

SHAPE YOUR
CAPE
20 SUMMIT 19



Mock Town Meeting

Session Overview, Town Meeting 101, and Rules of Decorum

SESSION AGENDA

- 1:45 PM** ----- Town Meeting 101 and Rules of Decorum
- 1:55 PM** ----- Call to Order – Mock Town Meeting Article 1
- 2:10 PM** ----- Article 2
- 2:25 PM** ----- Mock Town Meeting adjourned
Panel Discussion Begins
- 2:40 PM** ----- Wrap-up and End of Session

WHY TOWN MEETING?

- Town Meeting is the purest form of democratic governance
- Dates back over 300 years
- Other local governments use different forms (ex. Barnstable's Town Council; Council-Manager; Mayor-Council)
- Through voters, Town Meeting
 - 1) sets salaries for elected officials,
 - 2) appropriates money to run the town,
 - 3) votes on local statutes (bylaws)
- Role of the citizen is paramount – Town Meeting does not work without participation



TOWN MEETING 101

BASIC DEFINITIONS

- **TOWN MEETING:** “A gathering of a town’s eligible voters” as in the event itself. Can also refer to the entity “Town Meeting.” A form of direct democratic rule
- **WARRANT:** Outlines the time, place, and agenda for the Town Meeting
- **ARTICLES:** Line items on the warrant
- **MOTIONS:** Action taken by a member of town meeting in order for discussion and action to be taken on a warrant article
- **ANNUAL VS. SPECIAL:** Each town must hold one annual meeting. Any additional meetings are referred to as “Special Town Meetings”

Information adapted from Falmouth Town Meeting Orientation (D. Viera) and *Citizen’s Guide to Town Meetings* (Secretary of the Commonwealth)

TOWN MEETING 101

BASIC DEFINITIONS – KEY PEOPLE

- **SELECTMAN/WOMAN:** The town's executive officers, elected by the town's voters.
- **BOARD OF SELECTMEN:** Also referred to as a Select Board. A governing body consisting of 3-5 selectmen/women. Often picks and supervises the top staff position of Town Administrator or Town Manager.
- **MODERATOR:** The individual who "runs" the Town Meeting. Moderators declare the outcome of all voice votes and hold voters/representatives to procedural rules. They are usually elected to their role for a term of 1-3 years.
- **TOWN COUNSEL:** A lawyer who works for the town, either as an employee or as a contractor (the town is a client).
- **TOWN CLERK:** An elected or appointed official who records all votes and takes minutes at Town Meeting.
- **FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Reviews the budget prior to an Annual Town Meeting and serves in an advisory role, making recommendations.

TOWN MEETING 101

OTHER DETAILS TO NOTE

- Each town has a different way of running Town Meeting (procedures)
- Procedures are sometimes written down (bylaws, charter) and sometimes not (precedent)
- **Two basic forms of Town Meeting exist:**
 - Representative – (a.k.a. Limited) Voters may vote for representatives to attend, conduct business, and vote at Town Meeting
 - Open – All of the towns voters may vote on all matters at Town Meeting
 - Which type of meeting depends on 1) population size – 6,000 or fewer may only have open Town Meeting; and 2) Voter discretion – towns with 6,000 or greater population may choose either

TOWN MEETING 101

OTHER DETAILS TO NOTE

- **Voters may place articles on the warrant**
 - Registered voters of the town must sign a written request to insert an article
 - By State statute, Annual Town Meetings require 10 signatures for a warrant article; Special Town Meetings require 100
 - Must be completed *before* the warrant is “closed” by the Board of Selectmen
- **Any registered voter may speak**
 - For representative Town Meetings, some conditions may apply
- **Ways to vote:**
 - Voice vote (yea or nay)
 - Show of hands
 - Standing/rising vote
 - Secret ballot
 - Electronic devices



TOWN MEETING RULES

- **If you wish to speak**, stand up and wait for the moderator to acknowledge you. When the moderator acknowledges you, state your name and your address.
- **Speak about the topic** being discussed. Don't speak about a previous topic (unless there is a motion to rescind or reconsider).
- **Make your comments to the moderator**, not to the Town Meeting or individual Town Meeting Members.
- **You may attack a speaker's argument**, but not the speaker. Do not directly debate or ask questions of a previous speaker.
- For the purposes of this Mock Town Meeting, you may choose to speak, or leave this to our **Mock Interest Groups***

*See the Mock Warrant Guide handout for more information

MOCK WARRANT ARTICLES

ARTICLE 1. AMEND GENERAL BYLAW TO ALLOW FOR CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

To see if the Town will amend the language in the General Bylaw to require cluster development in open space and provide increased density for economic development and housing opportunities.

ARTICLE 2. FUND UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN FOR 4 AND 5 YEAR OLDS

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$150,000 to fund Universal Prekindergarten for 4- and 5-year olds for Town residents and Town employees.

For a detailed breakdown of typical warrant and article structure, please see the session handout, "Anatomy of a Warrant Article"

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Call to Order
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