

Article 29: Use of Hand-Held “Clickers” at Town Meetings

Mark Martines* moves: the Town utilize electronic voting devices (“clickers”) as the primary method to tabulate and record votes at Concord Special and Annual Town Meetings beginning in 2025 or thereafter.

*Scott Gillis co-petitioner

The Primary Method of Voting

- Motion: the Town utilize clickers *as the primary method to tabulate and record votes* at Concord Special and Annual Town Meetings beginning in 2025 or thereafter.
- “the primary method” (1) addresses “what if” situations; and (2) recognizes the Town Moderator’s broad discretion under MA law and Concord’s Traditions & Procedures to resolve problems.

Clickers Save Money and Respect Voters' Time

- Clickers saved the Town of Wayland an average of nearly 3.5 hours per annual town meeting from 2012-2019.
- Clickers will shorten Concord Town Meetings, and thereby
 - ✓ reduce overtime costs of Town employees working at Town Meetings, such as Police and Fire staff;
 - ✓ reduce the costs to keep CCHS open (including staff and operational costs); and
 - ✓ importantly, respect the voters' time.

Clickers Are Easy To Use and Promote Independent Voting

- A common clicker offers voters three options: “yes”, “no” or “abstain”.
- Clickers foster independent voting and prevent a herd mentality.
 - ✓ The system does not show voters the number of votes for or against an article until voting ends.
 - ✓ During the vote, there is no way to tell which way voters are leaning or who is voting how.



Clickers Are Secure, Widely-Used and Proven

- More than 70 towns in Massachusetts with open town meetings use clickers, including our neighbors in Acton, Carlisle, Lincoln (funding approved), Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, Stow, Wayland and Westford.
- Feedback from towns published by the Massachusetts Moderator's Association and available on town websites is **“uniformly positive”**:
 - ✓ Towns cite speed, accuracy and privacy as primary benefits.
 - ✓ Importantly, there have been **no complaints about security**.

Clickers Encourage Attendance and Voting

- Voting at Town Meetings has become more contentious.
- Hand-raising at Town Meetings is suppressing voting as well as attendance.
- The Williamstown Town Clerk noted “there are people in the community that don’t feel comfortable raising their hand [to vote] one way or another” and many voters “don’t vote at all.”
- The Town of Wayland concluded “Town Meeting is more relaxed, deliberate, and methodical; decisions made in this environment are better, to the benefit of every Wayland citizen.”

Private Voting Will Help Preserve Relationships Among Neighbors and Friends During and After Town Meeting

- Unlike elected, representative legislative bodies, our Town Meeting voters consist of individuals, friends and neighbors who live in our community.
- Votes on contentious and polarizing articles impact how neighbors and friends view each other.
- “Stand Up and Be Counted” has never been a core principle of our Town Meeting, and today is outdated and contrary to efforts to harmonize voters during and after Town Meeting.

Clickers Address a Major Concern Highlighted in Concord's Last Town Meeting Study Report (1996): many voters "feel disenfranchised"

- The Report notes “**Problem**: Many citizens are reluctant to be seen to take an unpopular position at Town Meeting and are also reluctant to initiate the present procedure for secret ballot. Accordingly, they feel disenfranchised from the process.” The Report further notes many voters “are uncomfortable [voting] in front of friends, family, neighbors and possible business colleagues and supervisors.”
- For voters who relish the opportunity to speak and declare their position at Town Meeting, clickers will not restrict public debate, advocacy or their choice to announce how they plan to vote.

Clickers Are More Accurate

- More accurate voting results are important particularly when articles are critical to the Town's future.
- Take advantage of available and proven technology.

Clickers Will Be Cost-Effective

- Some towns purchase clickers while others lease them.
- Making Concord Town Meetings shorter and more efficient will save not only overhead costs but also less tangible costs including the value of the voters' time, which collective savings will far exceed the cost to purchase or lease clickers.

Implement Clickers Next Year

Our Town, including with the help of the Moderator's Town Meeting Study Committee (if Article 26 is approved), can evaluate and recommend the best technology option for clickers for Concord to buy or lease.

Town Meeting's approval of Article 29 will:

- respect the desire of many voters to keep their vote private;
- lead to faster and more accurate voting;
- respect the time of voters; and
- increase voter attendance and participation at future Town Meetings.

We hope you will vote "YES" on Article 29!

Thank You!

Article 29: Use of Hand-Held “Clickers” at Town Meetings

Mark Martines* moves: the Town utilize electronic voting devices (“clickers”) as the primary method to tabulate and record votes at Concord Special and Annual Town Meetings beginning in 2025 or thereafter.

*Scott Gillis co-petitioner