed experience with and attitudes toward the current GA system only. Survey findings are cited throughout the Extended Model Notes as deliberative context, not as evidence for or against any particular option.

A Note on What This Survey Does and Does Not Show

The survey measured satisfaction with the current system and openness to change. It did not ask residents to choose among governance options, evaluate any specific reform, or indicate which problems they most want addressed. Those questions are for the community deliberation this document is intended to support. The committee treated the survey findings as context for its work, not as a mandate for any specific direction.

Survey Results (Nov 2025)

HEADLINE FINDINGS

- **65%** of respondents reported satisfaction or strong satisfaction with the current GA system; 28% reported dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction.
- **60%** expressed openness or neutrality toward considering changes to the governance structure; 40% preferred the current system with only minor adjustments or wanted no change at all.
- **66%** of respondents attend GA meetings at least three times per year, meaning the survey skews toward regular participants. The perspectives of less-frequent attendees are present but represent a minority of responses.
- The open-ended responses revealed a community that values direct democracy deeply while recognizing specific operational frustrations, particularly **meeting inefficiency** and **attendance-dependent representation**. Full treatment is in Part 1, Section 3 of this document.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1.) Respondent verification (n=63)

Attested: Ophir resident, registered to vote, completing survey once	59
Part-time resident, votes in California	1
Landowner and future Ophir resident	1
Planning to move back after home construction (winter 2026)	1
Not yet registered to vote in Ophir, intends to register	1

All 63 responses are included in the figures that follow. Excluding the four non-standard responses does not materially change any finding.

2.) How often do you generally attend GA meetings? (n=62)

6-11 times a year	24	39%
3-5 times a year	17	27%
1-2 times a year	13	21%
Never or not in the past year	7	11%
Unsure	1	2%

3.) How familiar are you with Ophir's GA form of government? (n=61)

Very familiar	51	84%
Somewhat familiar	10	16%

4.) Overall, how satisfied are you with Ophir's current GA form of government? (n=61)

Very satisfied	10	16%
Satisfied	30	49%
Neutral or no opinion	3	5%
Dissatisfied	13	21%
Very dissatisfied	4	7%
Unsure or need more information	1	2%

Combined satisfied or very satisfied: 40 of 61 (65%). Combined dissatisfied or very dissatisfied: 17 of 61 (28%).

5.) If you attend rarely or never, what are the main reasons? (Select all that apply; 56 respondents answered)

Schedule conflicts (work, family, etc.)	21
Prefer to stay informed without attending	18
Don't feel my input would make a difference	8
Meeting time or day doesn't work for me	4
Travel or seasonal residency	1
I do attend regularly (skipped this question)	19

Question 5 was multi-select. Counts reflect respondents who selected each option, not percentages of total responses. The "I do attend regularly" row is included for completeness; those 19 respondents skipped the substantive options.

6.) How open are you to considering changes to Ophir's governance structure? (n=62)

Very open: significant changes are needed	13	21%
Somewhat open: would consider changes if specific problems addressed	12	19%
Neutral: willing to hear options	12	19%
Somewhat resistant: prefer current system with minor adjustments	18	29%
Very resistant: want to keep the current system as is	7	11%

Combined open or neutral (top three rows): 37 of 62 (60%). Combined resistant (bottom two rows): 25 of 62 (40%).

Question 5 (write-in): Additional reasons for not attending

12 respondents added write-in comments.

[03] Frustrated with previous efforts to be involved in GA when I did attend more regularly.

[09] I am not allowed to vote.

[20] Meetings are too long and often controversial. I believe all voting should be by private ballot.

[25] They drag on

[26] My spouse attends on Zoom and I just listen in, but don't participate because I'm usually busy with family

[34] Long standing cultural "group think" mentality within general "regular" attending participants make meetings difficult to stomach.

[37] Don't feel I have enough information to participate effectively

[41] They are too long and not well managed. The same people talk in circles.

[43] Meetings can be painful with people repeating themselves over and over, or repeating points made by others over and over. The GA is really just whoever shows up that particular night, so there are often uninformed people, which requires that things get explained to them, even though there might have been ad nauseum discussion about that same thing at the previous GA.

[44] Prior negative experience in a town volunteer role.

[57] Last too long, too late

[62] Have better things in my consciousness than government.

7.) What are the greatest strengths of the current GA system?

56 of 63 respondents answered this question.

[01] Those who want to participate in government can do so quite easily.

[02] None

[04] I honestly believe allowing all residents of this very small community a voice is incredible. I for one have seen times in the past where the entire staff wants something and it goes against what the majority of residences think. To be able to keep staff in check is a very important part of a functioning government. While i believe on a larger scale staff aligns very well with the desires and direction of the community there are times that when is comes to detailed items or projects this is not the case

[05] It gives everyone a vote. I have no faith that a town council style of government will be better for Ophir. There is no single person in this town whom I would trust to make consistently good decisions for Ophir.

[07] If I want my voice heard, I know it will be.

[08] I think the greatest strength of the GA is our direct democracy. It's powerful and rare that everyone has both a voice and a vote, and that every vote truly counts. It allows us to stay directly involved in shaping how our community is run, and I really value hearing and understanding my neighbors' thoughts and concerns. We're a strong, lucky, and connected community because of it.

[09] Relative simplicity

[10] It worked when Ophir was originally formed and there were 20 or fewer citizens.

[11] Not much

[12] Simplicity

[13] Very representative, everyone has a direct voice.

[14] I like the concept bc it is such a unique form of govt where my voice and vote directly affect decisions

[15] Pure democracy. Equal input for everyone that attends the meeting.

[16] Despite its perceived inefficiencies, it's a true democracy where all who chose to participate have equal say and vote.

The current system encourages greater participation than other examples of Govt. allowing all residents to have a voice should they want to be heard.

Though participation can be argued as low, if 15 residents attend a meeting, that's 10% of our community. I argue that few communities can boast that high a % of participation. Some agenda issues through the years have pushed that participation to 30+% of residents demonstrations strong community passion and buy in.

[17] everyone has a voice, each vote truly counts

[19] every voice matters if you show up to participate and vote

[20] Things move slowly and this gives time for everyone concerned to make their voice heard. More people give options or new ideas, or clarify what exactly the problem is, and how to fix it affectively with support from most of Ophir residents.

[21] allows everyone in the community the opportunity to meet, engage and make decisions that are in the best interest of the community at large

[22] Purest form of democracy - everyone gets a say and everyone gets a vote. We discuss important issues as a community and we all get to hear each others' thoughts.

[23] We all get to vote! Direct democracy

[24] Allows all residents the choice to participate in the decision making process

[25] Ability to realize action on issues brought to GA by community members, all can provide input

[26] Every single person has a voice every single time if they choose.

[27] Everyone has a voice. We get great turn out and good representation when there are issues of importance.

[28] Everyone has a voice and vote in community decisions

[29] It slows down growth and keeps unnecessary personal agenda projects in control of the residents as opposed to a few elected officials.

[30] More opinions

[31] If someone has a agenda item that is important to them, they can show up and have direct input and representation.

[32] Everyone has a voice in every issue (if they want to). It's truly direct democracy.

[33] Direct input if you can make the meeting

[34] All residents having a vote! A vote on monthly agenda items to ordinances. This keeps any "regular participants" or "elected officials" from pushing their agendas. The General Assembly ultimately has the vote. True form of Democracy!

[36] Minimizing a few people who have lots of time to dictate our government.

[37] That everyone in the Ophir Community has a vote that impacts our town directly.

[38] The GA format affords every resident direct involvement in governance through both deliberation and voting, creating strong accountability. The structure naturally promotes fiscal discipline and environmental stewardship because residents directly vote on what's necessary and internalize those decisions. It also compels residents to participate directly and become involved on a regular basis promoting a more constant connection with self-governance.

The distributed nature of GA decision-making provides natural protection against outside interests. Ophir will inevitably face significant development pressure. The GA structure makes it much harder for outside interests to influence outcomes because they would need to convince dozens of engaged residents rather than a small number of elected officials. This distributed power structure helps preserve the minimal government and development restraint that most residents value and protects our unique environment.

[39] everyone has equal opportunity to participate in decision-making, committees, etc.

[40] Everyone has an EQUAL voice/vote.

[41] Each person has a vote - it feels democratic.

[42] Great that anyone has the opportunity to bring ideas, issues and concerns to the GA to discuss and/or to enact change or adopt new policies.

[43] It's nice to see neighbors

[44] It's good to see neighbors.

[45] Everyone registered can vote to decide what the town does

[46] When a person feels strongly about an issue they can affect change or at least have their voice heard easily.

[48] participatory democratic governance

[49] Community input, voices are crucial

[50] "Want to" from community members. They want to be involved. Volunteer spirit.

[52] Anyone being able to participate/vote directly on any issue

[53] I deeply believe in true democracy and this is one of the greatest things about Ophir.

[54] It promotes the highest level of voter participation

[55] The ability to be directly involved in governance that directly impacts me.

[56] It is community minded and everyone has a chance to speak

[57] Everyone gets a say.

[58] People who want to participate are able to

[59] Purest form of democracy. It has rarely erred in its decisions.

[60] When a major issue comes up, people show up and vote. It's not efficient. It's democratic.

[62] a limitation as to what "elected" individuals are able to do without a GA vote. Note how corrupt our local town of Telluride, town of Mountain Village and San Miguel County governments have all proven to be with their "elected" individuals and "town council" forms of government.

[63] nothing

8.) What are the greatest weaknesses of the current GA system?

55 of 63 respondents answered this question.

[01] Uninformed GA members delay decision making and often a majority of the meeting is spent trying to explain details of the meeting packet that they should have read prior to attending the meeting.

[02] We are effectively without governance except when the GA is constituted. The format of the GA disenfranchises many voters with obligations that preclude attendance and amplifies a small number of voices. It makes the GA singularly ineffectual.

[03] It's driven by a small group of the most opinionated personalities instead of allowing people to reach consensus. People typically just show up when they have an opinion about an agenda item already and if they can get 5 or 6 people to come to the meeting they can decide on the future of the town.

[04] The inefficiency can be seen as both a weakness and a strength as it tends to slow the process and allow things to be given the time needed to discuss items and has out the details

[05] People being uninformed and voting. There are procedural changes that can help with this, though.

[07] People asking questions that have been answered repeatedly, thus making the meetings last for hours.

[08] I think the greatest weakness in the GA system is that, during contentious issues or votes, the room can sometimes be filled with participants who don't regularly attend or fully understand the topic, and whose emotional responses rather than informed perspectives can shift the outcome at the last moment. That said, the process still works as intended—everyone has the right to show up, have an opinion, and cast their vote.

[09] Ineffective public discourse/debate

[10] The Ophir GA form of government excludes voting rights and representation if one is unwilling or unable to attend meetings and so excludes over 80 percent of the electorate. Meetings make poor use of participants time and are run inefficiently. Decisions are made by a self-appointed small group of attendees who lack expertise in topics under discussion. Voting and decision making is driven by self interests rather than what is for the greater good of the community. The GA government only exists during the two hours that meetings are taking place each month leaving the rest of the month without a functioning governing body or representation for community members.

[11] A few regular attendees make the decisions.

[12] Simplicity

[13] Too many people come to the meeting completely uninformed on the topic. Voting by Zom with your screen off is completely off base.

[14] i suppose if one doesn't go to meetings regularly then their vote /voice is not heard

[15] When GA members flood a meeting with supporters to pass a bill they favor..

[16] *Open ballots/voting potentially violates personal discretion and privacy, and potentially allows for votes to be swayed by the pure pressure of how friends and neighbors may vote.

*No time & response limits on agenda discussions and rebuttals. This potentially allows for some personalities to take more time than necessary to communicate repetitive points, suppressing others from making their's, for concern of prolonging discussions or bring talked over.

[17] lack of participation

[19] government is slow, but so is every form of government

[20] I would like for Robert's rule of order be generally followed. It is not a popular position to take, and it's not something that most people want to enforce. Still, I believe that many residents don't come to meetings because they take too long.

[21] it becomes circular and inefficient at times... meetings can drag on with a strange combination of not enough community members engaging overall, along with a few too many people who are trying to catch up on the topic at hand despite previous discussions, and then simply talk too much, too many times.

[22] Long GA meetings; circular discussions; often times lack of clarity in written ordinances and motions made. Lack of clarity presented on certain issues, for example, in the solar discussions.

[23] Bureaucracy

[24] GA system relies on voluntary inconsistent participation

[25] Inefficient, slow, redundant, less likely to have consistency (changes dramatically based on meeting attendance)

[26] Not enough people take advantage of their right to participate

[27] People are often not fully informed when voting.

[28] Lack of participation from many in the community. Important and time sensitive decisions can be delayed while masses are informed in previous about things discussed at previous meetings

[30] People who come in and don't know what they're talking about who can sway votes without being educated

[31] Efficiency of the system

[32] It can seem like a slow process. And such a relatively small number of residents involve themselves, but that won't necessarily change with a new form of government.

[33] Many people can not make the meetings

[34] The facilitation of many indoctrinated agendas by "philanthropy" efforts to heavily influence those "regular" participants. Allowing a constant platform for liberal ideology and philanthropy to influence those in attendance. The fostering of those active participants and town staff to remain in positions of control and employment while performing below expectations and not allowing other capable residents any opportunities to perform better.

[36] Can feel inefficient at times and certain people do slow the process.

[37] Every month a topic has to be discussed at length because new people attend the meeting and don't know what's going on. And this wastes so much time. People don't read the packet and do not show up to the GA assembly educated about the topics.

[38] The composition and attendance at GA meetings varies significantly month-to-month, which creates inconsistent decision-making and lack of institutional continuity.

Attendance fluctuations can be strategically manipulated - residents may mobilize neighbors around issues affecting them personally, which can skew representation away from broader community priorities.

Managing complex legal matters and executive sessions is particularly difficult with rotating participation. Members who didn't attend a prior executive session need to be "read in," which wastes time and can compromise the effectiveness of confidential discussions.

The Town lacks ongoing decision-making authority between monthly GA meetings. All policy decisions - even routine or time-sensitive ones - must wait for the monthly GA, creating operational delays and forcing minor administrative matters to consume meeting time that could be spent on substantive community issues. This also places excessive burden on the Town Manager to track and implement directives without ongoing governance support between meetings.

[39] conversations go round & round, with some people speaking often & long. Facts need to be revisited frequently (more than just briefly at the start of a meeting), statements get duplicated. If someone hasn't been attending (or even if they have), and that person hasn't done homework prior to the meeting or is regularly confused, it feels like we start all over again at the next meeting. Meetings can get packed by a minority opposition, shutting down progress on a project that has seen general support for months.

[40] Sometimes it may take longer to accomplish things. Sometimes this can be a good or bad thing.

[41] It takes way too much time and town money to work through changes.

[42] It can often times feel overwhelming and discussions can be long, tedious, and confusing. And right now in this current season of my life as the parent of a small kiddo it feels hard to choose to participate.

[43] It is not nimble. It has resulted in things getting passed that aren't necessarily in the best interest of the Town (IMHO), but passed because an interested party brought enough friends to a couple of meetings. It gives every registered voter the same voice, even if they have no idea what the issue at hand is really about. Yes, this is pure democracy, but it has demonstrated itself to have an ill-informed electorate.

[44] Too many to count. Water lines that needed replacement decades ago...

[46] Meetings can get cumbersome with many opinions and citizens getting easily sidetracked while trying to make points.

[48] manipulation in voting blocks

[49] Attendance is weak

[50] Zoom voting should be discontinued. Community members should be present to vote. Also, the screen during the meeting should be black when not in use. It is large and has become omnipresent a focus for GA members in Town Hall. GA members often end up staring at it versus making eye contact with the persons in front of them.

[52] Anyone being able to participate/vote directly on any issue

[53] Lot's of different opinions makes it so we spend lots of time getting nothing done.

[54] It gives a disproportionate impact/influence to to the loudest voices

[55] Just a Few people can have huge impact that affects every resident.

[56] We stay on one topic for much too long at the expense of other essential issues like water. While I love that everyone has a chance to speak, the same questions will be asked or discussed over and over and over. It is unclear how certain items become so important without the entire town's knowledge. Only a handful of people can try to push through an issue, which creates tension in the town.

[57] everyone gets a say, to often a group can push through an item because they overpower non attendees (their own fault). Not always in the best interest of Ophir the town.

[58] inconsistent attendance

[59] Bringing the GA up to speed on the issues

[60] A lot of effort may go into a project by town staff or volunteers and then get shut down: inefficiency.

[62] The Egos and agendas of the most active participants, as well as the general "group think" aspect off this culture

[63] The old guard runs things and doesn't want to give any of their fiefdom away

Question 9: Any other thoughts on Ophir's form of government?

43 of 63 respondents answered this question.

[01] GA members should be limited to one comment per agenda item (staff members should have ability to present/answer questions and that not count towards their one comment)

[03] The GA and the way we vote leads to very personal and divisive politics over the most mundane topics. The cost/benefit of showing up and voting means that typically only the most opinionated people, or people with something to win or loose show up and vote. It doesn't seem like it is reflective of the will of the voters in general.

We seem to jump from around from hot issues and there is little long term thinking or executive function.

[05] I'm totally against reforming the government in ophir at this time. Such a waste of everyone's time that could be better spent on any of the numerous other issues facing Ophir.

[07] It's novel, and it's a delight.

[08] I think our GA works well; we need to act like the strong, capable community we are—focused, confident, and proactive. Instead of reacting to distractions, let's stay aligned on the big things: planning for the future, researching water system upgrades, securing grants, and strengthening our infrastructure and emergency readiness so we can dream big and thrive.

[10] A Town Council-Mayor-Manager is considered "best practice" for small town governments by the Colorado Municipal League. The Town Hall or GA form of government has fallen out of favor throughout the US and has been uniformly replaced with a representative democracy with optional public participation in council meetings. The voting electorate comprises about 150 eligible voters in Ophir while the GA includes only 10-25 people, depending on the month. The GA is not equivalent to the tax paying electorate.

[11] I like the changes that were being proposed.

[12] Happy to hear about alternative options

[13] Remove voting from the zoom platform. Attending by zoom is fine but you can only vote in person. Also if joining by zoom you are treated as public, not GA, thus limited comment allowance. 1 comment and 3 minutes max. Too many rambling drunks.

[15] The GA IS unique for a unique town

[16] Ophir's limited and minimally transitive population affords few regularly active participants over time. A select-man or council arrangement could further limit participation down the line, once all residents willing to serve have done so, limiting the pool of future candidates without an undesired population influx or turnover.

[17] we are truly unique. Although sometimes frustrating every voice truly counts. It is difficult to keep current town positions filled and I can't imagine council seats would be much easier.

[20] I think any improvements should be thoroughly discussed by most residents. Tweaking a few things to make meetings shorter and more organized would be good, rather than throwing the whole GA idea out the window and giving a lot of power to a few people. Most people are used to being able to attend meetings and voice concerns. The idea of a council is such a stretch from the GA format, that it's too big a change for many Ophirians.

[21] I think one of the reasons Ophir is still so awesome is because of how it has governed itself over time. I don't think we should change the system significantly; we need to preserve our individual voices and votes, and do our best to act in consensus. That said, there is clearly room for improvement in how to better educate and engage community members, and how to more efficiently make certain decisions and take actions.

[22] I'm interested in [a committee member's] hybrid GA idea. Also, what happened to the mandated quarterly mayor/town manager report? I think it would be helpful if that came back. "Here's what's happening at town hall with a list and status of things that staff is working on. It was very informative to the people who read it, and kept people updated.

[23] I think with such a small community, a true town council would not work in my favor. I have strong beliefs on how Ophir should progress and I fear that the only people that would be able to be part of a town council would not necessarily be like minded. I understand the need to look at this issue and I am excited to hear options that are more sustainable for a small community such as ours.

[24] Participation should be incentivised or someway mandatory

[26] My biggest concern is that only those who are wealthy enough to not have to have full-time jobs will end up running for government, and we will be governed by people who don't represent all socioeconomic levels of our community

Perhaps we should try and just do anonymous voting I feel like a lot of people who are driving. This are too scared to speak up in front of their neighbors because they don't want to be judged and if we would just have a closed anonymous vote their neighbors wouldn't know how they stand on different topics

[27] I think we could use some improvements, like limiting the number of times the same person can speak at meetings.

[28] I appreciate all the community members who have been involved. Let's brainstorm ways encourage people to join committees and be involved.

[30] I do think a representative form of government is better

[32] I think about how no one (including myself) wanted to step up and be mayor when [the prior mayor] was ready to step down. So I wonder how many people would step up to be on something like a town council here. Seems like the GA form of government isn't the problem, it's Ophirians lack of involvement (or care?).

[34] I believe our current form of government has been and will continue to be the best form of government for the town of Ophir of the past and into the future. It's greatest weaknesses are at times it's greatest strengths. If not for the stubbornness of a "General Assembly" possibly our current situation would be much different. It won't always be the best or the most efficient and that in itself has helped to keep Ophir, Ophir. Please don't waste anymore time, money and energy attempting to change a system that isn't broken. It will ultimately come down to two readings and the "Ophir Culture" will be in full presence to vote it down. What a waste of time and effort it will have been and again how disappointed those driving this agenda will be with "their" current form of government. Possibly Ophir isn't the place for them?

[38] I believe Ophir's form of government ought to consider the big picture of the long term evolution in demographics of both the Town of Ophir and the Telluride region as a whole.

[39] its a really difficult form of government in which to make progress in a timely manner

[40] It's not perfect, but nothing is. I do not think a council or representative govt would work or be good for our town.

[41] Meeting management style is my largest challenge with being more involved in Ophir. Things take more time than I have able to share.

[42] I would like to express my gratitude for the small few that do show up monthly and those that volunteer to be on committees. .

[43] - In Ophir, virtually all direction and all actions taken to achieve any goal can only come from the GA. - The GA exists only between the opening and closing gavels, 2-4 hours, once a month. This does not enable the Town to be nimble and rather drags out decision making over at least a month, if not months. - The 7-voter quorum we still

use in 2025 was adopted in 1979, when there were just a handful of residents. When the same 7 people generally show up to GA meetings and make decisions for the rest of the Town, that sure feels like a Town Council. This makes it a governing body that is both easily manipulated for personal gain and also lacking of one important aspect of governance, a continuity of institutional knowledge. The direction agreed upon in one GA could easily be forgotten, neglected or rejected the following month, merely by having one or two different voters in attendance, a strategy that is often used to achieve personal ends. - Without a well-informed decision-making body, uninformed GA members often make emotion-based (my gut says...) decisions. The GA in general often engages in emotion-based debate over issues, rather than having dispassionate debate about the factual merits of a proposed motion.

[44] People who show up only to vote and lack the context of what they're voting on, is frustrating.

[45] The GA is one of the things that really attracted me to living here

[46] I think the GA is an appropriate form of government for a residential community of our size.

[49] Provides the town government with ideas and solutions in public forum. Discussion and debate are necessary for decision making.

[50] It is the best form of government except for all others. Whose government is working well right now? What is that example?

[52] Sometimes it seems like the GA moves too slowly, but I have come to see that as a good thing (most of the time).

[53] Even with it's issues, I'm proud we have the greatest form of governance I've ever been a part of.

[54] I appreciate the equality of the GA. Can we consider changes that will distribute voice and opinion equally (limiting voter input during discussion, private vote, required voter education to better understand our legislative process, required voter eligibility verification - to name a few ideas)

[55] It is unique.

[56] If there is an issue that affects the entire town, I think there needs to be notice in PO boxes, as they do in Telluride. Thank you so much to [the committee] and everyone for working so hard on this!

[57] Inability to enforce basic town rules

[58] Seems to provide citizens ability to Participate when they want

[60] I do love direct vote, a show of hands. I have concerns about government by representation becoming a group of people with free time who do not necessarily share community values running the town. I feel like this is what has happened on the national level and I hear people saying, "How did we let this happen?" I don't want that to happen here. I know it isn't practical, but with the current system, everybody has an equal vote all the time, so if they care enough, they'll show up and vote. It might be better if we got updates about decisions as they are evolving, surveys like this, so the community could weigh in more and Town government could gauge what the GA will elect for or against.

[62] It's not broken! Let's not fix something that isn't broken. [a committee member], you wouldn't have moved here if this place was broken. Don't try to fix it! Leave it be, Please!!