

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 automatic 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
Jessica Fidalgo	jessica.wilder13@yahoo.com
Eleanor Chew	eachew@msn.com
Bob Hannan	bob.hannan@gmail.com
Mark Sullivan	Mfsullivan33@gmail.com
John Hinds	johnhinds@comcast.net
Wayne Hayward	stillsendit@comcast.net
Andrew Romano	aromano@fairhaven-ma.gov
Brendalee Smith*	brendaleesmith@fairhavenps.net
Sharon Simmons	sharonsimmonsrealestate@gmail.com
Vinnie Furtado	vfurtado@fairhaven-ma.gov
Lissa Horan	ehoran@fairhaven-ma.gov
Krystal Lunn	krystal.lunn@gmail.com
Amy Hart	ahart@fairhaven-ma.gov

*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 Silveira 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 members to receive town meeting materials / warrant booklet	Set a standard of two weeks prior to town meeting to mail out all primary materials.	Materials get posted to the website 14 days in advance.
Form of distributing town meeting materials	Via mail, opportunity to pick up hard copies at Town Hall, via email to the distribution list and posted on the website	Continue to mail materials – with the goal of 14 days of advance. Distribute via email distribution list 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, closing of the warrant and distribution of materials	Currently the Select Board Office has a schedule. Amy and the Town Clerk have updated the schedule for 2025.	Implemented by Select Board Office.
Information in warrant booklet	Include definitions like Acushnet does. Reference what a Yes or No vote means for each article.	Implemented definitions at 05/03/25 ATM. Motions/quantum of vote are incorporated into warrants. Moderator to clarify Yes/No votes.
Accessibility	Ensure the warrant colors and print meet ADA requirements. Include statement in each warrant booklet about disability accommodations.	Implemented disability accommodations statement. Recommend adjusting warrant font to meet ADA requirements.
Financial information	Provide material on town finances prior to town meeting as reference prior to voting on financial articles	Implemented at 05/03/25 ATM. See Exhibit D.
Hold special town meetings on Saturday	Committee believes a Saturday STM may drive up attendance.	Distribute a survey to collect 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 requirement for precinct meetings – from 1/3 of total number of seats to 1/3 of total number of filled seats or some other number to ensure quorums are met.	In process – changed as part of the Home Rule Charter that is currently in the MA Senate – moved quorum from 1/3 of total seats to 1/3 of total filled seats for filling vacancies.
Precinct Meetings – Date	Should precinct meetings only be immediately before town meeting as opposed to on the day of the preview or should there be both – with both scheduled in advance.	Retain both and require precinct meetings/preview prior to any town meeting.
Materials for town meeting members	Provide more information – like what Plymouth provides, on each article	Utilize website work with IT team on setting up links/tabs with info on town meeting website.
Orientation/Script for precinct meetings	Establish FAQs/orientation for precinct meetings that all chairs can use to ensure consistency	Implemented at 5/03/25 Annual Town Meeting
Social Media	Work with comms director on using town social media to share info about town meeting	Work with town on social media posts.
Recruitment	Come up with ways to recruit town meeting members to increase participation.	Work with Community Development on a social media recruitment campaign. Provide information for Town Administrator to use during their community updates. Include information on how to become a town meeting 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 issue receipts that town meeting members can show to staff upon entering the auditorium	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Closed caption	Set up closed caption via monitors in two locations	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Mobile microphones	Have microphones available on demand for town meeting members that cannot use the isle mics	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Signage for precinct meetings	Signage posted throughout the auditorium.	Implemented at 11/19/24 STM
Automatic voting system	Explore possible system - speak to other communities that have it (Plymouth)	Research voting systems and 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 Disabilities 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 meeting / preview	Set time limit and establish structure so videos are timely and consistent in information provided.	Status quo – video is part of 15-minute presentation rule for petitioners.
Hand counts	Follow what Rochester does by giving tellers hand clickers to take counts	To be implemented at 11/19/25 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.