



# Town of Arlington

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RE: Town Meeting Procedures

Dear Town Meeting Members:

Welcome to the Town of Arlington's 215th Annual Town Meeting which will be held virtually starting Monday, April 25, 2022. Please review the Virtual Town Meeting guide and training videos which will be available on the Town Meeting webpage prior to the start of Town Meeting (<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/townmeeting>) as well the Interactive Warrant which contains all of the reports and video presentations as well as supporting materials neatly arranged under the appropriate Article. This is my first year serving as your Town Moderator, and while I intend to revisit policies that are at the Moderator's discretion, I intend to maintain a high level of continuity this year with recent past practice.

Arlington's Town Meeting is conducted in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, our Town Bylaws, local customs, traditions, and practices, with guidance provided by the principles and rules of conduct contained in *Town Meeting Time, a Handbook of Parliamentary Law*. I recommend that you to purchase a copy of *Town Meeting Time*, \$25.00 each from the Massachusetts Moderators Association, available for purchase online at: [massmoderators.org](http://massmoderators.org)

We will again use a "Consent Agenda" for Articles that are expected to be noncontroversial, have a recommended vote of "no action", or perform housekeeping to update outdated references. I will circulate the Consent Agenda Articles well in advance and we will vote on the Consent Agenda on the first night, in two parts: one for majority-vote Articles and one for two-thirds-vote Articles.

During recent sessions of Town Meeting there was some confusion about the definition and use of a Point of Order and a Point of Personal Privilege. I am attaching for your reference those portions of *Town Meeting Time* that specifically reference those procedural mechanisms.

In order to provide your fellow Town Meeting Members with ample time and opportunity to fully prepare for each Article, substitute motions and substantial amendments to motions must be submitted electronically to me at [GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us), the Town Clerk at [JBrazile@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:JBrazile@town.arlington.ma.us), and Town Counsel at [DHeim@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:DHeim@town.arlington.ma.us) at least 48 hours in advance of the commencement of the session in which the Article is expected to be considered and debated — please include all three recipients on the same email; if email is not an option, please call me at **781-819-2781** to make alternative arrangements. I may allow exceptions to this advance filing requirement in cases of motions that are short, clear, concise and easy to understand, but such exceptions are within my exclusive discretion as Moderator. The only blanket exception to the 48-hour rule will be for articles considered at the first session, April 25th . It is suggested that prior to April 19th you email your substitute motions to me, the Town Clerk, and Town Counsel at the email addresses noted above.

Please join the Town-hosted Town Meeting Members email distribution list for electronic distribution of materials by visiting: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/connect/email-subscription-lists>. At the bottom of the page, enter your email address into the text input field, click the "Submit" button, and after following the sign-in flow, select "Town Meeting Members". The email list is for distributing documents and announcements, not for debate among members. You are required to send all substitute motions and supporting documents to me for a review of appropriateness and for posting.

As provided by our Bylaws, Title I, Article 1, §7 (c), a speaker on each article is limited to a period of 7 minutes to speak upon their first time being called, and 5 minutes on their second time speaking on an article; all speakers for reports and announcements are limited to 4 minutes. As did my predecessor, I would like to quote Mr. Jim Doherty, Andover's Town Moderator, upon the question of time limits for speakers: "I don't have a formal limit, but I did tell the meeting that about three minutes is enough for anyone. After five, you put them to sleep. After seven, they're going to vote against you even if they agree with you". I recommend that you take his advice, and remember that if a point has been made already, there is no need to repeat it.

As a matter of courtesy to our Department Heads, Boards, and Committee Members, if you have a specific question, or information request of one of them, please discuss the question or information request directly with the appropriate person in advance so that they can gather and prepare the necessary information. All Department Head email and telephone numbers are freely available on the Town's website. It is hoped that this will eliminate Articles being tabled or postponed due to a lack of information.

Let's keep to and hold true to our civility pledge, as we carefully consider the Articles before us. I have attached to this letter the Parliamentary Guide and the Oath of Office for your review prior to being sworn in. If you have any questions, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely  
  
Greg Christiana

## TOWN MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Q: What can I do to prepare for the upcoming Town Meeting?**

A: Here are several things to do to prepare for Town Meeting:

- Download and/or read all the material that is available at the Town Meeting website by the Select Board, Finance Committee., Redevelopment Board, and School Department, read the materials made available to you.  
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/townmeeting>
- Sign up to the Town Meeting Members email distribution list.  
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/connect/email-subscription-lists>
- Review the Town Bylaws relating to Town Meeting, Title I - General Government, Article 1: Town Meetings. <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/laws-and-regulations/town-bylaws>

### **Q: What is the Warrant?**

A: Required by State law, the Warrant lists the articles that are to be deliberated and decided on during Town Meeting. It acts as a notice or 'warning' to town residents that the Town Meeting will take place with the Warrant Articles as the agenda items for the Town Meeting. Only items listed in the Warrant can be discussed at Town Meeting.

### **Q: Where can Warrant Articles and their recommended votes be found?**

A: The Warrant is provided to each Town Meeting Member and a copy is left at every dwelling house in the Town. The reports of the Redevelopment Board, Select Board, Finance Committee, and subsequent reports of these and other committees are available on the Town Meeting webpage, and on the Interactive Warrant, which can be found at: [arlingtonma.gov/townmeeting](http://arlingtonma.gov/townmeeting)

### **Q: What should I do upon arrival at the Virtual Meeting?**

A: On each night of Town Meeting, arrive early, between 7:30 pm and 7:45 pm, log onto the Portal and click the "**Launch Zoom**" button. Download all reports and read all these additional materials, which can be found by clicking the "**ATM 2022 Docs**" button on the left-hand side of the Portal. The Portal website is:  
<https://arlington.townmeeting.online>

**NOTE:** Upon visiting the Portal in your web browser, the web address in your browser's address bar may change. DO NOT bookmark the Portal page that you're viewing in your browser because that address is temporary and subject to change from one night of Town Meeting to the next. Instead, make sure to bookmark:  
<https://arlington.townmeeting.online>

**Q: Who has the right to speak?**

A: Town Meeting Members have the right to speak once recognized by the Town Moderator. To get recognized, use the "**Request to Speak**" button in the Portal and the Moderator will note that you wish to speak. Residents of Arlington may also speak once introduced by a Town Meeting Member (TMM). Non-residents may also speak, but only with the approval of the assembled Town Meeting Members. Residents and non-residents must contact the Moderator at least two hours prior to the start of the evening's meeting in order to make arrangements for joining the virtual meeting, via email at [GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us) or phone at **781-819-2781**.

**Q: What exactly is voted on?**

A: Town Meeting considers and votes upon the recommended vote of the respective committee or board that heard the Article prior to Town Meeting. If no committee submits a recommended vote, then the Article's proponent must present a substitute motion. The recommended vote on an Article can be amended or substituted by TMMs. A substitute motion or a motion to amend must be submitted electronically to the Town Moderator at [GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:GChristiana@town.arlington.ma.us), the Town Clerk at [JBrazile@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:JBrazile@town.arlington.ma.us), and Town Counsel at [DHeim@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:DHeim@town.arlington.ma.us) at least 48 hours in advance of the commencement of the session in which the Article is expected to be considered and debated. Please include all three recipients on the same email. If email is not an option, please call Greg Christiana, the Town Moderator, at **781-819-2781** to make alternative arrangements. The Moderator may allow exceptions to this advance filing requirement in cases of motions that are short, clear, concise and easy to understand, but such exceptions are within the exclusive discretion of the Moderator.

**Q: How do we know what we are voting on?**

A: The Town Moderator ensures that the wording and order of the vote is clear to the assembled TMMs.

**Q: Why might the order in which the Articles are deliberated change, especially if some are put off until late in the session?**

A: This most often happens if the supporting information for the Article or the presenter is delayed. As a response to this situation, a Motion to "Table the Article" or to "Postpone to a time certain" is then put before the meeting for a vote. Be aware that these motions are not always granted.

**Q: What Rules of Order does Town Meeting use?**

A: Town Meetings operate in accordance with rules of procedure established by: The General Laws of the Commonwealth; our Bylaws, Title I - General Government, Article 1: Town Meetings; local customs and traditions; as well as *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law, 3rd edition*, a standard parliamentary handbook which provides TMMs with a complete framework that all can readily learn and understand.

## OATH OF OFFICE

Raise your right hand, repeat after me using your own name, I \_\_\_\_\_, will participate fully and will fairly evaluate all matters before Town Meeting; and vote in the best interests of the Town. I support free speech and will treat others with mutual respect and will conduct myself in a civil manner that is becoming of an elected Town Meeting Member.

I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and impartially perform the duties incumbent upon me as a Town Meeting member of the Town of Arlington in accordance with the by-laws, the Town Manager Act and the General Laws of the Commonwealth, so help me God.