

Guide to Town Meeting Procedure

Town of Granby, Massachusetts



Town Meeting is the legislative branch of our local government. As voters at the Town Meeting, we are Granby's legislators. Town Meeting determines, among other things, how Town government raises and spends your tax dollars. Additionally, Town Meeting has the power to make and amend local bylaws. The meeting operates under the Massachusetts General Laws- see Chapter 39 for many of the rules- and in accordance with the Granby Bylaws.

How do I Address Town Meeting?

If you are a registered voter in Granby, you are a Town Meeting member and can address Town Meeting. As a registered voter, you have full power to participate by listening, asking questions, offering arguments for or against a motion and voting on an article as moved.

If you'd like to address Town Meeting, raise your hand and wait for the Moderator to recognize you. The Moderator will call on you to come to one of the microphones to speak. At the microphone, please state your full name and street address for the record. You can then discuss the matter at hand, or ask for information. Alternatively, if you cannot come to the microphone, a mike runner will come to you. Upon completing your question or comments, you must yield the microphone back.

Debate under the motion is limited to the subject matter at hand. If your comments or question are not within the bounds of the motion being discussed, the Moderator will indicate that the comments are not in order and remind you to keep the comments on topic. During debate, you, the speaker, are required to address the Moderator and not other members of Town Meeting. For example, do not say, "I have something to say to the Town Meeting," or "Mr. Smith, you said

something as a Town Meeting Member that I want to respond to.” Instead, say something like, “Madame Moderator, these are my thoughts on this article” or “I support this article because... .”

Please remember, Town Meeting is comprised of your neighbors and peers. Respect and tolerate each other’s opinions. Do not interrupt a speaker, cross-exam another person or derogatorily refer to another Town Member, or the Moderator will promptly rule you out of order.

I’ve heard enough debate. How do I ask for a vote?

*A motion to “**Move the Previous Question**” is a request to end all debate and to move directly to a vote on the article.*

Some Warrant articles are controversial and require considerable deliberation before being voted upon. Nevertheless, discussion may reach a point when little, if any, new light is being shed on the subject. When that appears to be the case, the Moderator will customarily remind Town Meeting of the length of time already devoted to the deliberation and will encourage those still wishing to be heard to limit their remarks to points not already made.

If you feel enough debate has been heard, you can proceed to Move the Previous Question. You must wait to be recognized by the Moderator and may not interrupt a speaker who already has the floor. A motion to terminate debate must be seconded, and requires a 2/3 vote for passage. It may not be debated, amended, or reconsidered.

A voter who moves the question must do only that and no more. You may not first offer views on the substance of the main motion and then request the Motion to Move the Previous Question.

If the Moderator feels that fairness requires that proponents or opponents should have some additional time to make their case before debate ends, *the Moderator has the right to rule that the Motion to Move the Question is out of order*. This is a judgment call by the Moderator, made in the interest of fairness and a full presentation of the subject.

How do I Amend a Motion?

During discussion, Town Meeting Members can make a “**Motion to Amend**” any main motion. The amendment may consist of adding, deleting or substituting words in the motion. You must wait to be recognized by the Moderator before offering an amendment.

The amendment must be relevant to the motion currently under consideration and submitted in written form to the Moderator. The Moderator will then declare the Motion to Amend is in order and will call for a second on the Motion to Amend. If there is no second, the Motion to Amend fails. If a second is given, the Moderator will ask for a *Motion to Stop Debate* on the main article in order to discuss the amendment. Once discussion of the amendment is complete, the Moderator will ask for a vote on the amendment. A majority of Town Meeting is required to pass the amendment. *When you vote on the amendment to a motion, you are voting on the words of the amendment; you are not voting on the words of the main motion.* If the amendment passes, Town Meeting will then resume discussion of the main motion **as amended**. If the amendment fails, discussion resumes on the main motion.

What if I think that the Moderator did not decide correctly a vote by show of hands?

Stand immediately and say one of the following: “Madame Moderator, I doubt the vote,” or “I question it.” If at least six other voters stand with you, the Moderator will count votes more formally, pursuant to town by-laws.

What if I want a secret ballot?

Ordinarily, vote is taken by a show of hands unless the Moderator or the Bylaws of Granby specify otherwise. However, you may request a secret ballot at any time after a motion is presented by making a motion to “**Fix the Method of Voting to Secret Ballot.**” This motion may be made only by a person recognized by the Moderator. This motion must be seconded and requires a majority vote from Town Meeting for passage.

If you have any questions regarding specific procedures or need more information regarding Town Meeting, please do not hesitate to contact the Town Moderator, Lynn S. Mercier, at lynnmercier@comcast.net or 467-1226.