

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Section 3, §2-3-7 of the Town Charter provides that:

In all procedural matters, the town meeting shall follow the latest revised edition of *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law*, by Johnson, Trustman, and Wadsworth, except as otherwise provided by the Massachusetts General Laws, the Provincetown General By-Laws, or this charter.

Town Meeting Time is a handbook of parliamentary law prepared under the auspices of the Massachusetts Moderators Association. The procedures detailed in this book are simpler and easier to understand than those of the more widely known Robert's Rules of Order.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE TOWN MODERATOR PERFORM?

The Moderator is an elected official who serves as the presiding officer, deciding all questions of order and making public declaration of all votes. The Moderator's goal is to conduct the Town Meeting in an impartial, yet expeditious, manner, allowing all points of view a fair hearing, while keeping the process moving. The Moderator recognizes people from the floor and, while they are speaking, allows no interruptions, except when a point of order or privilege is raised.

WHAT IS A TOWN MEETING WARRANT?

The warrant is a list of budget items and/or articles proposed to be acted upon by voters at a Town Meeting.

WHAT IS AN ARTICLE?

An article is a proposal which is to be acted upon and voted by the Town Meeting, as set forth in the warrant.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ARTICLE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WARRANT?

Articles are inserted by a vote of the Board of Selectmen. Voters can petition to include an article: For an Annual Town Meeting, an article must be supported by the signatures of 10 registered voters, and, for a Special Town Meeting, by 100 signatures of registered voters.

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES AN INDIVIDUAL, GROUP OR ORGANIZATION MUST FOLLOW TO INCLUDE AN ARTICLE ON THE WARRANT?

A Town Meeting Article petition form is available in the Town Clerk's Office, although no particular form is required, only that the necessary signatures and addresses of registered voters petitioning for the article are affixed or attached to it. Of course, the article must concern a subject which the Town Meeting can lawfully consider and vote upon. It is recommended that the petitioner of the article present the motion at Town Meeting since the article may be dismissed if nobody makes the motion to present said article.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THESE BOARDS RELATIVE TO TOWN MEETINGS?

Board of Selectmen: Prepares the warrant for the Town Meeting and is available at the town Meeting to explain and answer questions concerning the various articles inserted by them in the warrant.

Finance Committee: Reports upon and makes recommendations on the proposed annual budget and all financial articles in the warrant.

Planning Board: Makes recommendations upon those articles which are within their area of responsibility, such as zoning amendments and street acceptances, and are available to answer questions which might arise concerning their planning functions.

School Committee: Speaks upon, and is available to answer questions on school-related articles and other articles concerning subjects which are under their jurisdiction and control.

Town Counsel: Answers questions concerning legal matters which may arise during the course of the Town Meeting.

WHAT IS THE QUORUM REQUIREMENT FOR TOWN MEETING?

The quorum requirement for any Annual Town Meeting or Special Town Meeting is one hundred registered voters.

A Citizen's Guide To Town Meeting



Town of Provincetown, Massachusetts

This Town Meeting guide includes answers to frequently asked questions concerning the Town Meeting process.

The answers are, of necessity, brief. More information can be found by consulting the applicable provisions of the Town of Provincetown Charter as well as the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additional copies may be obtained from the
Town Clerk's Office
260 Commercial Street
Provincetown, Ma 02657
508-487-7013

E-mail: djohnstone@provincetown-ma.gov

TOWN MEETING GUIDE

WHAT IS A TOWN MEETING?

The Town Meeting is the occasion when the voters of the Town assemble to vote and act upon various articles as contained in the warrant. The Town Moderator conducts the Meeting.

HOW OFTEN DOES PROVINCETOWN HAVE A TOWN MEETING?

The Annual Town Meeting is held on the first Monday in April of every year, except when that date falls on a religious holiday, and is called to order at 6:00 p.m. Special Town Meetings may be called as needed, either by the Board of Selectmen, or upon a petition of 200 registered voters of the Town.

WHO MAY ATTEND TOWN MEETING?

Any person may attend a Town Meeting, but only registered voters of the Town of Provincetown may vote. Except by a motion to allow specific non-voters to speak at Town Meeting, non-voting attendees are not permitted on the floor of Town Meeting but can observe the proceedings from the balcony section, as determined by the Town Moderator.

WHAT ARE THE VOTING PROCEDURES AT TOWN MEETING?

Ordinarily, votes are taken by a show of hands. If the Town Moderator deems the vote to be close, or if more than a majority vote is required, the Moderator may direct a hand count be taken. If at least 7 voters challenge the Moderator's declaration of vote, a hand count will be taken. In rare instances, secret ballots may be cast in accordance with procedures specified in Town Meeting Time, although the practice is discouraged due to the length of time needed to conduct ballot voting during Town Meeting.

These are general points, proposals and motions, and have no order of precedence over another. You may introduce any of them at any time, except (a) when a motion to adjourn is pending, (b) when a motion to recess is pending or (c) when a point of privilege is pending. This information is only a guideline. Please refer to the Town of Provincetown By-Laws and Town Meeting Time for full definitions. The Town Moderator rules on all other questions regarding procedure. (NOTE: Motions must be submitted in writing, and be signed and dated by the person making the motion).

You want to:	You say:	May you interrupt the speaker to make this motion?	Is the motion debatable?	Can this motion be amended?	What vote is required?
Introduce an article	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Voter approval depends on article.
Amend a motion	"I move this motion be amended to read..."	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Consider something out of its scheduled order	"I move we take Article # out of order..."	No	Yes	No	2/3 vote
Have a standing vote taken (to verify a show of hands count).	"I doubt the vote, and I request a count."	Yes	No	No	Hand count Mandatory upon request of 7 or more voters.
Request Information	"Mr./Mdm. Moderator, Point of Information."	If urgent and to the point	No	No	No vote. Moderator's Discretion.
Object to an error in procedure or to a personal affront	"Mr./Mdm. Moderator, Point of Order."	Yes	No	No	Moderator Decides.
Register a Complaint	"Mr./Mdm. Moderator, Point of Privilege."	Yes	N/A	N/A	Moderator Decides.
Reconsider an article already disposed of	"I move we reconsider our action relative to Article #."	No	Yes, if original motion was debatable	No	Majority (Note: Motion must be made within 1 hour after the original vote.)