



Citizens' Petition Guide for Town Meeting

Background on Articles & Motions

An **article** is essentially an agenda item—it tells people what is to be discussed and what is being sought. For any matter to be discussed at the meeting, it must come within the scope of the article. In other words, someone reading the article must be able to tell what is going to be addressed. If a subject is then brought up which a person would not reasonably know was going to be discussed by reading that article, it cannot be discussed and will be considered as being beyond the scope of the article.

A **motion** is a formal proposal that is presented before the voters at the Town Meeting for action on a particular article. It must be within the scope of the article.

Appropriate subjects for Town Meeting action under a warrant article include:

- adopting, repealing, or amending Town bylaws
- authorizing the filing of home-rule legislation
- accepting or revoking the acceptance of local-option legislation
- making and amending budgetary appropriations
- authorizing the acquisition or disposition of interests in land
- making resolutions

Article & Motion Development

Citizens interested in submitting articles to be placed on an upcoming town meeting warrant must visit the Town Clerk's Office to pick up a petition form to start the process. Staff will offer instruction on how to fill out the form and acquire the necessary signatures. For questions related to obtaining the required signatures or filling out the petition form, please contact the Town Clerk's Office via email at clerk@lexingtonma.gov or telephone at 781-698-4558.

Care in the writing and the timing of articles is very important. Petitioners should ensure that the action the article proposes conforms to State law, Town of Lexington By-Laws, and is within the purview of Town Meeting. An article should be phrased to accurately accomplish its intended purpose. Depending on the subject matter of the article, it may require further review by the Select Board, the Finance Committees (Capital

Expenditures and Appropriation), the Community Preservation Committee, the Planning Board, and/or Town Counsel. In some instances, a public hearing may be required.

Examples include:

- If the article requires review or any changes in the Town's Zoning By-Law, the Planning Director and Assistant Town Manager for Development must be contacted to schedule a hearing with the Planning Board.
- If the article is making and/or amending budgetary appropriations, the Assistant Town Manager for Finance must be contacted to schedule a hearing with either the Appropriation or Capital Expenditures Committee, based on the nature of the appropriation.

Citizen's Petitions and draft motions must be submitted separately to the Select Board's Office box no later than the date and time established by the Select Board. If the petition is not submitted by the specified deadline, it will not be included on the Warrant for Town Meeting.

- The Town Manager's Office will send out deadlines in advance for submissions for article descriptions, motions, presentations, and supporting information for articles.
- Petitioners should consult with the Management Fellow/Analyst or Deputy Town Manager early in the process to establish a reasonable timeline for the article's inclusion.

Care in writing the accompanying motion is also important. The Town requires a separate motion from the article, which should clearly describe the specific action proposed to be taken and remain within the scope of the articles in the Warrant. In the absence of a prepared motion by the petitioner, the Deputy Town Manager will prepare the motion.

Assistance in writing of articles and motions is available from Town officials. The Management Fellow/Analyst, Deputy Town Manager, Town Moderator, and other staff are available to discuss and, if necessary, to assist a petitioner in the drafting of a warrant article and its accompanying motion. Town officials should be consulted as early as possible before the closing of the warrant to resolve any misunderstandings on the part of the petitioners. At the Town Manager's discretion, Town Counsel may review a petitioner's article or motion at a scheduled time or times before the deadline for submission of articles.

Upon submission, the article and description will appear on the Town Meeting Warrant and the official Town Meeting Webpage. The Select Board is responsible for determining the order of the articles on the warrant.

Key Meetings to Attend

Select Board Meeting: The Executive Clerk and Administrative Assistant will contact the petitioners to present and discuss their article for a Select Board Meeting prior to Town Meeting. Petitioners should expect to be contacted 6 to 8 weeks before Town Meeting to present at a Select Board Meeting.

Town Moderator Planning Meeting: Prior to Annual Town Meeting, the Town Moderator will schedule a planning meeting for article sponsors, boards, committees, and Town staff. Attendance to this meeting is highly encouraged to be aware of the proposed date and presentation order your article will be brought to Town Meeting. Petitioners are generally given up to 20 minutes for their presentation, at the discretion of the Town Moderator. This meeting usually takes place 1 to 2 weeks prior to the first Town Meeting session, and petitioners should expect to be contacted by the Town Moderator 1 week before the planning meeting.

TMMA Info Nights: Prior to Annual Town Meeting, the Town Meeting Members Association (TMMA) host information nights for article sponsors, boards, committees, and Town staff. This meeting gives Town Meeting Members a change to ask questions about articles and review presentations before the start of Town Meeting. TMMA Info Nights are usually 1-3 weeks before the first Town Meeting session, and petitioners will be contacted by the TMMA Chair and Town Manager's Office 1 to 2 weeks before the Info Night.

Town Meeting Session Guidelines

At Town Meeting, if the petitioner is not a Town Meeting Member, they must have a Town Meeting Member agree to move their article. ***The petitioner will not be able to present and no discussion will occur on the article until the motion is moved and seconded by a Town Meeting Member.*** If the petitioner wishes to change their motion, they must have a Town Meeting Member make this request, as well.

Audio-visual materials are often useful at Town Meeting to expedite the presentation and explanation of the article and motion.

- All presentations for Town Meeting must be sent to the Management Fellow/Analyst and Deputy Town Manager via email or submitted through a web-based file sharing site, such as Google Drive. Please note there is a 10-megabyte limit on email size. Presentation files must be smaller than that to be successfully delivered. If a PowerPoint presentation is larger than 10 MB, try compressing images for screen resolution. Microsoft PowerPoint and Google Docs presentation files are supported.
- All materials submitted to the Town Manager's Office must include contact information for the petitioner responsible for the presentation in the body of the email or as a separate sheet of paper as materials are regularly posted and updated on the Town Meeting Webpage.
- No individual personal laptops may be connected or used for Town Meeting presentations. Please review the Town Meeting presentation guidelines that will be sent in advance of Town Meeting.
- Once the Town Manager's Office receives the information, it will be installed on the laptop that will be used during Town Meeting. It will be tested to ensure it opens properly. The laptop will be placed in the Battin Hall Auditorium each day Town Meeting is in session. There, the petitioner may perform a walkthrough of their final presentation 30 minutes before Town Meeting.
- At the discretion of the Deputy Town Manager, slides will be run by the Management Fellow/Analyst.