



Town Meeting Orientation

Updated: April 14th, 2026
Jeff Alderson, Town Moderator



How to Prepare for Town Meeting

- **Educate yourself on the Finance Committee Recommendation Book.** Read articles, motions, and details as well as any supplemental information provided.
- **Watch meetings and hearings** of the Finance Committee and the Planning Board
- **Watch the Primer videos** prepared by the Moderator, Town Administration, Committee Chairs, and Natick Pegasus.
- **Prepare questions** that you may have in advance of sessions. Try to ask Town staff in advance for detailed information.
- **Have an opinion but be open** to the discussions and questions you will hear. You are the voice of your precinct constituency and the citizenry of the entire Town.
- **Ask your friends and neighbors how they feel** about any matter of the warrant.

Upon Arriving Each Night of Town Meeting

- Sign in with a member of the Town Clerks' office who will ask name and precinct.
- Members will receive their electronic device [aka Clicker] (assigned to each member), which are sorted by precinct and last name (alphabetical).
- If a Member has a visual impairment, there are special electronic devices available.
- Pick up additional printed information, that was not included in the TM Finance Committee Recommendations Book.



(Example Clicker)

Opening Ceremonies

Welcome Message and Introduction

Swearing in of Newly Elected Members

Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, and Moment of Silence

Assembly of Town Meeting

Rules of Natick Town Meeting

Resolution(s) (if any)

Announcements (if any)





Rules and Procedures

Natick's Town Meeting is governed primarily by four sets of rules:

- Massachusetts General Laws
- Town of Natick Charter
- Town of Natick By-Laws
- Town Meeting Time (4th Edition)



Other Rules may be adopted by Members as summarized and presented by the Moderator at the beginning of Town Meeting



Finance Committee Recommendations

The possible options for Finance Committee advisory recommendations mirrors Town Meeting votes and include:

- ***Favorable Action*** - Recommendation to Town Meeting to approve Motion
- ***Referral*** - Usually back to Sponsor and sometimes to Town Agency or other party
- ***No Action*** - Can be construed as a no vote for Citizen Petitions
- ***Indefinite Postponement*** - Usually construed as a negative action
- ***No Recommendation*** - No majority vote for Motion is achieved

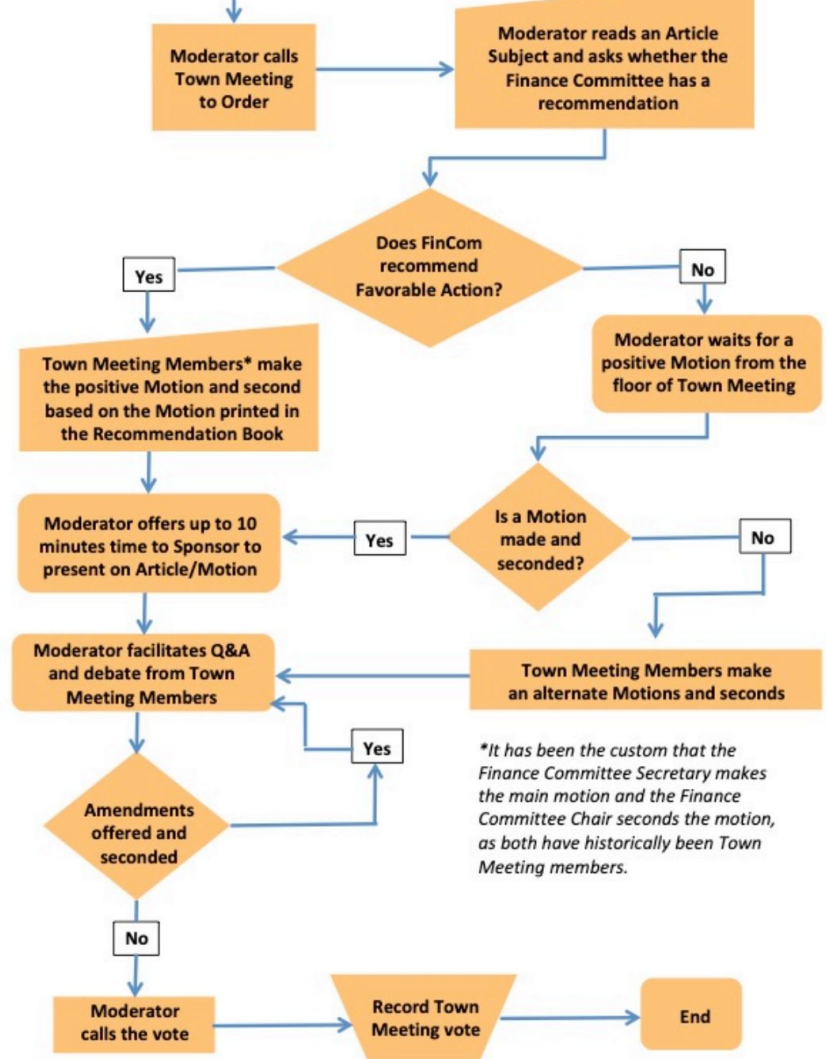
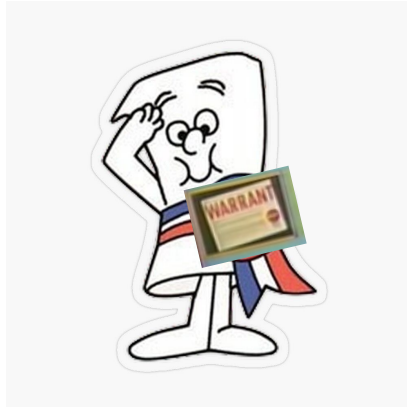


Consent Agendas

- A consent agenda groups routine, non-controversial articles for a single vote, saving Town Meeting time.
- Items typically have unanimous committee support and no expected debate.
- The Moderator announces the list and asks if any member wishes to "hold" an item for separate discussion.
- Seven (7) Town Meeting Members can rise and request removal.
- If no articles are removed, the entire consent agenda is approved in one vote.

Typical Flow of a Warrant Article

Town Meeting averages 6-8 article decisions each session, more if a Consent Agenda is used





Making Motions and Amendments

Any town meeting member, and ***only a town meeting member***, may make or second a motion. Motions must, in the opinion of the moderator, be ***within the scope of the warrant article*** under consideration.

Main Motions and any Amendments must be made in writing.

- Complete the [fillable PDF](#) Motion template available on the Town Meeting website, OR...
- Complete the Motion template included in the recommendation book
- Submit the completed motion form to the Moderator by hand or email to: moderator@natickma.org

Main Motions ***MUST*** be submitted at least 48 hours in advance of each session.



Other Motions

Motion to Refer: If approved, the subject matter of the article is referred to another agency or board for further consideration.

Motion to Close Debate (aka Move the Question): May be entertained by the moderator only if there are fewer than three people seeking recognition to speak for the first time on the matter at hand.

Motion to Reconsider: A motion to reconsider permits town meeting to rescind the action of a vote already taken during that town meeting and re-vote.

Point of Order: A question of legality or propriety of the proceedings.

Questions of Privilege: Relate first to the conduct of the meeting: the “safety, dignity, and the integrity of its proceedings, and second to the rights, reputations and conduct of the voters or town meeting members individually, in their capacity as voters or members.

Point of No Quorum: Made when a town meeting member questions whether a quorum is still present.

Motions to Recess, to Adjourn to a Fixed Time, or to Fix the Time at Which to Adjourn

Motion to Dissolve: Only in order when every article in the warrant has been disposed of.

Precedence of Motions

When a question is before the town meeting, motions may be received and have precedence as listed in the table.

Motion	Second Required	Debate	Amend	Vote Required
Adjourn or dissolve	Yes	No	No	Majority
Adjourn to a fixed time or recess +++++	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Lay on the table	Yes	Yes+	No	2/3 Majority
For the previous question+++	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority
For secret ballot	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority
Roll call vote	Yes	Yes	No	1/3 Majority
Postpone to a time certain	Yes	Yes+	Yes	Majority
Commit, recommit, or refer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Main Motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority++
Take no action	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Waive Mandatory Conditions Precedent +++++	Yes	Yes	No	2/3 Majority
Reconsideration	Yes	Yes	No	2/3 Majority
Take from the table	Yes	Yes+	No	Majority
Take up an article out of order	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 Majority

+ See By-Laws Article 3, Section 3

++ Some main motions are required by the general laws to be passed by greater than a majority vote; for example, bond issues, zoning changes, the taking of land require a 2/3 vote. For other examples, refer to the appendix in Town Meeting Time entitled "Quantum of Vote."

+++ See Bylaws Article 3, Section 11

++++ See By-Laws Article 1, Section 3

+++++ Finance Committee Public Hearing, see Bylaws Article 3, Section 1; Article 23, Section 4

Decorum in Debate

- When recognized rise and either ***wait for a microphone*** to be brought to you or ***go to the podium***.
- State your ***name and precinct*** or other affiliation before proceeding.
- Speakers ***do not speak directly to or ask questions of one another*** or to a proponent or official, but only to and through the moderator, as in, “Through you, Mr. Moderator.”
- Speakers ***do not refer to others present at the meeting by name***, but by title, or by designations such as “the previous speaker.”
- Speaking ad hominem, that is, commenting on the arguers rather than their arguments, is known in town meeting as “indulging in personalities,” and is not permitted; nor are superfluous speeches, indecent language, or other incivilities.



Making the Most of Your (Town Meeting) Time



- **Prepare your questions in advance** after reviewing the motions, finance committee hearing minutes, and sponsor presentations.
- **Ask questions first, then enter into debate.** Try to separate your questions, or the moderator will separate them for you.
- If you exhaust your **three** questions, **ask fellow members to use their time** to ask additional questions.
- After your initial debate, **listen attentively to other speakers.**
- You have the **option to speak a second time** if no one is seeking the floor for the first time.



Town Meeting Member Resources



[Town Moderator webpage](#)

- Rules & Procedures
- Charter & Bylaws

[Town Meeting webpage](#)

- Nightly agendas
- Supporting materials
- Motions and amendments
- Contact info for Members

[Finance Committee website](#)

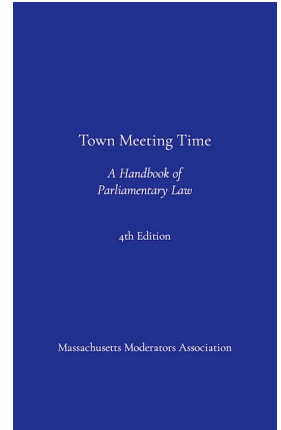
- Recommendation Book
- Detailed budget discussion

[Town Meeting Notifications & Alerts](#)

- Email and text alerts
- Notifications of agendas

[Town Meeting Time](#) (4th Edition)

- Check Library for copies
- Order the correct edition



Town Moderator Contact Information



Email: moderator@natickma.org

Phone: 508-810-7530

Calls, Texts, and Voicemails welcome!

I do NOT (and will NOT) use social media, with the exception of [LinkedIn](#)