

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

March 4, 2014

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Selectmen's Hearing Room, Town Hall, on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, at 7:38 PM.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Roland Chaput, John Leone, Adam Auster, Eric Helmuth, Steve Storch, and Wes Beal.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:

*Correction of
Minutes*

Mr. Leone moved to make the following correction to the draft minutes of the February 4, 2014, meeting.

The phrase "for voting for future Town Meetings" in the resolution on page 1 should read "for voting at future Town Meetings."

The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION:

*Approval of
Minutes*

Mr. Leone moved that the corrected minutes of the February 4, 2014, meeting be approved.

The motion passed.

Reports

CHAIR:

*Finance
Committee*

Mr. Helmuth said that he and Mr. Leone had met with the Finance Committee to discuss an appropriation to use electronic voting after this spring's town meetings.

That meeting, Mr. Helmuth said, discussed annual costs, likely lifetimes for components of the system, the possibility of other Town departments using the equipment, and the possible impact of such additional use on equipment lifetime.

Mr. Helmuth said that he and Mr. Leone plan to return to the Finance Committee on March 12 with further information.

*Disabilities
and Voting*

At Mr. Helmuth's request, Mr. Leone volunteered to meet with the Town's Disabilities Commission to anticipate accommodations for Town Meeting members with disabilities that might complicate their use of the voting equipment.

TOWN
MODERATOR:
Warrant Articles

Mr. Leone reported that he and Mr. Auster brought the two non-financial warrant articles to the Selectmen in February.

He said that the Selectmen supported Article 11, the bylaw amendment. The Board did not take a position on Article 54, sense-of-Town Meeting resolution, he said.

Business

DISCUSSION:
Preparation

Mr. Helmuth said the vendor will set up on Sunday before Town Meeting starts, including training for the Town Moderator and the Town Clerk.

DISCUSSION:
*Committee Report
and Materials*

Mr. Helmuth said that Mr. Auster had volunteered to prepare materials about the use of the handset. A draft, attached to these minutes, was distributed at the meeting.

DISCUSSION:
*Public Access to
Voting Data*

Committee members discussed different ways that data about votes taken could be made available on the Town's web site.

SUBCOMMITTEE:
*Publication of
Electronic Votes*

Mr. Helmuth appointed Mr. Beal and Mr. Storch to a subcommittee on publication of electronic votes to develop this issue.

DISCUSSION:
Special Meeting

Mr. Helmuth suggested that the Committee should meet on April 15 in addition to our next regular meeting on April 1.

MOTION:
Adjournment

Mr. Beal moved that the meeting adjourn.
The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

APPROVED
April 7, 2014

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Eric Helmuth, *Chair*

Documents attached to these minutes:

1. “Handset Q&A, Maybe” draft explanation of some of the mechanics and rules for use of the voting equipment, Adam Auster.

Handset Q&A, maybe

How do I claim a voting handset? How should I care for and return them?

You have been assigned a specific numbered handset and may use no other unit. You may claim yours from the volunteers at the back of the room every night.

Return your handsets by placing them in any of the receptacles at the edge of the enclosure when you leave for the night. If you leave early you may return them to a volunteer.

Do not take your handset home.

How do I cast a vote using the handset?

The numeric keys 1, 2, and 3 correspond to Yes, No, and Present (abstaining from voting) [is this right?]. Your selection will be broadcast to a base station, which will record your vote and broadcast a confirming signal to your handset.

The confirmation is a complete round trip of your vote from handset to base unit and back.

May I give my handset to another person to vote in my absence?

No. Proxy or absentee voting is not authorized for Town Meeting. You must cast your vote in person. You must be present to vote.

What if I change my mind while the votes are being cast?

There will be a voting period of approximately 20 seconds. You may change your vote during the voting period. If you do, only the changed vote will be tallied.

What if I change my mind after the votes have been cast?

As with other forms of voting, the vote you cast during the voting period is your legal vote and cannot be changed after the fact.

What if there is an error with my handset or my vote?

If your handset does not confirm your vote, immediately rise and gain the attention of the Moderator. You may be issued a new handset and, if needed, the record of the vote will be corrected.

There will be a test vote at the start of each night to check the performance of your handset.

How will we decide whether to use the handsets to vote?

That decision is in the hands of the Town Moderator. The Committee expects that we will vote with the handsets for most votes, replacing voting by voice and by standing count.

However, for any voice votes called by the Moderator, a standing vote or electronic tally may be required by 5 members rising for that purpose immediately after the vote by voice.

What is the difference between a regular tally and a roll-call vote?

The difference is not a great as it used to be. All of your votes will be recorded and be publicly available after the day of the meeting. A roll call, however, provides the individual votes immediately and includes them in the permanent legal record of the meeting that is prepared by the Town Clerk.

Is my vote secret?

Unless a secret ballot is ordered by a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting, a record of your vote will be public. Furthermore in the vent of a roll call, there is no second vote; the votes already cast are displayed for review and *become* the roll call.

How can I verify that my vote has been correctly recorded?

For all votes, your handset will confirm the vote broadcast from your handset to the base station and back. The confirmation is a “round trip” of your vote from handset to base station and back.

For roll-call votes, and for votes that are very close, and for other votes ordered by the Town moderator, the votes of all members will be projected onto the display screen, several precincts at a time. You may check to see that your vote is recorded correctly at this time.

How can members require a roll call?

Thirty members rising immediately after any vote will cause the individual votes already cast to be displayed and the roll call to be entered into the legal record of the meeting. There is no second vote.

What is the significance of an abstention or “present” vote? Could they affect the outcome of a vote?

Abstentions allow members to show that they were present for the vote but not voting. They are not votes and do not count in any way in calculating the outcome of a vote. Majorities are based on votes cast, not members present.

Is there anything else I should know?

Only that this is new for everyone and the Moderator will be trying out different approaches as we go along. If you have a question about the vote, please raise it with the Moderator promptly.

Qs for moderator, maybe

Under what circumstances might you choose to conduct the vote by voice or standing count?

Xx ?

May I give my handset to another person to cast a vote on my behalf?

Xx

Under what circumstances will you instruct the staff to show individual votes on the display screen?

Xx

What if I have a question about voting?

xx