Brown: Recall election boils down to defense of Town Charter

By BOB HOLMES

READING - To Bill Brown, Reading's Sept. 1 recall election isn't about any one individual. It's not about petitions, lawn signs, signature challenges, or town politics. In many ways it's not even about Select Board member Vanessa Alvarado, the subject of the recall.

No, it's all about the Reading Home Rule Charter. It's a document you've never read and probably know little about. A story about the charter risks putting you to sleep. But Brown asks for a minute of your time to understand why it's so important. And why Alvarado must go.

The Reading Home Rule Charter is a 35-page document that's not all that easy to find on the town's website. A mosquito spray notice is easy to find. The document that has governed Reading since 1986, not so much.

But Brown is the unofficial guardian of the charter. Woe to anyone in town government who breaks any of the rules it contains. Which leads him to Alvarado. According to Brown, there have been two issues where the charter was violated by Alvarado. The first was the effort by Alvarado and fellow board member Andy Friedmann to form an Ad Hoc Committee with non-residents in response to the appearance of racial and anti-Semitic symbols in town two years ago.

"The preamble to the charter says, we the people of Reading. It doesn't say, we the people of Reading and people from other towns," said Brown, the longest serving town meeting member at 53 years and counting.

In forming the Ad Hoc Committee, the Select Board targeted two non-residents, a violation of section 4.14 of the Home Rule Charter. "The Ad Hoc Committee did not take an oath of office as required or notify the Town Clerk as required," added Brown.

Recall on page A2