

### **Call to Order**

Town Clerk Mr. Simko called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. TGSC members and other participants all participated remotely via WebEx, with each member able to see and hear one other and share documents for all to see.

### **Participants**

The following members were online for the meeting: Town Clerk Austin Simko (ex-officio); Dara Obbard; Paula Colby-Clements; Andrew McBrien; David Floreen; and Sheila Doherty (ex-officio).

### **Discussion**

The subcommittee, as charged by the TGSC, discussed methods by which the public could be more robustly engaged regarding Town Meeting. The subcommittee focused almost exclusively on the issue of bifurcating Town Meeting's deliberation and voting functions.

The subcommittee revisited the following format allowing for remote and in-person deliberation of Town Meeting articles:

- The current conduct of Town Meeting would not be not altered. Each article would be presented, debated, and voted upon.
- But before Town Meeting, there would be made available to residents days or a week before Town Meeting a session or series of sessions wherein public and private article proponents would present on their articles and answer questions from residents.
- The session(s) would be live-streamed so that remote and in-person residents could ask questions and make comments.
- The session(s) would also be recorded so that residents could listen to the material on their own schedule. Those residents would be able to email questions to article proponents. The recordings could have time markings to allow residents to "jump" to the articles that interest them.
- Multiple sessions could be held to allow for the grouping of financial articles, zoning/planning articles, bylaw amendments, etc.

This format would effectively provide remote deliberation before the commencement of Town Meeting. This would promote transparency, perhaps make Town Meeting more efficient, allow more residents to engage, and serve good governance by more fully vetting articles. The sessions would be a consolidation of a public forum practice used ad hoc, and would guarantee a remote

aspect (which did not exist pre-Covid). This bifurcation might also give the community insight into the advantages and disadvantages of a fully remote Open Town Meeting, should that ever be legalized and chosen by the community. Also, when combined with the reform encouraging that article amendments be offered before Town Meeting, this format would provide for a fuller and more accessible preview of Town Meeting content before formal Town Meeting sessions.

The subcommittee turned to discussing some of the challenges in implementing this format. One question centered on how we would ensure that the pre-Town Meeting session questions and discussion are not duplicated at Town Meeting. The subcommittee recognized that there might be duplication of content but that, as the new format became more recognized and successful, there would be less duplication over time.

Another question was how we would ensure that private article proponents participate in the pre-Town Meeting session. It is important to the motivating goals of the format that all proponents participate. It is likely that private article proponents will feel a strong impetus to participate in the pre-Town Meeting session even if they are not formally required to. This pre-Town Meeting session would provide a distinct benefit from the meetings of the Select Board, School Committee, Planning Board, etc. where articles are debated and voted on in the weeks and months before Town Meeting. This benefit would provide potent encouragement of participation.

The subcommittee decided that, in the initial years of implementation, we should encourage but not require participation in the pre-Town Meeting sessions. Town Meeting will police itself, and appropriately dispose of articles from non-participating article proponents. Let us trust proponents, Moderators, and Town Meeting attendees.

Every subcommittee member endorsed this bifurcation format and looked forward to seeking endorsement by the full committee on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Floreen moved that the meeting adjourn, and Mr. Floreen seconded. The subcommittee voted by roll call (6-0) in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Austin Simko, Town Clerk