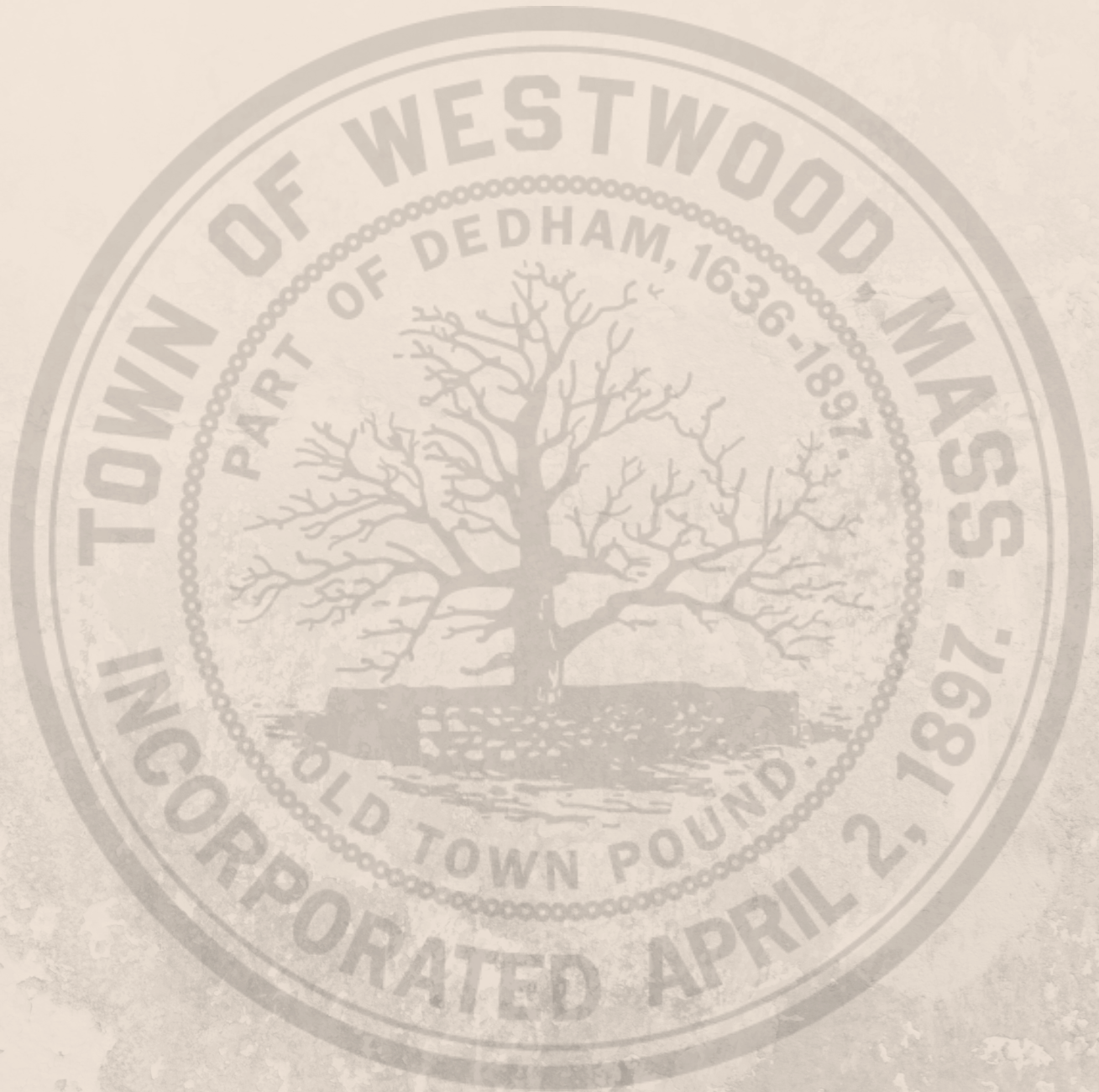


Citizen's Guide to Westwood Town Meeting



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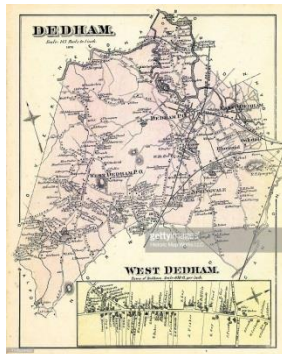
WESTWOOD, MASSACHUSETTS

INCORPORATED IN 1897

Westwood, Massachusetts is located in Norfolk County, approximately 12 miles southwest of Boston. It has been described as a mostly residential population with excellent schools and has ranked high on one of the best places to live for the past several years. Westwood is also home to one of the oldest churches in use in America built in 1730¹. Rich with historical connections, excellent schools, above average home values, Westwood is a great place for families.



Historical Information



The Town of Westwood was originally a part of Dedham until it was officially incorporated in 1897. Previously known as 'West Dedham' the official start to the separation from Dedham was reported as "The formation of a separate town by the division of the Town of Dedham is not a question of recent or sudden growth; it has been discussed at different intervals for many years²." The final petition that resulted in the incorporation of the Town of Westwood was suggested in November of 1896. The petition was quickly prepared and circulated once the residents of West Dedham realized that they must act quickly to receive consideration from the Legislature in 1897.

Leading up to the separation, the first settlers of Westwood were mostly dairy farmers looking to relocate to an area outside of Dedham center that had trees to enclose their homes in 1635. Soon after, saw mills and roads were developed to transport trees back to Dedham. Stone walls were erected to separate farms from each other. The early town consisted of two centers – High Street and Washington Street. Over the course of 140 years, these two major access roads began to populate more and more with the addition of local business, taverns and housing as farm lands began to split up.

Incorporated in 1876, the Dedham Water Company became the main source of water and sewer for the Town of Dedham. Many of the West Dedham residents felt that they would not benefit from this major infrastructure improvement being so far outside the Dedham center. To further fuel the separation ideas, in 1885, the Dedham Water Company gave the rights of the

¹ (First Baptist Church, 2016)

² (Dedham Historical Register of April 1897)

water in Buckmaster Pond (a pond suited for boating and recreation activities for the residents of West Dedham) to the Town of Norwood³.

West Dedham began its separation from Dedham. It took seven public meetings and seven months from petition to incorporate the new town on April 2, 1897 which was not so coincidentally just 3 days before the state set appropriations for the coming fiscal year. The new town was scheduled to be incorporated one month earlier in March but ran into problems in the Senate when on March 8, 1897, a senator from Nahant objected to the originally proposed name of Nahatan for the new town. A change to the town name Westwood was quickly made and the bill was passed⁴.

Soon after, Westwood saw a large boom in its population and economy. Business started to pop up along High and Washington Streets, and farm lands converted into estates for wealthy Bostonians. Particularly in 1899, the installation of trolley lines along High Street connecting Westwood with Medfield and along Washington Street, bringing residents to Islington, its other village area⁵. Rapid development took off in the 1930's as farm lands continued to be sold off and split into smaller residential subdivisions. These housing units were considered affordable, but would surpass the median housing price in later years.

As the community started to flourish, the residents quickly grew tired of paying tuition rates to neighboring communities and built its first junior high school in 1940. Today, Westwood is home to high end residential developments, excellent schools including elementary and high school level, classic New England town features with historical preservation and continued support of local small specialty businesses.

The Town Pound – built in 1700 by Lt. Colburn (one of the oldest families in Westwood) was on the first land grant of West Dedham and the oldest colonial town landmark. In 1899 when the state required municipalities to form a seal, a contest was held and a local artist won with the rendering of the pound with the Oak Tree. This seal is still used today⁶.

Other interesting Historical Facts about Westwood



Even further back, Westwood was also home to a hiding location for the Pokunoket chief known as “King Philip.” King Philip’s War marked the last major effort by the Native Americans of southern New England to drive out the English settlers⁷. King Philip hid himself and his men from the English in a cave known as ‘Oven’s Mouth’ on what is now known as High Street (Route 109). Major Robert Steele, better known as the ‘drummer boy’ for the Continental Army during the Battle of Bunker Hill, is buried in Westwood⁸. The cemetery dates back to 1752 and including Steele’s grave, many of the founding Westwood families are buried there⁹.

³ (DWWD – History)

⁴ (Dedham Historical Register of April 1897)

⁵ (MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report Westwood)

⁶ (Taylor 2002)

⁷ (History 1991)

⁸ (Taylor, 2002, p. 10)

⁹ IBID

Citizen's Guide to Westwood Open Town Meeting

"The purest form of democratic governing is practiced in a Town Meeting. In use for over 300 years and still today, it has proven to be a valuable means for many Massachusetts taxpayers to voice their opinions and directly effect change in their communities. Here in this ancient American assembly, you can make your voice heard as you and your neighbors decide the course of the government closest to you. This booklet outlines the forms and procedures used in Massachusetts Town Meetings. As the Commonwealth's information officer, I urge you to read it and make use of it as you engage in the debates and votes that give shape to your Town Government."

William Francis Galvin

Secretary of the Commonwealth

The legislative practice of Open Town Meeting is one of the purest forms of democratic governance. In use for over 300 years, Open Town meeting gives Massachusetts taxpayers a chance to voice their opinions and directly effect change in the community. Here in Westwood, you can still make your voice heard when you and your neighbors join together to attend and participate in Town Meeting.

Every town conducts Town Meeting differently, according to its Charter and Bylaws. Sometimes customs and traditions are written, and sometimes they are not. While not intended to be all-inclusive, this guide provides an overview of Open Town Meeting basics as they are practiced in Westwood. This information is designed to encourage you to find out more and attend Town Meeting. If you have any questions about specific procedures, please review the Westwood Charter and Bylaws. The Town Clerk or Town Moderator are also be willing to respond to questions.

What is a Town Meeting?

A Town Meeting is both an event and an entity. As an event, it is a gathering of the town's registered voters, and is referred to as "Annual, Special or Fall Town Meeting." As an entity, it is the legislative body of our town and is referred to simply as "Town Meeting." So one might say "I went to Town Meeting and Town Meeting approved the budget."

What is an Open Town Meeting?

An open Town Meeting means that all registered voters in Westwood are eligible to attend and vote on the articles presented.



EVERY VOTE COUNTS

What does Westwood Open Town Meeting decide?

Town Meeting is our town government's Legislative Body and appropriates funds to be expended by the Town, adopts laws such as zoning and general bylaws, and sets public policy. Throughout the year, elected and appointed officials act within the framework of the Massachusetts General Laws and our Town bylaws and policies. They have discretion and make decisions in the fulfillment of their duties. However, Town Meeting runs the government by voting:

- To appropriate funds such as:
 - Town budget – salaries and expenses of all municipal and school departments
 - Reserve Fund transfers
 - Stabilization Fund transfers
 - Capital expenditures
 - Acceptance of state and/or federal funds for road improvements (Chapter 90)
 - Other investments, disbursements and transfers
- The Town's local statutes, which are called bylaws, such as:
 - Town General Bylaws
 - Zoning Bylaws
- Other business as may come before Open Town Meeting such as:
 - Street or road designations
 - Purchase/Sale/Lease/Exchange of property
 - Special legislation according to state law

Who's who at Town Meeting?

It can be confusing trying to decipher who's who at Town Meeting and who is responsible for what. Complete descriptions of the roles, duties and responsibilities for each of the positions are in the Town's Charter and General Bylaws.

Voters – All citizens of Westwood, 18 years of age or older who reside in Town and have registered to vote may attend, speak and vote in accordance with the open form of Town Meeting.

Registration closes twenty (20) days before an Annual Town Meeting and Annual Town Election; fourteen (14) days before a Special Town Meeting; and twenty-eight (28) days before all other elections. Information is available at the Town Clerk's Office or on the website.

Petitioners – are residents who have submitted an article for consideration at Town Meeting. Petition articles submitted are subject to the Charter, Town Bylaws and MGL on submission procedure. Petitioners are allowed to present their article(s) with pre-approval from the Moderator.

Moderator – is the presiding officer of Town Meeting, elected by the voters to enforce orderly debate according to state law, Town of Westwood bylaws and customs; and to declare the vote. The Moderator also appoints members of the Finance and Warrant Commission, Permanent Building Committee and Personnel Board.

Town Clerk – registers voters, processes changes in voter information; records all votes at Town Meeting as declared by the Moderator; swears in newly elected and appointed officials; posts meeting and public hearing notices; and certifies petition articles submitted for consideration; and processes nominations and carries out elections for public office.

Select Board (formally known as “Board of Selectmen”) – is elected by the voters; is the Chief Executive Office of the community; sets the time and place for Town Meeting; prepares and issues the warrant; presents the proposed budget to Town Meeting (or its designee).

School Committee – represents a large portion of the budget and is elected by the Town voters to oversee the operations of the public schools. The School Committee often sponsors articles at Town Meeting to apply for and receive community support on various projects.

Planning Board – is elected by the voters and is required to submit a recommendation on all zoning bylaw articles, including petitioner zoning articles, proposed at Town Meeting. The Planning Board typically submits articles for consideration for amendments to various sections within the Town’s current zoning bylaw.

Finance and Warrant Commission - The Finance and Warrant Commission considers all articles in warrants for all Town Meetings and reports in writing before each Town Meeting in the manner provided by town by-law its advice, estimates and recommendations for consideration by the Town Meeting, and it shall hold a public meeting with respect to the warrant at least (fourteen) 14 days prior to any town meeting. If Town Meeting is the Legislative Body of Westwood, then the Finance and Warrant Commission is the Ways and Means Committee, often referred to as the “FinCom”. Citizens are encouraged to attend FinCom meetings in advance of Town Meeting. These meetings are open to the public, and it is at these meetings that much of the work is accomplished in preparation for Town Meeting. FinCom meetings are also broadcast over Westwood’s cable access provider, Westwood Media Center (WMC). Citizens who do not have cable access to WMC , can view these proceedings via YouTube.

Town Administrator – is appointed by the Select Board; conducts all of the daily business of the Town including administering all decisions made by the Select Board and Town Meeting; prepares and assembles the warrant; prepares and presents the budget to the Select Board; has oversight of all municipal departments including services provided to the community; and implements policies set by the Select Board.

Superintendent of Schools – is appointed by the School Committee; conducts all of the daily business of the School Department including administering all decisions made by the School Committee and Town Meeting; prepares and presents the budget to the School Committee and ultimately to the Select Board; has oversight of all school departments including public educational programs provided to the community; and implements policies set by the School Committee.

Town Counsel – works on behalf of the Select Board to ensure that all articles are legal and complete. The Moderator may consult with counsel on difficult questions but is not bound by Town Counsel’s opinion. Town Counsel is also available to answer legal questions from the floor.

Visitors – visitors to Town Meeting must sign in and are asked to sit in a segregated section and are not allowed to vote. Visitors are typically staff members who are not registered voters in Town and may not address the meeting unless otherwise authorized by the Town Moderator.

What is the difference between Annual, Fall and Special Town Meeting?

The Town of Westwood holds an annual Town Meeting according to the town Charter and bylaws. Additionally, Westwood adopted a second business session of Town Meeting to be held in the last three months of the calendar year. The Select Board have the authority to cancel Fall Town Meeting so long as no more than 10 petitioned articles have been submitted for inclusion on the warrant. The Select Board may also call for a Special Town Meeting from time to time as it deems necessary to carry out the business of Westwood. In addition, the voters may call for a Special Town Meeting in accordance with the procedures of the Charter, Bylaws and MGL.

When is Town Meeting?

Westwood's Annual Town Meeting is the first Monday in May and may be continued to additional days as decided by Town Meeting. Historically, registration begins at 6:30pm and Town Meeting convenes at 7:30pm at the High School. The Select Board is authorized by the Charter to call and set the date and time of all Town Meetings.

Fall Town Meeting is held in the last three months of the calendar year on a date to be determined by the Select Board. However, the Select Board may, at its discretion, cancel the Fall Town Meeting no later than September 15th of the given year, so long as no more than 10 petitioned articles have been submitted for inclusion on the warrant.

How do I find out when and where Town Meeting is?

Westwood notifies residents of Town Meeting in several ways:

- Notices posted at Town Hall
- Notices published in local newspapers
- Flyers and other material displayed two (2) weeks in advance of Town Meeting including A-Frame Signs and banners
- Select Board announce the date at its meeting when it opens the Warrant (typically 3-4 months prior to date)
- Multiple Board and Committee meetings announcement of the date
- A copy of the articles presented to each of the Finance and Warrant Commission public hearings is made available on the website
- A copy of the Town Meeting Warrant and Finance and Warrant Commission Report and Recommendation is mailed to each household at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- All materials are posted to a Town Meeting & Election section of the website and maintained in the Town Clerks Office.

How do I find out about Special Town Meeting?

Special Town Meetings, by very nature, are not held the same time every year. For Special Town Meeting, staff and officials will follow the same outline as a regular Town Meeting, however, notices will be provided at least fourteen (14) days in advance of the meeting.

If at any time you have questions about Town Meeting dates, you can contact the Town Clerk's Office at 781-329-3964 or examine the Town Charter and Bylaws.

Can Voters call a Special Town Meeting?

Yes, registered voters can call a Special Town Meeting. As provided by law (MGL c. 39, § 10), 200 registered voters may petition the Select Board to call a Special Town Meeting, 100 registered voters may insert an article in the warrant for any Special Town Meeting.

THE WARRANT

What is a Warrant?

A **warrant** is the official notice of a Town Meeting and a call to the citizens to meet and is issued by the Select Board.. Warrants essentially list an agenda of items called articles to be voted on by those present. Items on the agenda can vary significantly, from the annual operating budget of the town to adjustment of by-laws. The Warrant notifies citizens of what will be addressed at Town Meeting. Only items listed on the warrant that voters may consider, discuss and vote on at that Town Meeting.

In Massachusetts, residents may place articles on the warrant without approval of the Select Board by petitioning to insert the article. Petitions to insert an article on the warrant for an Annual Town Meeting require ten (10) signatures of eligible Westwood voters. Petitions to insert an article on the warrant for a Special Town Meeting require one hundred (100) signatures of the registered voters in the town. The Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting is usually open for acceptance of articles until the first Select Board meeting in January, before September 15th for the Fall Town Meeting, or the month before a Special Town Meeting, Please call the Select Board's Office for more information and to check the latest dates.

When is the warrant available?

The warrant is posted no later than seven (7) days before the annual town meeting or annual election and at least fourteen (14) days before a special town meeting. Warrant is signed by the Select Board at a meeting after the final Finance and Warrant Commission public hearings are held. The warrant is posted in all four (4) precincts in Town in a public location and is also posted on the Town's website for the public to inspect. Hard copies can be made available upon request to the Town Clerk's Office.

Who makes up the Warrant?

Any Elected board or officials may place an article on the Town meeting warrant by submitting information to the Select Board. Appointed boards and committees must submit the article through its appointing authority (Select Board, Town Moderator, Sewer Commission, Town Clerk, etc.). Petitioners are allowed to submit articles to be considered through the appropriate petition process as outline by the Town Charter and/or bylaws. For an annual Town Meeting, a petition article with

ten (10) registered voters can be submitted to the Town Clerks Office for signature certification and then to the Select Board's Office prior to the closing of the warrant.

What are articles?

Articles are questions that are proposed to Town Meeting on the action necessary to take for the adoption of such laws, statutes, bylaws or authorization. The article language is the presented to the Town Meeting in the form of the following: *To see if the Town will vote to...*The Select Board and Town Counsel review all article language compiled in the final warrant for posting. All votes are taken in a YES/NO or AYE/NAY format.

When is the article listing opened and closed?

The Select Board is tasked with opening and closing the warrant. For the Annual Town Meeting held in the spring, the Board votes to open the warrant in late fall, early winter and closes it at a meeting after the 1st of each year. The Board then prepares all article language for presentation at each of the Finance and Warrant Commission Public Hearings where hard copies are available to meeting attendees. Immediately following each hearing, the article language is posted on the Town's website for public inspection.

For the Annual Town Meeting held in the fall, the Select Board vote to open the warrant on or before September 15th of each year. The Board then closes it at a future meeting, ensuring proper timing for Finance and Warrant Commission Public Hearings and publishing and posted of the warrant before the scheduled fall town meeting. Check the Town's website for information for each scheduled Town Meeting for exact dates.

Is anything else included in the warrant?

The Official Warrant, which is submitted and signed by the Select Board, includes the date, time and location of Town Meeting as well as the articles. The Board also includes all open seats on the upcoming local election. No other information is provided in the official warrant.

What is the Finance and Warrant Commission Recommendation and Report?

The Finance and Warrant Commission Recommendation and Report is a document that is required by the Town of Westwood bylaws. The document is currently distributed to every household by mail in advance of Town Meeting. This report includes, but is not limited to, the full warrant and the recommendation on each article. The Finance and Warrant Commission recommendation is considered the main motion that will be taken up at Town Meeting. A copy of the document is also posted on the Town's website as soon as it is available.

The report and recommendation may include additional information such as copies of the budget summary, appendixes related to articles and information on the process for Town Meeting.

Public Meeting and Public Hearing Process

From the beginning of the Town Meeting process through the actual Town Meeting, multiple boards and committees hold public meetings and public hearings, thoroughly examining each article. Town citizens are invited to attend and participate in the process. The following is a generalization of the role each board plays in the Town Meeting process. All articles sponsors attend the Finance and Warrant Commission Public Hearings to present and answer questions related to the warrant articles. Residents are encouraged to check the Town's website for Town Meeting specific topics on the agendas:

Select Board – opens and closes the warrant; submits articles for consideration; reviews and approves the budget to be presented to Town Meeting; reviews the articles submitted at each meeting until final language is presented to the Finance and Warrant Commission; discusses the intent of each article with various staff and receives input from the public during the process; the Select Board typically meet twice a month on Monday nights.

Planning Board – submit articles on proposed amendments to the zoning bylaws; holds public hearings related to the proposed zoning changes to receive and incorporate public input; reviews special permits and plans related to proposed development in Town; and makes a formal recommendation to Town Meeting on all proposed zoning amendments including any articles submitted by petition.

Finance and Warrant Commission – receives warrant article submissions from the Select Board and reviews each article; holds public hearings on the articles including the proposed upcoming year’s budget; and votes and makes a recommendation on each article either in favor or for indefinite postponement. The Finance and Warrant Commission’s recommendation is considered the main motion at Town Meeting.

Other Boards and/or Committees – other elected or appointed boards and committees may hold public meetings in advance of Town Meeting to discuss and obtain further information on articles either proposed or being presented at Town Meeting. Any of the above listed boards may also decide to hold informational meetings to provide the public with additional information on a specific topic and/or project prior to Town Meeting.

TOWN MEETING

What is Town Meeting?

Town Meeting is the local legislative body that authorizes funding for essential public services, such as police, fire, education, roads, water and libraries. These services are funded directly through local taxes placed on real estate and personal property, local fees, state aid and other sources. Your neighbors serve on boards and committees that determine how much money is needed to provide these essential services and how these services are delivered. Westwood’s registered voters have the opportunity to approve or reject their recommendations by voting at Town Meeting. Town Meeting also determines and amends local bylaws, both general and zoning, and decides on project proposals brought before the Town. In the Town Election, voters elect their neighbors to serve on boards that participate in this process leading up to and following Town Meeting.

Why is my vote in Town Meeting so important?

Those quaint sayings about town governance being a “pure democracy” are true! State law refers to the Town Meeting as the “legislative body.” The Town Meeting is to the Town what the Legislature is to the State, or Congress is to the United States: Town Meeting has all the basic power. There is no higher authority in town. But in order to have the right to participate, you must be a registered voter in Town and you must attend. ?

How do I prepare for Town Meeting?

This quick guide is meant only for the purpose of outlining the basic procedure of Town Meeting. Long before Town Meeting convenes, many board and committees are collecting and distributing

information, holding public meetings and public hearings and learning about the issues. No item of business at a Town Meeting can be discussed unless it has been included in the warrant and vetted by one of the Town boards. The Select Board is responsible for setting the warrant, which may include articles of their own initiative, those requested by other boards and committees in town or requested by petition article submission.

In preparation, the proponents of each article must produce and submit article language and the intent of each article to the Select Board. Copies of all articles submitted for insertion in the warrant for any Annual or Special Town Meeting must be forwarded by the Select Board to the Finance and Warrant Commission for a public hearing process and its consideration.

The Finance and Warrant Commission must consider all listed articles in warrants for any Town Meeting and report in writing before each Town Meeting, in the manner provided by town bylaw, its advice, estimates and recommendations for consideration by the Town Meeting. It must hold a public hearing with respect to the warrant at least 14 days prior to any Town Meeting.

With respect to zoning bylaw articles and proposed projects, the Planning Board holds multiple public hearings leading up to the Finance and Warrant Commission review of articles to allow for public input. It is at the public hearings of these Boards where the articles are examined most thoroughly. Town Meeting runs most smoothly when residents participate in these public hearings and raise their questions and concerns.

What is the process for attending Town Meeting?

All citizens of Westwood, 18 years of age or older who reside in Town and have registered to vote may attend, speak and vote in accordance with the open form of Town Meeting. Registration for Town Meeting begins one (1) hour before the meeting is set to convene. Voters must check in prior to entering the meeting through the Town Clerk. At this time, voters are given the credentials they will need to vote.

Registration closes twenty (20) days before an Annual Town Meeting and Annual Town Election; fourteen (14) days before a Special Town Meeting; and twenty-eight (28) days before all other elections. Information is available at the Town Clerk's Office or on the website.

Who Runs Town Meeting - Some Basics

The Town Moderator is elected by the Town of Westwood voters to preside over and regulate the proceedings of Town Meeting, decide all questions of order and make public declaration of all votes. Voters can help accomplish the business of Town Meeting efficiently and democratically by being concise, avoiding points that have already been made and being courteous.

In order to be recognized, speakers are required to formally address the Moderator, give their name and address for the record, and wait for the Moderator to authorize the speaker to proceed. All discussion is made through the Moderator. Speakers should avoid references to and comments about others, including names and personalities (for example, "As a previous speaker indicated...") and should focus their remarks on the issues involved in the article that is being debated

No one may interrupt a speaker who has the floor except to raise a "Question of Procedure" or "Point of Order," such as *What is being voted on? Is the speaker entitled to the floor? Is the pending action of what the speaker is saying or proposing, indecorous, frivolous, irrelevant, illegal or contrary to proper procedure? Can visibility or audibility be improved?*

Who May Speak?

All registered voters are entitled to speak at Town Meeting according to the following procedures. Speaking limits are subject to Town Meeting consent:

Pre-Arranged Article Presentation are limited to five (5) minutes, whether for or against a motion. Exceptions may be made for presentation of the annual operating budget, large capital expenditures, significant zoning bylaw changes and other significant articles. All presentations must be reviewed and presentation times approved by the Town Moderator in advance of Town Meeting.

Speakers, other than presenters are limited to five (5) minutes, with the opportunity to speak again if there is new information to add after others have had a turn to comment. The Moderator will signal when the speaker has thirty (30) seconds to conclude their remarks. No one may speak more than twice per article without permission from the Moderator.

Motions, presentations and questions will be made only when a voter is recognized by the Moderator. Speakers must either use the provided podium at the front of the meeting or wait to be recognized and for a microphone to be provided to their seat. After a motion is made and seconded, the Moderator will first invite the lead petitioner to speak for or against the article. The Moderator will then open the floor for debate.

Participation in the debate must be made with a microphone or from a podium. Voters seeking to be recognized should line up near the podium or raise their hand from their seat to be recognized. In the event of overflow, arrangements will be made for voters in an overflow location to speak.

Before making a comment or asking a question, a voter must formally address the moderator, stating their name and address for the record and wait for the Moderator to tell the voter to proceed.

ONLY questions of procedure or points of order can be made from the floor without first being formally recognized by the Moderator.

How do I vote?

All votes are taken in the first instance by voice vote. The Moderator will read the motion by the Finance and Warrant Commission and ask that all those in favor of the article (everyone voting "yes") say "**aye**". The Moderator will then ask that all those opposed to the article (everyone voting "no") say "**no**". The Moderator listens, decides which side prevailed, and announces the results of the voice vote. If the Moderator is in doubt of the results of the voice vote, or if seven (7) voters rise and express doubt as to the result of the declared vote, the Moderator will call for a standing vote. The Moderator will ask all those in favor of the article to first stand while Counters compile the results. The Moderator will then ask those voters to be seated and ask that all voters opposed to the article stand while the Counters compile the results. Once the results are tallied by the Town Clerk, the Moderator will declare the vote to Town Meeting. An alternative method of vote calculation, if approved at the beginning of Town Meeting, is to tabulate votes electronically. In this method, there is no opportunity to doubt the ruling of the Moderator.

How do I call a vote and end debate on the question?

A voter may raise their hand to seek the attention of the Moderator. When recognized, say “Move the previous question” which means to call for a vote. Although a voter can move the previous question, the Moderator does not have to receive the motion if the Moderator feels that there are voters who still need to be heard. A motion to “move the previous question” is not debatable and requires a majority vote.

What does this mean for the procedures at Town Meeting?

The Westwood Town Meeting is conducted in accordance with the Town Bylaws and Massachusetts State Law. Some major matters of procedure are summarized below.

General Information

- The Moderator presides at the meeting and is responsible for ruling on procedural matters, overseeing orderly debate and preserve decorum. The Moderator calls the meeting to order at 7:30pm or once a quorum is reached.
- One hundred and seventy five (175) registered voters constitute a quorum.
- Registered voters are entitled to attend, address the meeting and vote. Visitors may attend the meeting, but can only address the meeting with the approval of the Moderator, or Town Meeting.
- Warrant articles are presented in numerical order. A motion to take an article out of order requires a 2/3 vote of those present at the meeting.

Motions, Motions to Amend, and Votes Required

- An article in the warrant states a question for the Town Meeting to answer. A motion is a proposed answer to the question and must be within the scope (intent) of the article.
- The recommendation of the Finance and Warrant Commission is the first motion on an article and is considered the main motion. Voice votes are taken by call of “**YES**” or “**NO**” during the meeting.
- Motions to amend the main motions, which are within the scope of the warrant article, may be made on Town Meeting floor, subject to the procedures outlined below.
- Ordinarily motions require a majority vote of the voters present to pass. Certain motions require a 2/3, 4/5 or even a 9/10 vote due to provisions of Massachusetts Law or the Town Bylaws. The Moderator will announce the voting requirement before each vote is taken.
- Motions to amend the main motion, may be made on Town Meeting floor:
 - A motion must be presented to the Moderator in writing.
 - Moderator to review and rule whether the amendment is within the scope of the article in order.
 - If the amendment is within the scope of the article, the Moderator will present the amendment to Town Meeting.

- A second to the motion must be made before consideration by Town Meeting members.
- If the amendment is approved, a motion must be made to vote on the article as amended
- If the amendment is rejected, a motion must be made to vote on the main motion and the article in its original form.

Motions for Indefinite Postponement and Motions to Reconsider

- A motion for indefinite postponement is equivalent to a motion that no action be taken under the article and such motion may not be amended.
- If the voters defeat the motion for indefinite postponement, favorable action on the subject matter of the article requires a motion and a second to that effect.
- A motion to reconsider an article may only occur on the same night the article was voted and shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting shall not be made again.

What is reconsideration?

A vote to reconsider a previous vote temporarily postpones final action on that vote. A vote to reconsider must occur on the same night of Town Meeting the article is presented and may not be considered at a later session. A motion to reconsider is debatable and no vote may be reconsidered without a two-third (2/3) vote on the motion. A vote may not be reconsidered a second time or after a motion to reconsider has failed to pass.

What is a vote to rescind?

A vote to rescind is a motion to rescind borrowing authorization articles only. A previous borrowing vote usually involves a decision made at a previous Town Meeting. For example, the 2013 Annual Town Meeting rescinded the vote from the 2011 Annual Town Meeting which authorized the borrowing of \$450,000 for the Brook Street Culvert. Since the project completion cost was only \$210,000, the Town voted to rescind the appropriation for the remaining balance. This is used to adjust or “close-out” unnecessary borrowing authorizations.

Rule of Debate and Vote Counting

- A voter desiring to speak should rise, await recognition by the Moderator, identify themselves when recognized and stand while speaking. Accommodations to residents with disabilities will be made when requested prior to the commencement of Town Meeting.
- All votes are taken in the first instance by voice vote and the Moderator determines whether the motion carried or was lost. If the Moderator cannot decide by the sound of voice, or if the Moderator’s announcement of the vote is doubted by seven (7) or more voters raising their hands for that purpose, the Moderator shall without debate determine the vote be declared by a standing vote, or may order a vote by other method approved by Town Meeting or Charter.

What is the difference between adjourning, recessing and dissolving?

Dissolving the Town Meeting means that it is over until the next Town Meeting, which must be called by a new warrant. If the Town Meeting has not dissolved, but is taking a break and will resume on the same day, it has *recessed*.

Adjourning is an imprecise word. It sometimes refers to “dissolving” and sometimes can mean “recessing.” At the end of the Town Meeting, the Moderator will ask for a motion and a second to adjourn before calling a vote. If Town Meeting is being adjourned to another date/time, the Moderator will ask that the motion made include the new date/time. If all business for the Town Meeting is complete, the Moderator will simply ask for a motion to dissolve.

For example, “*A motion to adjourn to DATE, TIME, LOCATION at 7:30pm*” would be made if Town Meeting needed to proceed to an additional night. “*A motion to adjourn the Town Meeting*” is a vote to dissolve the current meeting. A new warrant is needed to reconvene in this instance.

Where do I find statutes governing Town Meeting?

The Secretary of State’s Office has a number of useful resources related to the statutes governing Town Meeting. All of Westwood’s Town Charter and Bylaws governing Town Meeting comply with the Massachusetts General Laws, but more specifically, Chapter 39 and 43A. While there are other chapters that apply to Town Meetings, these two Chapters are the major ones.

The Westwood Charter and Bylaws were established and written to layout the form of Government and how the form of government is carried out. This is how the Town runs its local government and all information related to the Town Meeting can be found there.

Town of Westwood Charter and Bylaws

[Charter and Bylaws](#)

Massachusetts General Laws

[MGL c. 39](#)

[MGL c. 43A](#)

Secretary of State’s Website:

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cistwn/twnidx.htm>

Town Meeting is governed by:

Town Meeting Time – a Handbook of Parliamentary Law by Johnson, Trustman and Wadsworth

CONTACT

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