

WHAT IS THE TOWN REPORT AND WHEN IS IT ISSUED?

The Town Report is a detailed statement of receipts and expenditures for the previous financial year, as well as other information and data as required by Chapter Four of the Town By-Laws. It is issued at least seven days before the annual business meeting of the Town.

WHAT IS A TOWN MEETING WARRANT?

The warrant is a list of budget items and/or articles proposed to be acted upon by the voters at a Town Meeting.

WHAT IS AN ARTICLE?

An article is a proposal which is to be acted upon and voted by the Town Meeting, as set forth in the warrant.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ARTICLE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WARRANT?

At an Annual Town Meeting, an article must be supported by the signatures of ten registered voters and at a Special Town Meeting by one hundred signatures, unless inserted by vote of the Board of Selectmen.

WHEN IS AN ARTICLE CONSIDERED APPROVED AS AN ARTICLE TO BE INSERTED IN THE WARRANT?

The Board of Selectmen either insert an article on their own motion, or in the case of a petition, refer it to the Board of Registrars to certify the signatures. Once certified, the Board of Selectmen insert the article into the warrant.

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES AN INDIVIDUAL, GROUP OR ORGANIZATION MUST FOLLOW TO INCLUDE AN ARTICLE ON THE WARRANT?

No particular form is required, only that the necessary signatures petitioning for the article are affixed or attached to it, and of course, the article must concern a subject which the Town Meeting can lawfully consider and vote upon.

MUST THE INDIVIDUAL, GROUP, OR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT AND PRESENT THE ARTICLE AT THE TOWN MEETING?

While it is not necessary that those who petitioned for an article present it, it is desirable, since the article may be dismissed if nobody makes the motion to present said article.

HOW IS A STANDARD ARTICLE WORDED?

"To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds (after tax rate in set) or borrow (more than a year) a sum of money to be used (text of the article), or to take any other action in relation thereto. (This permits flexibility in the wording of the motion.)

Note: The actual motion begins with "... I move that the Town vote to", etc.. The "or take any other action in relation thereto" is deleted from the actual motion, when presented.

Edited from Town Meeting Guide published in 1973 by the Greater Mansfield Jaycees and Mansfield League of Women Voters

WHICH OF THE VARIOUS TOWN BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND/OR OFFICIALS MUST BE PRESENT AT THE TOWN MEETING?

All boards committees, and officials should be present at Town Meeting; however, any person's absence will not invalidate the action taken by the voters at the meeting.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE TOWN MODERATOR PERFORM?

The Town Moderator conducts the Town Meeting and makes rulings concerning questions of procedure. He declares the results of all the votes taken at the Town Meeting.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN RELATIVE TO TOWN MEETINGS?

The Board of Selectmen prepare the warrant for the Town Meeting, and are available at Town Meeting to explain and answer questions concerning the various articles inserted by them in the warrant.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TOWN MANAGER AT THE TOWN MEETING?

The Town Manager speaks upon, and is available to answer questions on the proposed annual budget, financial and other articles in the warrant.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE AT THE TOWN MEETING?

The Finance Committee reports upon and makes recommendations on the proposed annual budget and all financial articles in the warrant.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TOWN COUNSEL AT THE TOWN MEETING?

The Town Counsel is available to answer questions concerning legal matters which may arise during the course of the Town Meeting.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AT THE TOWN MEETING?

The School Committee speaks upon, and is available to answer questions on school related articles and other articles concerning subjects which are under their jurisdiction or control.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PLANNING BOARD AT TOWN MEETING?

The Planning Board makes recommendations on those articles within their area of responsibility, such as zoning amendments, and are available to answer questions which might arise concerning their planning functions.

Published by the Town of Mansfield, 2002
Additional copies may be obtained from the Town Clerk's Office, 6 Park Row, Mansfield, MA 02048
508-261-7345
or on the web at www.mansfieldma.com



Town of Mansfield Massachusetts

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO TOWN MEETING



Fisher-Richardson House, Willow Street, c. 1704

From the days of the first settlements on the coast of Massachusetts, the basic institution of the New England town was the Town Meeting, an assembly in which every citizen was entitled to participate.

At the outset, Town Meetings were held at irregular intervals, but a pattern soon established itself that has prevailed ever since. There is an annual Town Meeting for appropriating funds, electing town officials, and transacting town business.

The Town Meeting played a great part in the pre-Revolutionary controversy with the British crown, and in other historical crises. It also furnished a free arena for discussion of all local questions. In fact, few people in modern times have such an opportunity for democratic self-expression as the citizens in New England towns.

Do your part, attend and participate in Town Meeting. This guide will help you to understand how they are run.

TOWN MEETING GUIDE

Below we have listed some questions that newcomers, and some old-timers, have asked concerning the Town Meeting. The answers are, of necessity, brief. A more elaborate explanation can be found by consulting the applicable provisions of the Town Charter and By-Laws, as well as the General Laws of the Commonwealth.

WHAT IS A TOWN MEETING?

The Town Meeting is the occasion when the voters of the Town assemble to vote and act upon the various articles as contained in the warrant. The Town Moderator conducts the meeting.

HOW OFTEN DOES MANSFIELD HAVE A TOWN MEETING?

There is one Annual Town Meeting held in two sections. The first is the business meeting for voting upon the various articles contained in the warrant, and the second is for the election of town officials. Special Town Meetings may be called as needed, either by the Board of Selectmen, or upon a petition of two hundred qualified voters of the Town.

WHO MAY ATTEND TOWN MEETING?

Any person may attend a Town Meeting, but only registered voters of the Town may vote. Non voting attendees are seated in the section reserved for them, as determined by the Town Moderator.

WHAT IS A QUORUM?

A quorum at a Town Meeting consists of two hundred registered voters present in the hall, except for Town elections, but a lesser number may organize and adjourn to a future time.

WHEN IS THE TOWN MEETING CALLED TO ORDER?

When a quorum has been reached and certified, the Town Moderator calls the Town Meeting to order.

WHAT ARE THE VOTING PROCEDURES AT TOWN MEETING?

Ordinarily, the votes are taken by a show of hands, but if the vote is close, or if more than a majority vote is required, then tellers, designated by the Town Moderator for this purpose, take a standing vote. Secret votes may also be taken by ballot.

Continued on back

These are general points, proposals and motions, and have no order of precedence over another. You may introduce any of them at any time, except (a) when a motion to adjourn is pending, (b) when a motion to recess is pending, or (c) when a point of privilege is pending. This information is only a guideline, refer to the Town By-Laws for full definitions. The Town Moderator rules on all other questions regarding procedure.

You want to:	You say:	May you interrupt speaker to make this motion?	Is the motion debatable?	Can this motion be amended?	What vote is required?
Adjourn	I move we adjourn.	No	No	No	Majority
Recess	I move we recess until {time and place}	No	No	Yes	Majority
Register a complaint	Mr. Moderator. Point of Privilege,	Yes	No	No	Moderator decides.
Suspend further consideration of a matter (to table)	I move we table this matter.	No	No	No	Majority
End discussion or further debating of a matter	I move the question.	No	No	No	Majority
Postpone consideration of a matter	I move we postpone this matter until {time}	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion*	I move this motion be amended to read . . .	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce an article	I move that . . .	No	Yes	Yes	Voter approval depends on article.
Object to error in procedure or to a personal affront	Mr. Moderator. Point of Order.	Yes	No	No	Moderator decides.
Request for information	Mr. Moderator. Point of Information.	If urgent and to the point.	No	No	No vote. Moderator's discretion.
Take up a matter previously tabled	I move we take from the table . . .	No	No	No	2/3 vote
Reconsider something already disposed of	I move we reconsider our action relative to . . .	No	Yes, if original motion was debatable.	No	2/3 vote
Consider something out of its scheduled order	I move we take article xx out of order.	No	Yes	No	2/3 vote
Have a standing vote taken (to verify a voice vote)	I doubt the vote, I request a standing vote.	No, Moderator must see 7 voters standing.	No	No	Standing vote is mandatory when 7 voters stand.
Ask for a quorum count	I move for a quorum count.	Yes	No	No	Majority
Secret vote	I move for a secret vote.	Yes	No	No	25% of voters present & voting.

*The Town Moderator may require long amendments be put in writing.