TOWN MEETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT – OCTOBER 23, 2025

OBJECT:

To identify best practices / improvements related to the dissemination of materials and information to town meeting members including but not limited to the warrant, information related to articles, etc. The Advisory Committee will also review the preview/precinct meeting process as well as any other matter related to the preparation for town meeting as well as electronic voting systems for town meeting.

TASKS:

- A. Review warrant and related materials sent to town meeting members
- B. Review preparation prior to town meeting (e.g. preview, precinct meetings)
- C. Review procedures/process day of Town
- D. Review and approve final recommendations for each of the steps in the town meeting process.

MEETINGS:

The plan is to dedicate each meeting to one of the tasks. The intention is to complete the committee's work in four meetings; however, the committee may decide that more time is required to complete its work.

Town Meeting Review Committee		
Name	Email	
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^{*}Completed service on advisory committee as a representative of the School Committee 4/7/2025

The Town Meeting Advisory Committee met on the following dates. Full video recordings are available on Fairhaven TV, Government Access.

- July 17, 2024
- August 21, 2024
- October 9, 2024 (including a walk-through at Silviera Auditorium and gymnasium)
- January 29, 2025
- February 26, 2025
- November 6, 2025 (Voted unanimously to approve the report/recommendations)

A. RECOMMENDATIONS: THE WARRANT AND OTHER MATERIALS SENT TO TOWN MEETING MEMBERS

Issue	Comment	Status/Recommend
Deadline for town meeting	Set a standard of two weeks prior to	Materials get posted to the website
members to receive town meeting	town meeting to mail out all primary	14 days in advance.
materials / warrant booklet	materials.	
Form of distributing town meeting	Via mail, opportunity to pick up hard	Continue to mail materials – with
materials	copies at Town Hall, via email to the	the goal of 14 days of advance.
	distribution list and posted on the	Distribute via email distribution list
	website	with a disclaimer that hard copies
		are primary record. Consider
		adding this requirement to the
		bylaws and include a waiver if the
		bylaw cannot be met.
Calendar for review of articles,	Currently the Select Board Office has	Implemented by Select Board
closing of the warrant and	a schedule. Amy and the Town Clerk	Office.
distribution of materials	have updated the schedule for 2025.	
Information in warrant booklet	Include definitions like Acushnet	Implemented definitions at
	does. Reference what a Yes or No	05/03/25 ATM. Motions/quantum
	vote means for each article.	of vote are incorporated into
		warrants. Moderator to clarify
A and a cile itie.	Former the mount calcus and print	Yes/No votes.
Accessibility	Ensure the warrant colors and print	Implemented disability
	meet ADA requirements. Include statement in each warrant booklet	accommodations statement.
		Recommend adjusting warrant font
Financial information	about disability accommodations. Provide material on town finances	to meet ADA requirements.
Financial information		Implemented at 05/03/25 ATM. See Exhibit D.
	prior to town meeting as reference	See Exhibit D.
Hold special town mostings on	prior to voting on financial articles	Distribute a survey to callect
Hold special town meetings on	Committee believes a Saturday STM	Distribute a survey to collect
Saturday	may drive up attendance.	feedback from Town Meeting
		Members on day preference for
		special town meetings.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS: PREPARATION PRIOR TO TOWN MEETING

Issue	Comment	Status / Recommend
Precinct meeting/preview information	Put on front cover of warrant booklets as opposed to Moderator letter on inside cover. Continue to put information on the website and send information to the email list. Include the information on Fairhaven TV.	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Promote Select Board, Planning Board, CPC meetings (etc.)	Include a master calendar for all warrant article related board meetings leading up to Town Meeting and distribute via posting on web and send out email to list.	Work with Community Development team to promote town meeting process/meetings using town social/website.

Precinct Meetings – Quorum	Should we change the quorum	In process – changed as part of
Frediret Meetings – Quorum	requirement for precinct meetings –	the Home Rule Charter that is
	from 1/3 of total number of seats to	currently in the MA Senate –
	1/3 of total number of filled seats or	moved quorum from 1/3 of total
	some other number to ensure	seats to 1/3 of total filled seats for
	quorums are met.	filling vacancies.
Precinct Meetings – Date	Should precinct meetings only be	Retain both and require precinct
	immediately before town meeting as	meetings/preview prior to any
	opposed to on the day of the preview	town meeting.
	or should there be both – with both	
	scheduled in advance.	
Materials for town meeting	Provide more information – like what	Utilize website work with IT team
members	Plymouth provides, on each article	on setting up links/tabs with info
		on town meeting website.
Orientation/Script for	Establish FAQs/orientation for	Implemented at 5/03/25 Annual
precinct meetings	precinct meetings that all chairs can	Town Meeting
-	use to ensure consistency	
Social Media	Work with comms director on using	Work with town on social media
	town social media to share info about	posts.
	town meeting	
Recruitment	Come up with ways to recruit town	Work with Community
	meeting members to increase	Development on a social media
	participation.	recruitment campaign. Provide
		information for Town
		Administrator to use during their
		community updates. Include
		information on how to become a
		town meeting
		member/qualifications.
1		member/ qualifications

C. RECOMMENDATIONS: PROCEDURES/PROCESS ON DAY OF TOWN MEETING

Issue	Comment	Status/Recommend
Check in procedures	Have town clerk staff use poll pads and	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
	issue receipts that town meeting	
	members can show to staff upon	
	entering the auditorium	
Closed caption	Set up closed caption via monitors in	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
	two locations	
Mobile microphones	Have microphones available on demand	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
	for town meeting members that cannot	
	use the isle mics	
Signage for precinct meetings	Signage posted throughout the	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
	auditorium.	
Electronic voting system	Explore possible system - speak to other	Research voting systems and
	communities that have it (Plymouth)	make recommendation to Town
		Meeting.

Review home rule petitions that allow for hybrid town meetings	Explore possible home rule petition – speak to Plymouth which has a home rule allowing for hybrid town meetings.	Take no further action on this recommendation.
Closed-caption for preview and town meeting	Set up monitors and run software to do in auditorium CC	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Make an audio version of the warrant.	Work with Commission on Disability and Fairhaven TV on this	Recommend implementation.
Provide assisted listening devices	School Department has equipment that can be provided	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Consider interpreters	Target for ATM – Eleanor to pursue	Under review
Make material available in braille	Research providing braille version of warrant/materials	Research cost
Mandatory breaks		Implemented at 05/03/25 ATM, 10-minute breaks every 2 hours.
Calling the question	Move from simple majority to 2/3	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Video presentations for town	Set time limit and establish structure so	Status quo – video is part of 15-
meeting / preview	videos are timely and consistent in	minute presentation rule for
	information provided.	petitioners.
Hand counts	Follow what Rochester does by giving	To be implemented at 11/19/25
	tellers hand clickers to take counts	STM.
Slides	Follow what Rochester did by including summary slides/FAQs for each article with motion slide. Include what Yes and No votes mean	Take no further action.
Childcare services	Follow Rochester's process of providing childcare at town meetings for parents who otherwise would not be able to attend due to lack of childcare.	Distribute a survey to collect feedback from Town Meeting Members on need/interest in childcare services.
ADA accessibility	Ensure the ADA entrance is fully accessible and that a town clerk staff person is assigned to check in those who need assistance.	Implemented at 5/03/25 ATM.
Size of town meeting and quorum	Consider discussion with Charter Committee on size of town meeting and quorum requirements	Size and quorum not included in Home Rule Charter. To be reviewed in the future.

EXHIBIT A: Report from Bob Hannan regarding providing financial information to town meeting members (email to the Town Meeting Advisory Committee on 10/8/2025)

On March 6 I had a productive meeting with George Samia and Anne Carreiro. The ideas that we discussed to improve the financial information provided to Town Meeting are detailed below.

Several of these suggestions were reflected in the material provided for the 2025 Town Meeting. I would suggest that some of that information was more detailed than necessary and could be distilled to a more summary level for Town Meeting members.

- 1. Include a high-level balance sheet and income statement (2 years) available to Town Meeting members as part of the auxiliary meeting materials included on the town website. George and Anne suggested this should be reviewed and confirmed with the new Town Administrator Note An Issue to be addressed, what version should be made available audited (full accrual) or Dept of Revenue version (question for the Finance Committee?)
- 2. Providing an overview of the Town's funding sources perhaps a ppt page with pie chart highlighting mix and how this has changed over time
- 3. Providing additional context on the budget by including
- a. A summary of the key assumptions (COL adjustments, revenue increases/decreases, head count adjustments or consolidations etc)
- b. A variance analysis (%) of proposed budget to current year actuals with line item explanations of any large variances
- 4. Providing a description of any restricted funds referenced in warrant articles (Special Funds, Revolving Funds and Trust Funds) along with current balance.
- 5. In several instances in the 2024 Town meeting warrant there were articles which transferred Retained Earnings from various accounts it would be helpful to include the current balance of retained earnings in the summary information related to the article.