

Citizen's Guide to Longmeadow Town Meeting

Annual Town Meeting.

The Town Meeting, as practiced in the Town of Longmeadow, remains the purest form of democracy. It is only practiced by communities in New England. The registered voters of Longmeadow act as the Legislature for their community and vote on applicable issues put before them for decision. These issues are important; the input of the citizenry is key. A citizen must be in attendance to fully participate.

Effective in 2006, the annual Longmeadow Town Meeting will be held on the last Tuesday of April at 7:30 in the evening. The Town Meeting is held in the Gymnasium of Longmeadow High School, with the auditorium and /or the cafeteria used for over-flow seating. Town Meeting can last from one to five hours in length.

Special Town Meeting

The Special town meeting is held in the Fall on a date set by the Select Board. The Special Town Meeting warrant articles historically address budget/appropriations adjustments for Town Departmental budgets, but are not restricted to these type articles. The Select Board shall call a special town meeting upon request in writing by not less than 3% of registered voters, such meeting to be held not later than forty-five days after the receipt of such request, and shall insert in the warrant therefore all subjects the insertion of which shall be requested by said petition (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 39, Section 10).

Admission to Meeting.

At a Town Meeting held for the transaction of Town business, the only persons eligible to vote are those whose names appear on the current voting rolls of the Town. The Moderator has authority to exclude or remove a person who is not eligible to be admitted to the floor of Town Meeting.

Attendance by Non-Voters.

The Moderator can admit to a Town Meeting a media representative or any person whose knowledge, in the opinion of the Moderator, can assist the voters in achieving a better understanding of a question before the Meeting. Non-voters, observers and the media will wear a badge for identification and will be seated together, in a specified/identified area

Order and Decorum.

The Moderator (an elected official) has the duty and responsibility to preserve order and decorum in a Town Meeting. The Moderator has authority to direct a police officer or constable of the Town to act appropriately to maintain that decorum. Regarding parliamentary procedure, the Moderator conducts and controls Town Meeting by using and enforcing existing Town by-laws, the rules contained in Town Meeting Time and officially recognized parliamentary procedures and techniques.

Quorum.

Fifty (50) voters constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a Town Meeting.

What is a Warrant?

The Select Board shall issue a warrant stating the time and place for the town meeting and the subjects (warrant articles) to be addressed. The warrant shall be available in Town Hall, other public places and delivered, using existing local print media resources, to households at least 7 days before the annual town meeting and 14 days before any special town meeting, per General Laws, Chapter 39, Section 10.

What is a Petition/Citizen article for a Warrant?

The Select Board shall insert in the annual town meeting warrant any petition/citizen articles requested in writing by ten (10) or more registered voters, and 100 or more registered voters for any special town meeting, per Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 39, Section 10.

Order of Articles.

The Moderator shall present to Town Meeting the articles in the warrant in the order in which the articles appear in the warrant; but the meeting may direct an adjustment to that order by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the voters present.

Notice of Business.

An item of business is out of order at a Town Meeting if it is outside the scope of an article designated for action in the warrant published prior to Town Meeting.

Speaker Identification.

A person who wishes to speak at a Town Meeting will move to one of the available microphones, take a place in line if applicable, address the Moderator, and identify themselves by name and address. The Moderator is authorized to refer to a person by name for the purpose of identification or recognition; other than this instance, no person can refer to another person by name in a Town Meeting.

Debate Question.

To ask another Town Meeting voter a question relating to debate, that question must be put to/through the Moderator.

What is a Motion?

A motion is presented by a Town Meeting member from the floor and is used to initiate debate/discussion or a course of action. The Moderator shall put all motions in the order in which they are moved, unless a specific motion is previous in its nature. Regarding motions, the initial vote pertains to the motion upon the article; not the contents of and decision on that warrant article in question.

Written Motion. The Moderator can require a motion be put in writing.

Extents of Speech.

Except when the Moderator has recognized a voter for the correction of an error or to state an explanation, a voter is not entitled to speak more than twice on any question/article until others who have not spoken have had an opportunity to do so. A voter is not entitled to speak more than three (3) times on any one question/article, without first obtaining leave of Town Meeting (through the Moderator) to do so.

Counting Votes.

The Moderator shall announce that only those voters who occupy seats on the floor of the meeting are eligible to be counted on the vote. The Moderator has authority to instruct the tellers (counters) to count the votes of specific voters who are unable to obtain seats on the floor of the meeting. The Moderator shall cause the question before the meeting to be distinctly and clearly stated(read) and, sequentially, the Moderator shall request those who choose to vote in the affirmative to rise, then those who choose to vote in the negative to rise. Voters will stand in place until they are counted by the tellers, or raise their voting card, as appropriate.

The tellers shall carefully count the voters and report to the Moderator. The Moderator shall announce the number of voters in the affirmative and those in the negative. If a two-thirds vote for an action at a Town Meeting is required by statute, the Moderator, per General Laws Chapter 39, Section 15, as amended, may dispense with the requirement of taking a count of the vote if the Moderator, in his discretion and without taking a count, determines that two-thirds of those voting supported this action.

(Prepared by the Standing Rules Committee, as appointed by the Town Moderator)