

2020 Annual Town Meeting: Key Points for Town Meeting Members Regarding This Year's Meeting

Dear Arlington Town Meeting Members and Citizens of Arlington:

This year, the annual Town Meeting is coming at a difficult and challenging time, as we address the unique circumstances associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, we think it is important to share detailed information with Town Meeting Members and the general public, about the plans and logistics for the 2020 annual Town Meeting, which will be held Monday, June 15 at 6:30 p.m. on the football field at Arlington High School.

First and foremost, we want you to know that special Covid-19-related public safety measures and precautions are being put in place. The overarching goal is to do everything possible to conduct the meeting in a way that protects the health and safety of attendees, while at the same time upholding our high Town Meeting standards of participatory democracy. The planning and organization for this year's annual meeting is being done in collaboration with the Town Clerk, Select Board, Town Manager, Town Counsel, Director of Health & Human Services, and the AHS facilities team.

Below is a summary of the specific steps being taken to help conduct the annual town meeting safely and efficiently.

- **Meeting Venue:** This year's annual town meeting will be held outside on the football field at Arlington High School. This venue has been chosen because the guidance from public health officials indicates that an outdoor gathering provides the safest venue for conducting a gathering of this type and for guarding against the spread of Covid-19.
- **Social Distancing:** Safe social distancing measures will be followed for TMM check-in and in the arrangement and spacing of chairs placed on the football field. There will be a total of 252 chairs available to be set up for the meeting, and we will designate places where they can be placed, based on social distancing guidelines.
- **Face Coverings:** Attendees are strongly encouraged required to wear a mask or other type of face covering at all times. If you choose not to wear a mask a separate seating area will be available.
- **Microphone Cleaning and Disinfecting:** Appropriate cleaning supplies will be made available to enable the microphone to be sanitized after each speaker. You are asked not to touch the microphone as it is fixed and not adjustable.
- **Meeting Efficiency:** A number of steps will be taken to help facilitate a quick, efficient and orderly meeting.
 - **Consent Agenda Motions:** Fewer articles than usual are being included on the annual town meeting warrant, and a number of routine articles (essentially those that must be voted at each annual town meeting) are combined into a series of consent agenda votes. The consent agenda motions will enable multiple articles to be voted at once, rather than gone through separately.
 - **Time Limits for Speaking:** Under the moderator's powers to regulate the town meeting proceedings and our Bylaws, time limits will be strictly enforced at town meeting.

The Meeting

- The meeting will be conducted as close to our normal experience as possible while adhering to the deliberative process of any town meeting.
- It is important for all of us to abide by physical distancing standards and other proper behaviors to ensure that we are not creating unnecessary risks to our health and well-being of others during this pandemic.
- Your courtesy is sought to limit comment and questions to that which is necessary and non-repetitive. Statements simply stating support or opposition are discouraged. Questions and new information are encouraged for the benefit of the meeting.
- Efforts by town officials and other petitioners are ongoing to make citizens fully aware prior to the meeting of the articles and their merit.
- Expect that the Moderator will take articles out of order, as we have done many times, so that a hierarchy of the most important matters that need to be dealt with are fully heard and acted upon early in the meeting. In addition, the consent agenda for routine and non-controversial articles will be expanded.
- Considered debate is a hallmark of Town Meeting. Microphones will be set up at the front of the seating area. An array of two microphones on podiums will be set up. Do not touch the microphone.

- Face coverings may be removed when an attendee speaks but only for the period when one is speaking. This is a universal standard for all, including officials and the moderator.
- Microphones will be treated with an industry sanctioned antiseptic to ensure safety. Hand sanitizer will be available for the use of each speaker as they approach the microphone.
- Motions made and seconded under the articles will go to debate. They will be read unless they are readily available in pre-printed and downloaded form.

Post the Meeting and Other Matters

- When the meeting is adjourned, please stay in place. A metered process will be directed by staff to ensure safe and orderly exit.
- In the event of poor weather forecast the meeting may be postponed. A notice will be posted on the town web site. See Weather Protocol below for full details.
- In the event of a rainfall or other surprise weather situation during the meeting, a judgment will be made on the ground.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout the venue.
- Town Meeting will be broadcast live on ACMi Comcast Ch. 22, Verizon Ch. 26, RCN Ch. 614
- Please bring a bottle of water.

Weather Protocol

- **Rain Date:** The rain date for the Annual Town Meeting is Wednesday, June 17 at 6:30 p.m. on the football field at AHS. The decision on whether to postpone will be made the day of the meeting at 3:00 p.m.. If a postponement until Wednesday, June 17 is needed due to weather, we will post on the Town of Arlington website and you will receive an email notification via the TMM list serve).
- Five days prior to the event public safety officials and meteorological expertise will be consulted on the predicted weather. If at that time there is some indicator of an extreme weather factor (predicted storm(s), extreme heat/cold) the event will be evaluated.
- Two days prior the weather will be evaluated for the same parameters and actions.
- One day prior the predicted weather for the time of the event will be evaluated. If the weather will not support the event it will be deemed a “no go” and postponed.
- Early on the day of the event, public safety officials and meteorological expertise will be consulted and a go/no go judgment made. The day’s weather will be continually evaluated and decision to cancel or postponed will be made. Due to the logistic concerns and set up requirement, an early decision should be made.
- Due to the use of audio equipment rain is a no go factor. Extreme heat should also be considered as a no go as this event will take place in an open field with minimal shading opportunities. Lightning is a no go. The prediction of thunderstorms would most likely be considered a no go prior to the event. A lightning monitor will be on the field at all times. Weather will be monitored during the event by the safety and operations team.

Each Town Meeting Member needs to make their own judgment whether to attend. I respect that personal decision and endeavor to make the conduct of the meeting as safe as reasonably possible, guided by state and local public health authorities. Please know that the Governor has signed emergency legislation authorizing the Moderator, after consulting public health officials and the Select Board, to recess the meeting for up to 30 days, and to do so repeatedly if necessary. I will be monitoring the situation with State and Town officials, and if necessary will not hesitate to reschedule the meeting in order to preserve the safety of our neighbors and the legitimacy of Town Meeting as a deliberative legislative body.

As always, your input, feedback and questions regarding the plans for the annual town meeting are welcome. You can contact me via email at jleone@town.arlington.ma.us . We recognize that this is a challenging time and understand that people are being careful and cautious about going out in public. Our hope is that the safety measures and precautions will give Town Meeting Members a comfort level about attending the annual town meeting.

Thank you and stay safe.

John D. Leone,
Town Moderator