

Town of Arlington
Town Meeting Procedures Committee
April 10, 2024

MINUTES

Call to order: The meeting of the Town Meeting Procedures Committee was called to order by Town Moderator, Greg Christiana, at 7:05pm

Quorum: A quorum was present: Adam Auster, Greg Christiana, Rebecca Gruber, Christopher Moore, and John Worden (remote).

Mr. Christiana said that remote participation was authorized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Public Comments:

- Public comment was taken as part of the discussion on the articles. See below.

Minutes of Prior Meetings:

Sept 25, 2023:

Moved approval: Mr. Auster

Seconded: Mr. Moore

Vote: unanimous

Jan 4, 2024:

Moved approval: Mr. Moore

Seconded: Mr. Auster

Vote: unanimous

Old Business:

Warrant Articles 8 and 9:

Mr. Christiana shared results of the Dec 2023 Town Meeting Member survey particularly with respect to meeting time preferences.

Ms. Kelleher (Article 9 proponent) spoke about the disadvantages of late meeting end times including members leaving early, difficulties for those who have early morning responsibilities and/or long commutes, and the possibility that the late meeting end time is a deterrent for residents to join Town Meeting.

Ms. Deshler (FinCom chair) spoke of the problems that would likely be encountered if the FinCom, which meets 30 minutes before every session of Town Meeting, were required to start any earlier to accommodate an earlier Town Meeting start time. These include difficulty achieving quorum due to members who commute from employment outside of Arlington and concern that an earlier meeting time would significantly limit the diversity of those who are able

serve on FinCom. In the event that FinCom fails to achieve quorum, it is possible that Town Meeting could be kept waiting for FinCom's recommendation on an article or motion.

Mr. Christiana said that he had received comments from Ms. Zsembery (Arlington Redevelopment Board chair) which largely agreed with Ms. Deshler's concerns.

Mr. Goff (Article 8 proponent) spoke about the benefits of an earlier Town Meeting especially the potential benefits in diversity by avoiding late end times which favor those who have flexibility in their schedules, work from home, etc. The late end time has been a deterrent to some prospective members that he has spoken to.

The Committee discussed the governing bylaw which specifies only the start time of the first session of Town Meeting.

The Committee discussed a framework for recommending a way forward to the Select Board.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Christiana will form a working group to draft a memo to the Select Board recommending actions consistent with the framework discussed. The Committee agreed to meet on April 18, 2024 at 7pm to discuss the memo.

New Business:

- Ms. Gruber inquired as to whether the vote on Special Town Meeting Article 3 is 2/3 or majority. The Moderator will investigate.
- Ms. Gruber noted that some Annual Town Meeting articles have dependencies on the MBTA Communities map and therefore on the Special Town Meeting. The Moderator took this under advisement.
- The Committee discussed the general process for debate on resolutions. The Moderator will clarify the process in his communication to Town Meeting.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:24pm.

Moved: Ms. Gruber

Seconded: Mr. Moore

Vote: unanimous

Christopher Moore

Town Meeting Procedures Committee
Town of Arlington

Chair and Members of the Committee:

I filed Article 9 with the intention of having Town Meeting begin earlier and end earlier each evening.

I offer for your consideration: Top Ten Reasons Why Town Meeting Should Begin at 7:30pm

#10 Late night policy decisions aren't necessarily ideal

#9 There may be Town Meeting members who struggle to stay awake until 11pm

#8 It's important to respect the time and needs of town employees, board/commission members, ACMI staff, town consultants, legislators, and others who watch and/or speak at Town Meeting, including students

#7 An earlier end time may allow for increased sleep making for healthier habits and more rested Town Meeting members

#6 The later into the evening the meeting runs, the more likely it is that Town Meeting members depart before adjournment

#5 Sticking with an 11pm end time may deter some residents from being willing to serve on Town Meeting

#4 Starting earlier might allow TM members and others to get to the bake sale even earlier

#3 Feb 2023 Town Mtg Member survey results indicate that 61% preferred an end time earlier than 8pm; According to preferences from Dec 2023 survey with 154 respondents (offered by the Town Moderator to the Select Board on March 18, 2024), close to 60 respondents selected 7-10pm and the next most popular choice was 7:30-10:30pm

#2 Town Meeting members who have early morning work obligations and/or caregiving responsibilities may appreciate having more time to rest

#1 A modified start time would affirm that traditions can adapt over time in response to changing needs

Thank you in advance for considering this article.

Christa M. Kelleher

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