



# Citizen's Guide to Town Meeting

Wilmington, Massachusetts

## WHAT IS TOWN MEETING?

Town Meetings trace their origins to colonial New England, when residents gathered to collectively decide upon matters which affected their community. Today, Town Meeting is the legislative body of the Town of Wilmington. Town Meeting provides a forum for direct democracy and self-government, where residents vote on their town government's budget for the upcoming year, changes to zoning, amendments to by-laws, and other issues.

## WHO MAY ATTEND TOWN MEETING?

Anyone may attend Town Meeting, but only individuals registered to vote in Wilmington may vote. Non-voters must sit in the designated non-voter section.

## WHAT IS A QUORUM?

A quorum is the minimum number of registered needed to call the meeting to order. In Wilmington, 150 registered voters need to be present for a Town Meeting to begin.



## The decisions made at Town Meeting affect you, and your community.

You are encouraged to attend and participate, and this brief guide is intended to help make sense of what Town Meeting is, and how the meetings are run.



## The Warrant

### WHAT IS A TOWN MEETING WARRANT?

The Warrant is a list of Articles to be acted on by Town Meeting.

### WHAT IS AN ARTICLE?

An Article is a proposal which is to be acted upon with a vote at Town Meeting, as contained within the Warrant.

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

For an Annual Town Meeting, an Article must be signed by 10 registered voters and timely submitted to the Town Clerk's Office. For a Special Town Meeting, an Article must be signed by 100 registered voters. Additional information for submitting an article can be found at the Town Clerk's Office.

## Voting on the Budget

Town Meeting votes on a bottom line operating budget for each departmental category. Appropriations for capital expenditures are contained within separate Articles.

## What are the procedures of Town Meeting?

Wilmington's Town Meetings are conducted in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, our Inhabitant By-laws, and traditional customs and practices that we have followed for many years, with guidance provided by *Town Meeting Time, a Handbook of Parliamentary Law*, and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised: 11th Edition*. A non-exhaustive list of items of procedure are included in the chart that appears on the next page.



## Who's Who at Town Meeting?

**TOWN MODERATOR** - the Moderator presides over Town Meeting, rules on questions of procedure, and declares the results of each vote.

**TOWN MANAGER** - the Town Manager speaks on the proposed budget, and is available to speak on other Articles.

**SELECT BOARD** - the Select Board prepares the Warrant, and decides on the order of Articles in the Warrant.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE** - the Finance Committee reports upon and makes recommendations on the proposed annual budget and all Articles in the warrant.

**PLANNING BOARD** - the Planning Board makes recommendations and are available to answer questions on Articles within their area of responsibility, such as zoning amendments.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE & SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT** - the School Committee and School Superintendent speak upon, and is available to answer questions on school-related Articles.

**TOWN COUNSEL** - the Town Counsel is available to answer questions which may arise during Town Meeting.

**REGISTERED VOTERS** - individuals registered to vote in Wilmington may attend Town Meeting, participate in debate, make motions, and ultimately vote on matters at Town Meeting.

»»»» **TO CONFIRM YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS** ««««

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/VoterRegistrationSearch/MyVoterRegStatus.aspx>

This information is only a guide; refer to the Inhabitant By-Laws and *Robert's Rules of Order* for complete definitions and other possible actions. The Moderator rules on all questions of procedure.

You want to:	You say:	May this interrupt the speaker?	Is this motion debatable?	Can this motion be amended?	What vote is required?
Introduce a motion on an article*	Mr. Moderator, I move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Depends on motion.
Amend a motion*	Mr. Moderator, I move to amend this motion to read ...	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Respond to a comment which indulges in personalities	Mr. Moderator, I rise to a point of privilege.	Yes	No	No	None
Clarify whether the present action is contrary to proper procedure	Mr. Moderator, I rise to a point of order.	Yes	No	No	Moderator determines.
Request information	Mr. Moderator, point of information.	If urgent and to the point.	No	No	None
Suspend consideration of a matter (to table)	Mr. Moderator, I move that we table this matter.	No	No	No	2/3**
Take up a matter previously tabled	Mr. Moderator, I move that we take from the table...	No	No	No	Majority
Divide a matter to be taken up separately*	Mr. Moderator, I move to divide the question.	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
End discussion or further debating of a matter	Mr. Moderator, I move the previous question.	No	No	No	2/3
Have a standing vote taken to verify a voice vote	Mr. Moderator, I request a standing vote.	No	No	No	Mandatory when 7 voters stand.
Reconsider a matter already voted on	Mr. Moderator, I move to reconsider our action on Article...	No	Only if original motion was.	No	Majority
Recess	Mr. Moderator, I move we recess until [time].	No	No	No	Majority
End the meeting	Mr. Moderator, I move to dissolve.	No	No	No	Majority

\* Every motion dealing with the expenditures of money or the amendment of any by-law shall be presented in writing and signed by the person presenting it; other motions shall be in writing if so directed by the Moderator.

\*\* Out of order if to defeat a measure.