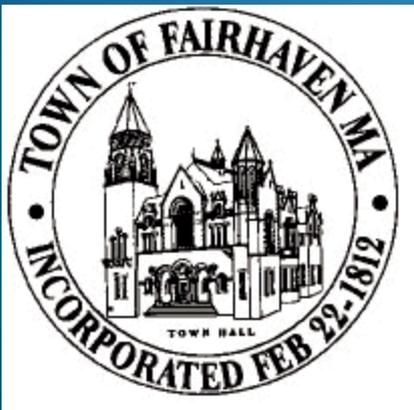


TOWN MEETING MEMBER ORIENTATION

April 25, 2012



Agenda

- Forms of Local Government
- What is Town Meeting?
- What is the role of a Town Meeting Member?
- How does Town Meeting Work?
- Who else is involved with Town Meeting?
- What resources are available to me to learn more?

Forms of Local Government in MA

- Cities (53)
 - Mayor/Council (e.g. Boston, New Bedford, Fall River)
 - Council/Manager (e.g. Lowell, Worcester)
- Towns (298)
 - Board of Selectmen/Town Manager or Executive Secretary/Open Town Meeting (259)
 - Board of Selectmen/Town Manager or Executive Secretary/Representative Town Meeting (39)

WHAT DOES TOWN MEETING DO?

- Town Meeting is the **legislative body** for towns in Massachusetts – Over 300 years of history in MA!
- A legislative body typically has the power to make general bylaws, zoning bylaws, adopt the budget and approve other spending.
- According to the Secretary of State's *Citizens Guide to Meeting* , Town Meeting decides three major things
 - It sets salaries for the elected officials
 - It votes to appropriate money to run the town
 - It votes on the town's local statutes which are called by-laws

Special vs. Annual Town Meeting

Annual Town Meeting

- Each town must hold an annual Town Meeting and unless otherwise provided by special law or charter, must be held in Feb, Mar, Apr or May (*SOS Guide*)
- Must be called by the Board of Selectmen
- Requires 7 days notice prior to meeting (*GL 39, §10*)

Special Town Meeting

- Additional Town Meetings are called special meetings. They may be called as many times during the year as necessary (*SOS Guide*)
- Can be called by the Board of Selectmen or upon request in writing, of 200 registered voters (*GL 39, §10*)
- Requires 14 days notice prior to meeting

TOWN MEETING MEMBERS

- Representative Town Meeting Members are elected by their precinct to vote on articles that come before Annual and Special Town Meetings.
- Town Meeting Members represent the citizens in their precinct and vote on matters that affect the entire town as well as their precinct
- Debate Town Meeting articles and make motions

FAIRHAVEN TOWN MTG

- Representative, approximately 429 are elected from each of 6 precincts
- There are at large members including town-wide elected boards and state legislators who live in Fairhaven
- Generally serve 3 year terms – and are staggered 1/3 per year. In 2012 due to redistricting – terms vary
- Quorum is 100 Town Meeting Members

THE PRECINCTS

FACTS

- Six Precincts
- Precinct meetings are held prior to Town Meeting and typically on Town Meeting day
- Precinct meetings are held to:
 - Elected a Chair
 - Fill Town Meeting vacancies between elections
 - Discuss Town Meeting Articles

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAIR

- Organize Precinct Meetings
- Chair Precinct Meetings
- Makes up to two appointments to Finance Committee
- Communicate with the Town Moderator on Town Meeting Issues

MODERATOR

- The Moderator presides over each Town Meeting and is responsible for the orderly conduct of these meetings. The Moderator declares the outcome of all votes and determines matters of procedure (see MGL 39, §15, 17)
- The Moderator is elected for a 3 year term.
- The Moderator jointly appoints the at-large Finance Committee member and members to the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School Committee

What is the WARRANT?

- It is the public notice and agenda for a Town Meeting.
- Pursuant to GL 39 §10:
 - Every town meeting must be called through a warrant
 - The warrant lists all matters to be voted on at the Town Meeting as well as the date time and location.
 - The warrant is prepared by the Board of Selectmen
 - For an Annual Town Meeting the warrant must be posed least 7 days before the annual meeting or an annual or 14 days before a special town meeting.

**WARRANT AND REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
FOR THE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2012 AT 9:15 A.M.
AT THE ELIZABETH I. HASTINGS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
BRISTOL, s.s

To the Constable of the Town of Fairhaven in said county:

GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts you are hereby directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of the Town of Fairhaven qualified to vote on town affairs to meet as follows:

On Saturday, the fifth day of May 2012 at 9:15 a.m. in the Walter Silveira Auditorium at the Elizabeth I. Hastings Middle School, then and there, to act upon the following articles:

ARTICLE 1 – TOWN CHARGES

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds a sum of money to fund additional salary and operating expenses for the following departments. Said sum to be added to previously voted appropriations for FY 2012, or to take any other action relative thereto.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

1. Treasurer

a. Salary and Wages

Request: \$1,524.00

Recommend: \$1,524.00

What is an ARTICLE?

- It is an agenda item to be acted on
- The purpose of a warrant article is to apprise or “warn” the voters as to the subject matter to be discussed....
- Can only be acted on by a motion, which must spell out the detail

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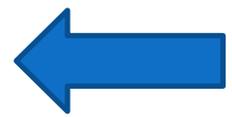
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TOWN MEETING MATERIALS

Town Meeting Members receive the following materials:

Mailed and available on the Town Web-Site

- Annual Town Meeting Warrant
- Town Warrant and Report of the Finance Committee
- Special Town Meeting Warrant (including recommendations)
- Fiscal Information from the Finance Director

Available at Town Meeting in the lobby

- Other materials regarding articles
- Annual Report

TOWN MEETING PROCEDURES

1. Town Meeting is called to order
2. Opening ceremonies
3. Instructions are provide to Town Meeting Members
4. Moderator offers procedural motions
5. Selectmen and Finance Committee make opening statements
6. Procedural motions regarding the warrant, tax levy
7. Article presentations, debate, votes
8. Adjourn either Sein Die or to another date

TOWN MEETING RULES

- **Robert's Rules of Order - Governs the overall order of the meeting**
 - Main Motion – formally presents a article to Town Meeting to be acted on
 - Amend – revises the main motion
 - Indefintely Postpone – takes no further action on an article
- **State Laws – Provides specific legal requirements**
 - Zoning bylaws and borrowing authority require 2/3 vote
 - A Bill of Prior Year requires a 9/10 vote
- **Traditions**
 - Voting on the higher figure first
 - Selectmen generally make all main motions, Finance Committee seconds the motion

What is a MOTION?

- A **motion** is a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting that the assembly take certain action (Robert's Rules of Order – 10th Edition)

ARTICLE 6 – FAIRHAVEN HOUSING AUTHORITY MAIN ST. PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate and to authorize the Community Preservation Committee to expend, \$6,500 from the Community Preservation Fund – Community Housing available funds for the Fairhaven Housing Authority to hire a Development consultant to facilitate the development of affordable housing on the recently acquired property on Main Street adjacent to Oxford Terrace, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Petitioned: Community Preservation Committee

Request: \$6,500

Recommend: \$6,500

MOTION: Mr. Silvia moves that the Town vote to appropriate \$6,500 from the (must be seconded) Community Housing Existing Fund Balance for the Fairhaven Housing Authority to hire a development consultant to facilitate the development of affordable housing on the recently acquired property on Main Street adjacent to Oxford Terrace.

DEBATE

- Once a motion has been made and seconded, debate ensues.
 - A **presentation** can be made by the sponsor/petitioner or their representative.
 - Town Meeting Members can **speak** on an issue, **ask questions** or **offer other motions** (amend, IP) after being recognized by the Moderator.
 - Town Meeting votes on the motion(s) on the table after debate has been exhausted or if a Town Meeting Member “Calls the Question”, it is seconded and then approved by Town Meeting.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

- Call the Annual Town Meeting each year and can call Special Town Meetings as needed (Citizens can also call a Special Town Meeting by submitting a petition to the Town Clerk with the signatures of 200 registered voters)
- Issue Town Meeting warrants
 - Place articles on the warrant and determine their order
 - Sign the warrant and order its posting
- Review all warrant articles and determine which articles they will support / move at town meeting (or yield to petitioner on)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- MGL c. 39 §16. establishes appropriation, advisory or finance committees
- Finances Committees review the proposed annual town budget and make recommendations to Town Meeting . Finance Committees review all fiscal articles and (in some towns review all town meeting articles) make recommendations to Town Meeting.

FAIRHAVEN FINCOM

- 13 Members
- 2/pct and 1 at large
- Pct members appointed by Precinct Chair and at large by Moderator, Finance Committee Chair and BOS Chair
- Produces a Report for Annual Town Meeting
- Makes recommendation on fiscal articles

Town Meeting Participants

Town Clerk

- Responsible for taking attendance at Town Meeting and verifying quorum
- Takes minutes at Town Meeting
- Serves as Acting Moderator
- Oversees counted votes
 - By hand or by ballot

Tellers

- Town Meeting Members appointed by the Town Moderator to count hand votes

Town Counsel

- Provides legal guidance on warrant articles, municipal law and Town Meeting procedures

Town Meeting Participants

Appointed Officials

- Present and speak on Town sponsored articles and answer questions
 - Executive Secretary
 - Supt. of Schools
 - Police Chief
 - Fire Chief
 - BPW Superintendent
 - Finance Dir./Treasurer

Boards and Committees

- Sponsor articles, make presentations, answer questions
 - School Committee
 - Planning Board
 - Board of Public Works
 - Board of Health
 - Community Preservation Committee
 - Council on Aging

Town Meeting Participants

Petitioners

- Individuals / groups that have acquired enough of signatures to have an article placed on the warrant.
 - May or may not be a Town Meeting Member
 - Present the article and answer questions

Residents / Citizens

- Attend Town Meeting and may speak with permission from Town Meeting

Press/Cable Access

- Print journalist report on Town Meeting news and Cable Access broadcasts meeting live and taped

RESOURCES

Helpful information to Town Meeting Members

- Secretary of State's Citizen's Guide to Town Meetings
 - <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cistwn/twnidx.htm>
- Massachusetts Municipal Association
 - <http://www.mma.org>
- MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services
 - <http://www.mass.gov/DLS>
- Town of Fairhaven Website
 - <http://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/pages/index>

MODERATOR CONTACT INFO

Email: msylvia11@comcast.net

Telephone:

Home – (508) 997-7963

Cell – (508) 858-7123

Website:

http://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/Pages/FairhavenMA_TownModerator/index