

How Town Meeting Works

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Town Meeting Member, Precinct 1

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The Structure of Town Government

- ▶ Select Board (Executive Branch)
 - ▶ Town Manager
- ▶ Town Meeting (Legislative Branch)
- ▶ School Committee
- ▶ Board of Assessors
- ▶ Town Moderator
- ▶ Town Clerk

Arlington's Town Meeting

Arlington has a representative town meeting.

- ▶ There are 21 precincts.
- ▶ Each precinct has 12 town meeting members (252 total).
- ▶ Town meeting members are elected for three-year terms.
- ▶ You must serve in the precinct where you live.

Are town meeting members paid?

- ▶ No
- ▶ But, participating gives you a say in decisions that affect the community.

Things town meeting deals with

All of town meeting's business is contained in the *Warrant*, which is town meeting's agenda. For example:

- ▶ Any changes to town bylaws or zoning
- ▶ Operating Budgets
- ▶ Capital expenses
- ▶ Financial Appropriations and revolving funds
- ▶ Community Preservation Act

The Schedule

- ▶ Town meeting starts in April, and goes until we get through the warrant (typically a few weeks).
- ▶ Town meetings are held at town hall, from 8–11pm on Mondays and Wednesdays.
 - ▶ Town meeting members sit on the auditorium floor.
 - ▶ Spectators are welcome to sit in the balcony.
- ▶ Additional town meetings (“Special town meetings”) can be called during the year, if needed. These typically last one night.

The Cast of Characters

- ▶ Town moderator. Facilitates the meeting, decides the order of speakers, keeps time, decides scope, calls votes.
- ▶ Town clerk. Records the results of votes.
- ▶ Town staff and officials. Often speak to warrant articles, and answer questions from town meeting members.
- ▶ Town meeting members.

Town meeting follows parliamentary procedure. Arlington uses rules from *Town Meeting Time* (available from the Massachusetts Moderator's Association).

The Workflow

- ▶ The moderator announces the warrant article to be discussed.
- ▶ The person/body that submitted the article presents it.
- ▶ Moderator calls upon members who wish to speak, or ask questions. You have seven minutes (five if called a second time).
 - ▶ Other residents can address town meeting, if introduced by a town meeting member.
- ▶ People run out of things to say, or someone makes a motion to terminate debate.
 - ▶ Town meeting votes to terminate debate, or continue debating.
- ▶ Town meeting votes on the article.

Warrant Articles and Main Motions

The warrant is town meeting's agenda.

- ▶ Warrant articles are submitted during the winter.
- ▶ Articles can be introduced by town bodies, or by 10 registered voters.
- ▶ The Select Board, Redevelopment Board, or Finance Committee formulates a recommended action.
- ▶ Town meeting votes on the recommended action.
- ▶ Town meeting can amend a recommended action via Substitute motions.

Note: Legislation is *not* written during town meeting.

2015 Warrant Article 26

**ARTICLE 26 APPROPRIATION/FINANCING OF CONSTRUCTION OR
RECONSTRUCTION OF SEWERS AND SEWERAGE FACILITIES**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of sewers and sewerage facilities for inflow/infiltration reduction or system rehabilitation, including costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine how the appropriation shall be raised or expended, including the possibility of borrowing all or some of same; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager and the Director of Public Works)

2015 Warrant Article 26 - Recommended Action

ARTICLE 26 APPROPRIATION/FINANCING OF CONSTRUCTION OR RECONSTRUCTION OF SEWERS AND SEWERAGE FACILITIES

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of sewers and sewerage facilities for inflow/infiltration reduction or system rehabilitation, including costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine how the appropriation shall be raised or expended, including the possibility of borrowing all or some of same; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager and the Director of Public Works)

VOTED: **That the sum of \$1,000,000 be and hereby is appropriated for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of sewers and sewerage facilities, inflow/infiltration reduction or system rehabilitation, including costs incidental and related thereto; that to raise this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is authorized to borrow \$1,000,000 under and pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 7, of the General Laws, as amended, or any other enabling authority and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefore; and that the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager be and hereby are authorized to enter into any agreements they determine to be necessary in connection with the project and its financing and are further authorized to accept and expend in addition to the foregoing appropriation any grants that may become available from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority or other sources.**

COMMENT: This authorization allows the Town to receive an interest free loan from the MWRA and issue municipal debt in support of capital construction projects.

How to Submit a Warrant Article

- ▶ Download warrant materials from town website (after the warrant opens).
- ▶ Work with town counsel on the warrant article language.
- ▶ Gather signatures (10 for regular town meeting, 100 for special town meeting).
- ▶ Submit signatures to the Select Board's office by the due date.
- ▶ Attend warrant article hearings, work on main motion.
- ▶ Be prepared to introduce your article at town meeting.

Resources

- ▶ Arlington Town website
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/town-meeting>
- ▶ Massachusetts Moderator's Association
<http://www.massmoderators.org/>
- ▶ ACMi's Government channel, where you can find videos of Arlington town meetings.
<http://vod.acmi.tv/category/government/>