



BOXBOROUGH LEADERSHIP FORUM (BLF)

Comprising meetings of the:

Select Board

Finance Committee

Library Board of Trustees

Planning Board

Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee (ABRSC)

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 7 PM

PLACE: *Virtual Meeting* - this meeting is being conducted via Remote Participation, pursuant to the Current Executive Order. Remote participation instructions are provided below.

To Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87652393095?pwd=R0ZBeVlzcGtyMzB3OGpRRnZ6SUtjdz09>

Meeting ID: 876 5239 3095

Passcode: 247930

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,87652393095# US (Washington DC)

+13126266799,,87652393095# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcu75ovHkx>

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order (Planning Board)
2. Introductions (for any new members who may be in attendance)
3. Review and accept minutes of March 16, 2021
4. COVID-19 Updates
5. Select Board Updates
 - Annual Town Meeting [[Link to Warrant](#)]
 - Logistics overview
 - Standard Voter Materials/Information - Moderator Fallon
6. AB Regional School Committee and School Building Project Committee Updates

7. Finance Committee Updates

- Budget updates
 - FY 2021
 - FY 2022

8. Planning Board Updates

9. Library Updates

10. Other business

11. Date: May Meeting/Pre-Town Meeting Forum - **TBD** [*To be Chaired by Planning Board/Moderator*]

12. Adjourn

Boxborough Leadership Forum is comprised of members of the Select Board, Finance Committee, Library Board of Trustees, Planning Board and AB School Committee – a quorum of these respective boards may be present for this meeting.



Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

*Comprising meetings of the: Select Board, Finance Committee,
Library Board of Trustees, Planning Board and the AB Regional School Committee*

Meeting Minutes Tuesday, March 16, 2021

APPROVED: _____

PLACE: *Virtual Meeting* - this meeting is being conducted via Remote Participation, pursuant to the Current Executive Order.

(Parties identified herein may not have been in attendance for the entire duration of this meeting)

Finance Committee: Gary Kushner, Ling Chen, Becky Neville, Diana Lipari and Sachin Mathur

Select Board: Wes Fowlks, Les Fox, John Markiewicz, Maria Neyland and Bob Stemple

ABR School Committee: Tessa McKinley and Adam Klein

Library Board of Trustees: Jennifer Campbell and Mary Brolin (also member of the School Building Comm.)

Planning Board: Cindy Markowitz and Robin Lazarow

Other Attendees: Ryan Ferrara, Town Administrator; Jennifer Barrett, Finance Dir./Town Accountant; Liz Markiewicz, Town Clerk, Peishan Bartley, Library Director; John Fallon, Moderator; Cheryl Mahoney, Administrative Assistant and Kirby Dolak, BXB-TV Supervisor Susan Schmitt

At 7:01 PM, Library Board of Trustees Chair Jennifer Campbell called the virtual meeting to order via ZOOM. This meeting was conducted via Remote Participation, pursuant to the Current Executive Order.

MINUTES

Neville moved to accept the minutes of February 16, 2021. Seconded by Brolin. **Approved by Roll Call Vote: 12-0-2**, Kushner "aye," Neville "aye," Chen "aye," Markowitz "aye," Fowlks "aye," Brolin "aye," Markiewicz "aye," Neyland "aye," Fox "aye," Campbell "aye," Lipari "aye," and Klein "aye." Stemple and Mathur abstained.

LIBRARY UPDATES – Bartley

They have begun the planning needed to allow them to resume our pre-COVID operating hours of 10am-8pm, Monday-Thursday, and 10am-3pm on Saturdays (except for July and August).

AB REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT UPDATES

SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT COMMITTEE – Brolin

Brolin shared an update on the project.

AB REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE - McKinley

Elementary Schools return to in person learning on April 5th; and the High School on April 29th. Staff is scrambling to meet the deadline. Most teachers will have at least one vaccine dose in time for the opening.

They had several new hires: High School Principal; SPED Director and a new Principal for McCarthy/Towne.

They are taking their final FY 22 Budget vote on Thursday. A correction was identified by Barrett and Kushner; a \$9,000 savings. They are still waiting for final votes from Acton FinCom/BSB on their submitted budget.

PLANNING BOARD UPDATES - Markowitz

They have completed the hearing process on proposed Zoning Bylaw Articles.

The Planning Board also has a funding article for the recodification of the Zoning Bylaws,

They will be holding a public hearing on Vibalogic development at 1414 Mass. Ave. A second tenant recently announced that they will also be moving into the property.

COVID-19 UPDATES – Ferrara

The Town's case count stands at 167. The last two weeks we've been trending down, but the State count is concerning. As reported students are heading back to in person learning.

He and the Select Board have been working to encourage the State to locate a super site in the Nashoba Valley. Local stakeholders, including the BSB, have submitted several letters encouraging the state to look at Devens. The State's current vaccination logistics aren't matching up with the demand.

He related the CoA outreach efforts with seniors and the disabled who might need direct assistance with accessing COVID related services including possibly home vaccination. Volunteers have been assisting seniors with enrollment process.

SELECT BOARD UPDATES

Special thanks to Becky Neville and UCC Rev. Cindy for their personal support and how they were able to coordinate other volunteers and resources for the residents displaced by the Harvard Ridge Fire.

Our new Community Services Coordinator, Rose Gage started on Monday and she will be reaching out to these residents.

The Board has reached agreements with all three unions for a one-year contract; which were ratified by the Board last night. An overview of the terms was provided; specifically, the salary adjustment in the Dispatch contract. It was also agreed that the Town will participate in a Public Safety personnel compensation survey. Negotiations for the subsequent three-year agreements will get underway soon.

870 responses were received on the Select Board's Communication survey, most were paper responses. The results were shared. A preference for email versus printed notifications was split. The priority as to who they wanted communications/updates from were Planning Board; Select Board and Town Clerk, in that order. There was discussion as to how other communities provide resident outreach and the need to determine how the Town would manage this process.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The warrant will be signed at the next Select Board meeting.

Logistics Overview - Ferrara

This year's Annual Town Meeting will be a hybrid venue at the Regency [Parade Room and Parking Lot] Saturday morning, June 12th. An aerial diagram was shared. The intention is for this to be a one-day event. They are discussing food sale options with the Regency. There was discussion as to the necessary set-up time and how registration would impact what time the ATM would be convened. It was suggested ATM start at 9:00 AM with registration opening at 8:00 AM. There will be one registration process and then voters would decide where they would sit. It was suggested about putting out a letter and doing a video explaining this process. Concern was voiced about the inconveniences related to a Saturday meeting; specifically, for employees. It was noted that the necessary logistics could cause tension and everyone just needs to practice patience and understanding. There was discussion as to voter rights, impact of the vaccination count by ATM, and the related mask and social distancing protocols and segregated seating for non-voters, and those voters that decline the mask protocol. The intention is to mail out the warrant in the standard April timeframe; this allows the Annual Town Election Ballot for May 18th to be delivered in compliance with Election Laws.

Initial review of standard Voter Materials/Information - Moderator Fallon

An assistant Moderator will need to be recruited for the outdoor venue.

There was an overview of the standard Town Meeting documents; noting that modifications may be needed.

The desire is to keep the Article Two presentations short. It was suggested that something similar to tonight's School Bldg. Project presentation also be provided. In an effort to keep ATM discussions flowing it was suggested that when recommendations are called for, the committee's spokesperson would simply state, "For the reasons printed in the warrant;" that parties discussing possible amendments be encouraged to provide their amendments to ATM stakeholder prior to ATM; and the 3-minute Q & A timing be re-visited.

There was discussion as to providing one central ATM resource on the website.

There are 40 articles, a significant number assigned to consent agendas

The Liberty Field Project is addressed with three separate articles.

There are Two Sense of the Meeting Articles.

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATES

FY 2022 Budget/ATM updates

They had to hold a revote because of the Personnel Board revised salary recommendation.

They have had several significant discussions on Article #3 – Clerk Stipend and have determined to calculate the Clerk's salary at 6 weeks, as a place holder.

They have received the CBU contracts

We are waiting for the Planning Bd.'s final language on the Hazardous Waste bylaw article

They held a joint meeting with the Select Board last night to approve article funding sources.

There is not unanimous support for either Articles 4 or 5.

The next BLF meeting will be April 20, and Chaired by the Planning Board. Further the Pre-Town Meeting Forum would be rescheduled to the May BLF meeting, TBD.

ADJOURN

At 8:20 PM, Markiewicz moved to Adjourn. Seconded by Campbell. **Approved by Roll Call Vote: 14-0**, Kushner "aye," Neville "aye," Chen "aye," Fowlks "aye," Brolin "aye," Markiewicz "aye," Klein "aye," Lipari "aye," Fox "aye," Neyland "aye," Stemple "aye," McKinley "aye," Markowitz "aye," and Campbell "aye."

Exhibits

Agenda

Minutes of 2/16/2021 – Draft

ABRSD Building Project Presentation

ATM Process Documents

BLF Chairing Schedule

2021 Town Meeting, Budget,
Warrant Article Calendar

April

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10
				Warrant to Printer	
12	13	14	15	16	17
Holiday	BLF 20	21	22	23	24
				Warrant Mailed	
26	27	28	29	30	
		Presentations Due			

May

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1
3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	12	13	14	15
ATM Rescheduled					
17	18	19	20	21	22
	Town Election				
24	25	26	27	28	29

June

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Holiday	1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11	12
					ATM Begins [Sun. 6/13 Rain date]
14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30	FY 2022		
		End of FY 2021			

TOWN MEETING PROCESS

Motions

- Motions are made by the registered voter who sponsors the article
- Each motion requires a “second”
- Sponsor of the article explains/presents arguments in favor of the article: max 10 minutes
- Other Town Boards may comment on the motion. (No more than 3 minutes allowed)

Debate

- Speakers with questions or comments must be at one of two alternating microphones; the microphones may be marked “yes” or “no”
- Speakers must stand in line or sit in a designated chair behind a microphone
- Clearly speak your name and address before asking a question or making a comment
- All speakers are limited to 3 minutes. A clock will be running on the projection screen.
- Comments must be related to the motion (within the “four corners” of the motion)
- Comments must be civil. Disagree without being disagreeable
- Sponsor of the motion stays at the front microphone to answer questions, not debate
- Moderator will recognize sponsor, Finance Committee or BSB for comments as appropriate

Amendments

- Once a motion has been moved and seconded it is subject to amendments from the floor
- Amendments must be in writing and given to the Town Clerk before they are made; they may be given to the Town Clerk at the start of the meeting or before the article is debated
- Forms for amendments are available on the tables at the back of the hall
- Boxborough’s practice is not to allow “amendments to amendments” except for the personnel plan, the operating budget article, or to clarify the amendment
- Maker of the amendment will present the amendment to the TM. (No more than 3 minutes allowed)
- Moderator will call on the maker and related boards of the original motion, for comments; after which the amendment will be open for debate on the floor

Debate Closes

- When there are no speakers in line or when a resident says “I move the question”
- Motion to move the question is not debatable. It takes precedence and requires a 2/3 vote
- Sponsor or a person from the same board/committee may not move to close the debate
- Residents cannot state their opinion and then immediately move the question to close the debate
- In very rare circumstances, the motion to “move the question” may be ruled out of order if the moderator believes that there has not been a sufficient debate or information
- If the motion is ruled out of order, the maker of the motion will be recognized later to make the motion

Reconsideration

- Boxborough does not have a Town Meeting By-law governing reconsideration of an article
- Each meeting can vote to adopt a reconsideration rule for that meeting
- Absent adoption of a reconsideration rule any article can be reconsidered at any time

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Boxborough Town Meeting May 2021

Persuade

The goal of a presentation at Town Meeting is to convince the Meeting to support your proposal. The best approach in most cases is to aim your presentation at the undecided voters.

You are there to answer these basic questions:

- ☆ **What is the need/problem?**
- ☆ **What is the proposed solution?**
- ☆ **How does it benefit the town?**
- ☆ **How much will it cost and how will it be funded (if applicable)?**

Consider whether you want to address opposing views in your presentation or wait for a question from the floor. Ask yourself: Will incorporating the criticism take you off message? Will you be raising an issue that might not otherwise surface? Will you gain an advantage by raising the concern and framing it in a light most favorable to your point of view?

Prepare

Talk with your committee and identify the key points you want to make in your presentation.

Assume that the Town's residents have read the material you put in the warrant, but *do not assume that Town residents know all relevant background*. Briefly include history as it directly impacts the article. Let someone not directly involved read or listen to the presentation and ask questions as part of your preparation.

Provide handouts at town meeting for complex information or supporting documents so your presentation focuses on the high points.

Prepare responses to potential questions that might arise during discussion. You can include additional slides not in your original presentation to address complex questions. Consider allowing other committee members to answer questions if they have a fuller grasp of the topic.



Present

Most issues are capable of being presented in much less than ten minutes. Keep your presentation short, but interesting.

A presentation can be solely verbal or involve PowerPoint slides. If your article is capable of being presented verbally don't feel compelled to do slides.

Use your slides as a guideline or visual support for your presentation but do not simply read them aloud. Keep slides simple and uncluttered. Use contrasting colors and large fonts. Slides should contain:

- ☆ **Key facts**
- ☆ **High-level points**
- ☆ **Pictures or graphs as needed**

Practice your presentation and its timing (both pace and length). Use audiences unfamiliar with your issue to see what questions arise.

Familiarize yourself with the podium and the microphones before the meeting starts. Hold the mike very close to your mouth so people can hear you.

If you are using PowerPoint, the Town Administrator's Department Assistant will run your presentation. Presentations are to be formatted in a 4:3 Aspect Ratio and a template can be provided. Adhere to all deadlines for submission to ensure your presentation is ready at town meeting.

When the floor is open for discussion, be receptive to the questions. The question may be repetitive, off-point, or uninformed. Trust the moderator to intervene if a questioner is uncivil or the question is out of order. You may give a bad impression if you treat the question or the questioner without respect or patience.

Once the floor is open for discussion don't rebut each comment. Unless the speaker presents inaccurate information, let it go. You can ask the Moderator to make a clarifying statement if necessary.



TIME GUIDELINES

Boxborough Town Meeting May 2021

General Reports

Under Article 2 & Introduction to the Budget Article (Finance Committee)

With the exception of the Finance Committee, Boxborough Select Board, and School Committee, general reports to the Town Meeting should be:

- ☆ **Limited to topics that are out of the ordinary**
- ☆ **Not already covered in the Warrant or Annual Town Report**
- ☆ **Not capable of being covered by a handout**

Reports should be under the following time limits:

- ☆ **Finance Committee (under budget article) - 15 minutes**
- ☆ **Boxborough Select Board & School Committee - 10 minutes**
- ☆ **All other reports - 5 minutes**

There will be no question and answer period after general reports.

Presentations under Warrant Articles

Except in very complex situations, the one presentation relating to a warrant article should be done by one person and limited to 10 minutes (preferably less).

- ☆ Include a summary in the warrant when you submit it with relevant details.
- ☆ If needed, handouts can be placed on tables at the rear of the hall.
- ☆ Presentations should summarize the main points. *See Presentation Guidelines.*
- ☆ *Please prepare PowerPoint presentations in the **standard (4:3) size**. Do not use widescreen (16:9). You can see which format is selected by looking at the PowerPoint Design tab under Slide Size.*
- ☆ Submit an electronic copy of all presentations, along with the name of the individual presenting, to the Town Administrator's Department Assistant by **Wednesday, April 28** as all presentations will be run from the same computer. *If late, you may not be able to use a slide presentation for your article.*

Comments, Questions, & Recommendations under Articles

Comments and questions from the floor on warrant articles, including recommendations by Town Boards and amendments, should be limited to no more than 3 minutes per speaker. Speakers can comment more than once if debate continues.

FLYERS AND SALES POLICY

Boxborough Town Meeting May 2021

Flyer Authorization

- Flyers will be authorized if they relate directly to the business of Town Meeting and/or are issued by a Town government body and/or are issued by a local non-profit organization. The name of the sponsoring person or organization must be listed on the flyer.
- Flyers must be submitted to the Town Moderator, the Town Clerk or the Town Administrator for approval prior to Town Meeting.
- The Chairs of any elected Board may also authorize a flyer if the content is under the purview of her/his respective Board. Chairs must alert the Town Clerk, Town Administrator, Town Department Assistant and Town Moderator of any flyers that have been authorized.

Flyer Distribution

- Parties are responsible for making copies for town meeting. Town hall is not responsible for copying or creating packets of documents.
- There will be two or more tables at the back of the Hall/in the corridor for flyers. Some will be reserved for “official” Town Meeting material.
- Flyers advertising “for-profit” groups will not be allowed. The Town Clerk or Town Administrator or Moderator should be contacted if there is a special case.
- Based on advice from Town Counsel, no political flyers or flyers relating to an override will be allowed in either the Hall or in the corridor. Flyers concerning politics, election, or an override ballot must be distributed outside the building.

Sales [NOTE: Sales may be suspended due to COVID-19 regulations at the time of the meeting.]

- Due to space considerations, only one non-profit organization shall be allowed to sell refreshments inside the hall. The deadline for application is three weeks before the meeting. If more than one organization applies, one will be chosen by a random drawing. This organization will be allowed to sell merchandise and to have general material relating on the table. Flyers relating to issues coming before Town Meeting will not be allowed at the refreshment table.
- All other sales at Town Meeting shall be limited to local non-profits and located in the corridor outside the Hall and ideally should take place only before and after the Meeting so as not to interrupt the business of Town Meeting.
- If a group or organization wants a staffed table in the corridor outside the Hall, they should contact the Town Administrator or Moderator at least one week in advance of Town Meeting (preferably earlier). The limited amount of space is assigned on a first come first served basis.

TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH TOWN MEETING: A GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS

On behalf of all the elected and appointed officials of the Town of Boxborough:

WELCOME TO TOWN MEETING.

This is your chance to make your voice heard and make your vote count.

Remember: YOU Are the Town Government.

What is Town Meeting?

Town Meeting is the foundation of Town Government, the purest form of direct democracy and fiscal responsibility. While the elected officials and appointed department heads supervise the day-to-day running of the town and schools, their authority extends only to managing employees and administering the expenditures that have already been voted by Town Meeting.

Boxborough has an Open Town Meeting form of government where each resident has the right to be heard in a respectful and civil fashion and each registered voter has the right to have their vote count. Open Town Meeting government is the best insurer of liberty by giving the primary power to the citizens. Attendance at Boxborough's Town Meetings runs around 150 to 200 voters out of approximately 4,000, while 200 legislators in the State House and Senate represent 7 million Massachusetts residents.

During a typical Town Meeting, voters approve the town's annual and supplemental budgets for schools and general government, vote on additional capital expenditures for equipment or buildings, authorize changes to zoning, land, or other town bylaws, approve compensation for employees and elected officials, acquire roads or parcels of land, and more.

Most of the money the town spends is generated from the local property tax. (Some comes from state aid or special funds.) Each spending decision made by Town Meeting has a direct effect on each voter's tax bill and on the quality of service the town provides for schools, highways, police and fire protection, conservation, recreation, library, etc. Town Meeting is the official convening of a legally constituted legislative body with power to make laws, levy taxes, and authorize expenditures.

What is the Warrant?

The warrant is the agenda for Town Meeting. Town Meeting does not come to an end until all the agenda items on the warrant articles have been decided: approved, defeated or no action deliberately taken. Only those articles of business that have been included in the warrant may be legally acted upon at Town Meeting. Warrants can vary in length, and the amount of debate on a given article can vary widely. No one can predict how many nights it will take to complete the business of any given Town Meeting, so this is a form of government that requires dedication by the citizens to see it to completion.

What about the Election?

Although it is held at a separate place and time, at Town Hall on the Tuesday in May after the Annual Town Meeting opens, the election is the part of Annual Town Meeting at which Town officials are elected. Some Town Meeting expenditures and sometimes other items require both an affirmative vote at Town Meeting as well as the passage of a ballot question. Tax and debt exclusion overrides are decided by election ballot. A debt exclusion exempts from the Prop. 2 1/2 limits the amounts borrowed for the duration of the loan; a capital outlay exclusion exempts the amount for a specific item, while an operating override raises the tax cap permanently.

Who Participates in Town Meeting?

Voters: Every registered voter in town is a legislator, with full power to participate in budgeting, allocation of funds and law-making. At Town Meeting the job of the voter is to listen, to ask questions, to offer arguments for or against a question, and to vote to decide each article on the warrant. Anyone who is not a registered voter of the Town of Boxborough is welcome to attend Town Meeting, but may not vote, and can address Town Meeting only with permission. Non-registered voters sit in their own section of the hall.

Moderator: The elected official who presides over Town Meeting and is responsible for its conduct consistent with bylaws and the parliamentary procedures defined in Town Meeting Time. [Town Meeting Time is a handbook of parliamentary law that is published by the Massachusetts Moderators Association and used by the vast preponderance of Massachusetts town meetings.] The Moderator has broad authority to accept parliamentary motions, regulate debate, and rule speakers in or out of order.

Town Clerk: The Town Clerk is the elected official responsible for maintaining town records, conducting elections, and recording the votes and actions taken at Town Meeting.

Town Counsel: A representative from KP | LAW, the firm providing legal services to the town, attends town meeting to offer advice as to the legality of proposed actions the town may be considering.

Finance Committee: This branch of town government is a standing committee appointed by the Moderator. They have authority to consider all municipal questions and make reports or recommendations to Town Meeting. The Finance Committee reviews every line item in each department's budget, and submits the total budget. They recommend for or against each article on the warrant, based on their calculation of its impact on the tax rate, the town's financial position, and the spending priorities of the town. Their report is included with the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Each member of the Committee can speak and vote independently as a citizen.

Boxborough Select Board: Members of the Select Board have an important role before Town Meeting occurs. They prepare the warrant, obtain legal opinions where needed, make recommendations on specific articles, collect recommendations from other boards and committees, and cause the warrant to be mailed. At Town Meeting itself, their role is the same as other boards and committees. They will often make the main motion under an article, offer information, particularly through their appointed standing or ad hoc committees, or answer questions. Each member of the board can speak and vote independently as a citizen.

Boards and Committees: These elected and appointed boards have jurisdiction over various areas including schools, planning, zoning, conservation, recreation, library, and elder affairs. Their representatives will often offer the main motion on an article, give special presentations, or supply information on articles being considered. Each member of a board or committee can speak and vote independently as a citizen.

Petitioners: Any ten voters have the right to petition the Select Board to put an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. This number increases to one hundred for a scheduled Special Town Meeting and to two hundred to petition the Board to call a Special Town Meeting. These petitioners will often offer the main motion on their article, give a presentation if desired, or supply information on the article. An article submitted by petition has the same status as other articles on the warrant. To insure the best possible outcome, petitioners should contact the Town Administrator, Town Moderator, and other impacted Town officials as far in advance of Town Meeting as possible to discuss article language and process.

What Happens at Town Meeting?

Articles are usually considered in the order in which they appear on the warrant. An article may be taken out of order by majority vote. Each article is taken up in a similar way.

Motion: First the Moderator asks for a motion concerning the article, and a motion is made, generally by the person who put the article on the warrant, recommending action to be taken with regard to the article. The motion is then seconded. Voters should listen closely to the motion as stated since the vote and debate is on the motion which may be slightly different than the article as printed in the warrant. The mover then takes the floor and makes a presentation offering background on the article and reasons that it should be passed. The Moderator then asks for the recommendations on the article which are provided by the Finance Committee and other reporting committees.

Debate: Following the recommendations, debate is open. Voters must be recognized by the Moderator and clearly state their name and address before speaking. In most cases speakers are recognized using "alternating microphones" which may be labeled "yes" and "no". Any registered voter may speak to an article, ask questions, voice comments or criticism, or offer information. With one exception, all speakers must be at microphones and cannot be interrupted by others. Remarks must be limited to the content of the article and be civil and respectful to others at the meeting. The mover remains available to answer questions but can also participate on the same basis as any other voter. Non-voters can speak with the permission of the Moderator and/or meeting members. Technically all comments are directed to the Town Meeting through the Moderator but this is observed more in the breach than reality in Boxborough. The only exception to interrupting a speaker or being recognized by the Moderator from the floor is for a voter to stand and raise a "point of order".

Open and full debate is the hallmark of the New England Town Meeting. Most Massachusetts town meetings have formal or informal restrictions on how long and how often voters can speak on any article. Boxborough's limitations are 10 minutes for a presenter and 3 minutes for a speaker. Brevity is a virtue and voters are encouraged to add new points to the debate rather than repeat what others have said. New speakers and new points of view are always encouraged. [Sometimes being over-long or repetitious can actually hurt a speaker's case.] When no more debate is offered, or debate is ended by "Moving the Previous Question", a vote is taken.

Voting: Most articles are decided by a simple majority. Some votes carry higher requirements, for example zoning bylaw changes need a two-thirds majority. Decisions can be made by a voice vote, a show of hands, or having voters stand while they are counted by tellers. Very infrequently, votes are taken by paper ballot. The Moderator declares the outcome of a voice and/or show of hands vote. If seven (7) people question the outcome, then a count by tellers will be made.

Amendments: Amendments can be offered to any article being debated. To offer an amendment, a voter needs to give the text to the Town Clerk in writing on a special form before the amendment is made. The Moderator will then recognize the mover of the amendment, and the amendment will be debated and voted up or down before returning to debate on the article as a whole. “Amendments to amendments” are generally not allowed except for the personnel plan, the operating budget article, or to clarify the amendment. Further information regarding amendments may be found on the *Town of Boxborough Amendment Work Sheet*.

Consent Agenda: Articles on the Consent Agenda are exceptions to the general process of Town Meeting. In every Town Meeting warrant the Select Board, in consultation with Town Counsel, the Moderator and the Finance Committee, identify those articles they feel should generate no controversy and can be properly voted without debate. These articles are put on the Consent Agenda to allow motions under these articles to be acted upon as one unit and to be passed without debate.

At the call of the Consent Agenda, the Moderator will read out the numbers of the articles, one by one. If one or more voters object to any particular article being included in the Consent Agenda, they say “Hold” in a loud voice when the number is called. The article will then be removed automatically from the Consent Agenda and restored to its original place in the warrant, to be debated and voted upon in the usual manner. After the calling of the individual items in the Consent Agenda, the Moderator will ask for a motion that the voters pass all items remaining AS A UNIT on one vote. Use of the Consent Agenda process makes the Town Meeting more efficient by speeding up the handling of non-controversial items.

Operating Budget: The operating budget for the Town is somewhat different from other articles. This article is moved and presented by the Finance Committee and the Finance Committee may speak to individual line items. During debate, the elected or appointed officials or staff responsible for the various line items may also speak to their department’s budget. One note concerning the school budgets: while detail information may be presented in the warrant, by state law only the bottom line of the regional school assessment is voted by Town Meeting.

Quorum: There is no quorum required for any session of Town Meeting. So long as the Town Clerk is present, the Moderator can call a session to order at her/his discretion no matter how few voters are present, and the actions taken will be perfectly legal.

Reconsideration: Unless the Town Meeting votes to set rules otherwise, an article may be reconsidered on any night of the Town Meeting in which it was originally voted. The Town can vote to amend or defeat an article that has already passed, or re-vote and pass an article that was previously defeated. Each Town Meeting has the right to set its own rules on reconsideration for that meeting.

Selected Common Parliamentary Motions:

I move that this meeting be dissolved: This motion, if passed, ends the Town Meeting. It is in order only when all articles on the warrant have been disposed of in some way. It cannot be debated or amended and takes a simple majority.

I move to lay on the table: This motion, if passed, ends debate on the motion on the floor without any action. It cannot be debated or amended and takes a two-thirds majority to pass. If it passes, and Town Meeting ends without the motion being taken back off the table, the article is effectively defeated.

I move to take Article ___ off the table: This motion, if passed, brings an article back before Town Meeting for debate on the motion and action. It cannot be debated or amended and takes only a simple majority to pass.

I move the previous question: This motion, if passed, ends debate and forces an immediate vote on the article/amendment being debated. It cannot be debated or amended and takes a two-thirds majority to pass. If it fails, debate continues on the original item on the floor. Since this is a highly privileged motion, and a two-thirds vote is a high threshold, the Moderator will usually accept this motion unless it is extremely clear that both sides of an argument have not been heard.

I move that debate on the pending motion be limited to ___minutes or ___minutes per speaker: This motion, if passed, sets the clock ticking on a debate. It cannot be debated or amended and takes a two-thirds majority to pass. It can be undone by a motion to “**extend debate**” which is not debatable or amendable and also takes a two-thirds vote. [Note: this is a motion that has seldom, if ever, been used in Boxborough during the last 25 years.]

I move that the pending motion be amended by...: This motion, if passed, changes the content of the motion being debated. Once the motion to amend is made and seconded, debate ceases on the main motion until the motion to amend is voted up or down. The motion to amend can be debated, and takes a majority vote to pass no matter what vote is needed to pass the original motion.

I move reconsideration of Article___: This motion, if passed, nullifies a previous vote of Town Meeting and brings a previously passed or defeated article back to the floor for debate a second time. This article can be debated, and cannot be amended. Unless the Town Meeting votes to set rules otherwise, in Boxborough it is always in order and takes a simple majority to pass. If the reconsideration article passes, it is as if the earlier debate and vote never took place.

Point of order: This is the one time that a speaker at a microphone can be interrupted from the floor. This is not really a motion at all but a question or comment, and thus cannot be debated or voted. The Moderator will immediately stop discussion, listen to the point of order and rule on it. Points of order could relate to the right of the speaker to the floor, the germaneness of the speaker’s comments to the article under consideration, proper procedure, conduct of a speaker, or an error on the part of the Moderator.

Selected Quotes:

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” Sir Winston Churchill, Speech in House of Commons 1947.

“We were all friends and neighbors before this meeting; after this meeting we will still be neighbors; hopefully we will still be friends.” Reginald C. (Reg) Brown, Boxborough Town Moderator 1977 to 2005.

“Civility at Town Meeting is not optional.” Various and sundry Town Moderators in Massachusetts.

Prepared by the Boxborough Moderator John Fallon with assistance from a great many people



TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH AMENDMENT WORK SHEET

Select the appropriate sections below by marking the box.
Please print neatly and cross through all words that do not apply.

I move to amend Article ____
by striking the words _____

and by substituting the words _____

I move to amend Article ____
by striking in its entirety {Section | Paragraph} # _____
and by substituting in its place the following: {Section | Paragraph} # _____

I move to amend Article ____
by adding the following {words | sentence | paragraph} _____

after the words _____

Name (printed): _____ Signature: _____
Street: _____ Date: _____

See instructions and information on reverse

Continuation

Instructions for using this form:

- Neatly print all information.
- Select the appropriate section to be used by marking the check box.
- In the selected section, cross through all words that are not to be part of the amendment.
- Fill in the identification information and signature at the bottom of the form.
- Request to be recognized by the Moderator and then move the amendment by reading the completed form.
- Present the completed and signed form to the Moderator.

General Information:

- An amendment may be made to modify either the main motion already on the floor or another amendment that has been previously moved.
- All motions to amend must be presented to the Moderator in writing.
- All amendment must keep the amended motion within the general scope of the originally posted warrant article. This is referred to as “within the four corners” of the article.
- Town Counsel may be asked to review an amendment and present an opinion on the legality of the amendment prior to being accepted by the Moderator for consideration by town meeting.
- Amendments should (if possible) be carefully written and reviewed prior to town meeting.
- It is strongly recommended that the Moderator be made aware of the intention to present an amendment well before the start of Town Meeting or as soon as possible within Town Meeting.**