



Important Information for Town Meeting Members Regarding Needham's October 25 Special Town Meeting

From the Moderator: Michael K. Fee

We're back!!

After holding three sessions outdoors since June 2020, we are returning to the friendly confines of James Hugh Powers Hall for our Special Town Meeting on October 25, 2021. How wonderful it will be to see all of you in our traditional meeting place. Our concerns about possible rain, dissipating sunlight, strong breezes and plunging temperatures are gone. While meeting outdoors was certainly an experience to remember, we can now return to a more comfortable and familiar environment.

Safety Precautions

As we all know, we have made tremendous strides in our battle against COVID-19, but safety remains of paramount concern. Please be assured that we have instituted several precautions to protect the health and wellness of all who will attend Special Town Meeting indoors at Town Hall. Specifically, we are taking the following steps:

- requiring that face masks must be worn at all times, even when a person is addressing Town Meeting (with the exception of the Town Moderator and Town Clerk who are on stage);
- reducing the number of people in Powers Hall by having Town of Needham employees (such as department heads) who typically attend Town Meeting watch Special Town Meeting remotely from offsite;
- revising the seating plan to allow for more spacing throughout the hall; and

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- utilizing standing microphones rather than passed hand-held mics. As we did at the outdoor meetings, when recognized by the Moderator, move to the nearest standing mic to speak and leave your mask on your face.

In addition, the Town's Building Maintenance Division has inspected the ventilation system that serves the Great Hall and installed MERV-13 filters to maximize the indoor air quality. The HVAC system is operating optimally, bringing fresh air into the building meeting the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards. Windows may be cracked to allow additional outside air to circulate, but they cannot be opened wide, or it will defeat the efficiency of the HVAC system. The airflow from the slightly open windows may impact the indoor temperature and it may be chilly for Members seated near the windows. We recommend bringing an extra layer to provide warmth.

As a reminder, please do not attend Town Meeting if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 10 days or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days. Please stay home if you are feeling unwell or have any of the following symptoms:

- Cough;
- shortness of breath;
- fever; or
- loss of taste or smell.

If you are feeling sick or even just a little "under the weather," please prioritize the health and wellness of yourself and the community and do not attend Special Town Meeting.

If you are eligible for a 3rd (booster) COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine and you wish to receive it in advance of Special Town Meeting, you may make an appointment with Needham Public Health at <https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/needham> or find an alternative location nearby at <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/>

The Warrant, Warrant Articles, Presentations

The Special Town Meeting Warrant contains 12 Articles, two of which are resolutions requested through Citizen Petitions. While circumstances do change, as of this writing, I anticipate that all these Articles will be presented for your consideration and vote on October 25.

Although we are returning to Powers Hall, we are still mindful of public health concerns that militate in favor of keeping our meeting more condensed than in the past and minimizing the length of time we convene. Our experience during the last year has provide us with some innovations that help promote this goal. One is viewing the presentations of proponents of the Articles and the Finance Committee in advance of the meeting. For the upcoming Special Town Meeting, we will continue this practice. Members are encouraged to view the video

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presentations on the Town's YouTube page <http://needhamma.gov/needhamyoutube>. Videos should be available through the Town website after October 16.

Supporting materials will also be posted in advance. There will be no materials distributed at the meeting and the table full of materials customarily situated at the rear of the hall will not exist.

While the videos have proven to be very popular with many Members, my review of the actual number of "Views" each presentation received in advance of our Annual Town Meeting in May revealed that nowhere near the total number of Town Meeting Members accessed the videos in advance. One advantage to in-person presentations is that everyone sees and hears the same thing. As Moderator, I want to see the largest possible number of people informed about the matters before Town Meeting. The more informed you are as a Town Meeting Member, the more effective you are as a representative. For this reason, I will ask Proponents and the Finance Committee to make live, in-person remarks at Special Town Meeting that last no longer than FIVE MINUTES. This is not intended to replace or repeat the content of the videos. Rather, the intent is for the speakers to remind Town Meeting Members of the subject matter of an Article and then summarize the proponents' and Finance Committee's views. After these brief remarks, we will turn to discussion. I will seek your unanimous consent to establish this process for this meeting.

Another innovation we are keeping for this meeting is the ability to ask questions in advance of Town Meeting. The Town has created a dedicated email address where Members and the public may submit questions to the proponents or the Finance Committee in advance for Special Town Meeting. Questions will be answered on the Town Meeting website in advance of the meeting. Questions can be emailed to townmeeting@needhamma.gov.

Participating in Town Meeting

As mentioned above, standing microphones will be placed around the seating areas. Members are asked to use the closest microphone if they wish to speak. Members should try not to touch the microphones and should remain at a distance from the microphone as delineated by the marking around the stand. The Marshal will help direct you to a microphone and if necessary, adjust it for you.

If a member cannot walk to or stand at a microphone, they should contact the Town Manager's office in advance for an accommodation. Please contact TownMeeting@needhamma.gov or call 781-455-7500 extension 0.

Arriving at Special Town Meeting and Departing

When we are not in session doing our work, Town Meeting has always provided enjoyable opportunity to see familiar faces and socialize. For now, I ask you to refrain from this activity. When you arrive, please do not congregate in groups. Please proceed to directly to your seat.

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While we may have a "Seventh Inning Stretch" in place, I do not envision calling a formal recess. If you need to use the rest rooms during the meeting, please feel free to do so.

When we have concluded our business, I will dismiss Town Meeting by Precinct, as we did at the outdoor meetings. As you know, this is intended to minimize a crowd of people at the stairways.

Conclusion

Thank you for your participation, patience and understanding. Until we see each other on October 25, I wish you all the best.

Michael K. Fee

Town Moderator