



ARTICLE 26. Town Meeting Study Committee

Ms. Reiss moves:

That the Town take affirmative action on Article
26 as printed in the Warrant.

Town Meeting: Part of Tripartite System of Government

- Executive:** Enforces laws, oversees expenditures, acts as head of state
- Legislative:** Enacts laws, appropriates funds, buys and sells town real estate
- Adjudicative:** Resolves cases and controversies

Checks and Balances

Separation of Powers

ARTICLE 26: Town Meeting Study Comm

Executive

Select Board

- Committees
- Boards

Town Manager

- Committees
- Boards

CPS Committee

Superintendent

Legislative

Town Meeting

Moderator

Finance Committee

Adjudicatory

Statutory Commissions

Statutory Boards

Town Meeting is a deliberative body

Deliberation:

Discussion and consideration by a group of persons (such as a jury or legislature) of the reasons for and against a measure.

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Massachusetts Local Legislature Options (all deliberative)

- **Open Town Meeting:** Every registered voter entitled to attend, speak, offer amendments, and vote; space must be made for all.
- **Representative Town Meeting:** Registered voters may attend, space permitting; only elected representatives may speak, offer amendments, and vote.
- **Town Council:** Registered voters may attend, space permitting; only elected council members may speak, offer amendments, and vote.
- **City Council:** Registered voters may attend, space permitting; only elected council members may speak, offer amendments, and vote.

Concord Town Meeting: Some History

- Open town meeting since colonial times
- 1956 Town Charter reaffirmed open town meeting form of government
- 1996 Town Meeting Study Committee reaffirmed open town meeting form of government, but recommended changes
- 2014 Town Governance Study Committee reaffirmed open town meeting form of government and suggested further study

1996: Process Recommendations

- Continue and expand Consent Calendar use✓
- Pre-schedule high interest articles✓
- Pro & Con microphones✓
- Publicize extra time opportunity for article opponents✓
- Designate Town Meeting Resource Person✓
- Boards and Committees answer questions from floor✓
- Begin meeting sessions at 7:00 pm✓
- No new business after 10:00 pm✓
- Streamline secret ballot option✓

1996: Other Meeting Recommendations

- Hold two town meetings per year
 - Spring: Budget articles
 - Fall: Bylaws and other articles
- Convene town meeting on a Sunday✓
- Provide childcare✓
- Provide transportation for senior citizens✓

1996: General Gov't Recommendations

- Encourage citizen participation in board and committee processes
- Develop communications plan✓
 - Broadcast Select Board meetings on TV✓ and radio
 - Publish weekly community calendar✓
 - Produce Town Meeting Procedures video✓ and, annually, warrant articles preview video
 - Make public documents available on website✓
 - Appoint Media Specialist✓
- Review Town Meeting and Election procedures periodically

1996: Recommendations for Further Study

- Limited referendum option
- Limited proxy voting

Additional Town Meeting Modifications Made on Trial Basis

- Electronic voting demonstration(2019 Annual Town Meeting)
- Email submission of questions/comments from voters watching Town Meeting at home
- Electronic access to FinCom Report at Town Meeting via QR Code

2024 Proposed Study Topics

- Scheduling
- Communication and education
- Format and location of pre-meeting town meetings
- Management of warrant articles
- Voting methods and procedures, including electronic voting
- Accommodation of persons with disabilities
- Remote participation
- Options for referenda on town meeting votes
- Town meeting procedures employed by other communities
- Any additional areas the Committee finds relevant to charge

Proposed Committee Composition

Members

- 9 members appointed by Moderator
- Select Board ex officio non-voting member
- Moderator ex officio non-voting member

Collective experience

- Knowledge of town government structure
- Familiarity with state law regulating local government
- Knowledge of communication, voting, and remote participation technology
- Familiarity with common social media platforms

Proposed Committee Tasks & Timetable

Research

- Voter participation in town meeting and elections since 2000
- 1996 Town Meeting Study and related data analysis
- 2015 Town Governance Study
- Recent studies of open town meeting completed by towns similar to Concord
- Any additional relevant background materials

Proposed Committee Tasks & Timetable, con't

Public Outreach

- Public comment at each Committee meeting
- Invite, review, compile correspondence from public
- One or more public hearings
- One or more town-wide survey(s) on town meeting issues
- Press releases on Committee activities to The Concord Bridge
- Other means as determined by the Committee

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Proposed Committee Tasks & Timetable, con't

Preliminary (Draft) Report

Presented to Select Board by November 30, 2024

Proposed Committee Tasks & Timetable, con't

Final Report to 2025 Annual Town Meeting

- Including:
 - Identification of options to make town meeting more inclusive, effective, and responsive to the needs and desires of the town
 - Evaluation of identified options for consistency with state law and Concord charter
 - Summary of requirements and estimated cost of identified options
 - Recommendations

Proposed Committee Tasks & Timetable, con't

Term:

Committee to be dissolved one month following 2025 Annual Town Meeting, or at such later time as the Moderator directs upon request from the Committee, but in no event later than the conclusion of 2026 Annual Town Meeting.



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