



Important Information for Town Meeting Members Regarding Needham's 2022 Annual Town Meeting

From the Moderator: Michael K. Fee

With the public health emergency behind us and a successful indoor Special Town Meeting completed last October, we will hold Annual Town Meeting in James Hugh Powers Hall beginning on Monday, May 2, 2022. This is another signal of how far we have come and how satisfying it is to once again be able to convene in our traditional meeting place.

Safety Precautions

As we all know, while we have made tremendous strides in our battle against COVID-19, the virus is still around, so safety remains of paramount concern. By now, you all know the commonsense procedures one should employ to minimize the spread of a virus. As in the fall, we have instituted several precautions to protect the health and wellness of all who will attend Town Meeting indoors at Town Hall. Specifically, we are taking the following steps:

- 1) Face Masks: Face masks are no longer required but they may of course be worn at the option of the individual;
- 2) Reduced Capacity: We are reducing the number of people in Powers Hall by once again having Town of Needham employees (such as department heads) who typically attend Town Meeting, watch proceedings remotely from elsewhere in the building. If necessary, they may be summoned to the meeting space to respond to a Town Meeting Member's question;
- 3) Spacing: We will maintain our revised seating plan to allow for more spacing throughout the first floor of the hall for Members, directing non-member registered voters who chose to attend Town Meeting to observe and if necessary, address Town Meeting from the balcony; and

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- 4) Microphones: For the time being, we will continue our use of standing microphones rather than hand-held mics that are passed from Member-to-Member.

Once again that the Town's Building Maintenance Division has inspected the ventilation system that serves Powers 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. While we never know in May, it may be chilly for Members seated near the windows, so I recommend bringing an extra layer to provide warmth.

As a reminder, please do not attend Annual Town Meeting if you have received a positive COVID-19 test in the five (5) days preceding Annual Town Meeting. If you tested positive for COVID between six and 10 days before Town Meeting, then you must wear a mask and have decreasing symptoms to safely attend Town Meeting. If you were exposed to COVID-19 and are not up to date with your vaccines please follow the guidance for exposure found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-isolation-and-quarantine-guidance-for-the-general-public>

As always, 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 Town Meeting.

The Warrant, Warrant Articles, Presentations

I will be sending my Memorandum to Town Meeting Members with the Warrant. Please be advised that the Annual Town Meeting Warrant contains 41 Articles. There will be a Special Town Meeting held during our Annual Town Meeting. The Special Town Meeting will occur on Monday May 9, 2022.

We are still mindful of public health concerns that militate in favor of keeping our meeting more streamlined than in the pre-COVID past and minimizing the length of time we are gathered as a large group. Our experience during the last two years has provided us with some innovations that help promote this goal. One is viewing the presentations from proponents of Articles and the Finance Committee's commentary in advance of the meeting. For the upcoming Annual Town Meeting, we will continue this practice. Members are encouraged to view the video presentations on the [Town's YouTube page](#). (this link will take you directly to the Town Meeting video playlist) . Videos should be available after April 23.

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Supporting materials will also be posted in advance on the [Town Meeting website](#). No hard copy materials will be distributed at the meeting and the table full of documents that was customarily situated at the rear of the hall will not exist.

The advance videos have proven to be very popular with many Members. As I mentioned in my communication with you last fall in advance of Special Town Meeting, my review of the actual number of "Views" each presentation received in advance of our last couple of meetings 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, at the same time. 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 can be as a representative.

For these reasons, as we did in the fall, I will ask Proponents and the Finance Committee to make live, in-person remarks at Annual Town Meeting that last no longer than FIVE MINUTES. This is not intended to replace or repeat the content of the videos or the documents made available in advance. Rather, the intent is for the speakers to remind Town Meeting Members of the subject matter of an Article and then provide a fresh summary of the proponents' and Finance Committee's views. After these brief remarks, we will turn immediately to discussion. I will seek your concurrence with this approach at the start of the 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.

Congregation at Town Meeting

Town Meeting has always provided an enjoyable opportunity to see familiar faces and socialize. I ask you to use common sense and avoid gathering in large groups. We may be able to resume

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our practice of having a brief recess this year, but if you need to use the restroom while we are in session, please feel free to do so to avoid long lines at a recess.

Conclusion

Thank you for your participation, patience and understanding. Until we see each other on May 2, I wish you all the best.

/s/ Michael K Fee

Michael K. Fee

Needham Town Moderator