

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1213, relative to the number, selection, and terms of town highway agents and relative to the appointment of an expert highway agent.

Hearing Date: April 21, 2026

Time Opened: 10:50 a.m.

Time Closed: 11:00 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill modifies the methods for determining the number of town highway agents, their method of selection, and the length of their terms. This bill further allows a town to rescind authorization for the appointment of an expert highway agent and provides additional requirements to govern the appointment and authorization processes.

Sponsors:

Rep. Wherry

Rep. Pauer

Rep. Aures

Rep. Sellers

Rep. Harvey-Bolia

Rep. R. Brown

Rep. Tom Mannion

Who supports the bill: Rep. Robert Wherry, Rep. Diane Pauer, Rep. Juliet Harvey-Bolia, Eric Pauer

Who opposes the bill: William Copeland Jr, Joyce Weston, Valerie Scarborough, Sarah Thorne, Judith Saum, Sally Widerstrom, Andrea Powers, Richard Hunnewell, Anne Hunnewell, Julie Retelle, Gary McCool, Brodie Deshaies

Who is neutral on the bill: None

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Robert Wherry, Hillsborough-District 13

- This addresses 5 variables when dealing with road agents and expert road agents (those with a contract) and provides clarity.
 - Election
 - Contract for expert agents
 - Appointment

- Number of highway agents
- Duration of the term when it is an elected position

Senator Lang asked what we are trying to solve.

Rep. Wherry noted that the laws governing highway agents and related matters are unclear.

Senator Lang asked why we are setting a 1-year term for a highway agent and added that it seems to him that it would be difficult to maintain a consistent road plan if people were only in the position for 1 year.

Mr. Wherry said he doesn't think it is restricted to only 1 year.

Senator Lang said that, as written, it will default to 1 year unless the town decides to change the arrangement.

Rep. Wherry said he doesn't think it is restricted to 1 year and added that if the committee thinks it needs to change, he would be okay with that.

Senator Rochefort said that, given the exception for this time of year, he thinks the road crews and road agents do a good job maintaining the roads, and asked how our roads will be improved if we pass this bill.

Rep. Wherry said he thinks this gives municipalities flexibility as towns expand and roads are added.

Senator Rochefort said that in his town, they just hire more part-time workers during tough years like this one, and that he is struggling with the need for this bill.

Rep. Wherry said Senator Rochefort has a good question, and the bill is just a matter of implementing the law more clearly.

Eric Pauer, Brookline

- In favor of this bill.
- This bill aims to clarify the role of the "expert agent," as there is confusion among several towns about what it entails.
- This is the last remnant of the 1970s, when how you voted for road agents depended on how big your town was.
- Streamlines the process because the current law is confusing.