

Moderators' Rules For Town & School District Meetings

By Bill Bardsley, School Moderator and Ed Becker, Town Moderator

Andover School District Meeting is Monday, March 2 at 7 PM. Town Meeting Day is Tuesday, March 10. This is a short primer of what takes place and how the meetings are conducted and is intended to encourage you to come and participate at both the School District and Town Meetings.

The polls for the election of Town and School District officials will open at 11:30 AM and close at 7:30 PM on Town Meeting Day. This election is conducted just like the state and federal elections with the ballot clerks, Town Clerk, Supervisors of the Checklist, and Town Moderator in attendance. The two big differences from the Primary Elections and General Elections are the later starting time (11:30 AM instead of 8 AM) and that the official ballot is non-partisan (no political parties are designated for any of the candidates).

If you are registered to vote, you check in with the ballot clerks. If you are not registered, you can register with the Supervisors of the Checklist and then vote immediately thereafter.

During Town Meeting Day many town organizations and groups set up tables and displays to share information, recruit new volunteers, raise funds, and

sometimes even just to socialize. About 6:30 or 7 PM townspeople take it upon themselves to help take down the tables and set up the folding chairs in preparation for the meeting. You don't have to wait to be asked, just join in and help.

Promptly at 7:30 PM the business part of Town Meeting is called to order, and the Moderator asks that we start by standing and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. If anyone has not voted for Town officials, they are given one last chance to check in with the ballot clerks and to vote before the polls are closed.

Years ago the ballots would be counted at the end of the business meeting, and sometimes the clerks would still be counting until the wee hours of the morning. Then someone suggested that they would be willing to count starting after the polls were closed and the business meeting was going on. This makes too much sense not to do.

Immediately upon closing the polls the ballot box is taken to the classroom behind the stage and the ballots are counted. This counting is open to observation by the public. All you have to do is quietly walk up to the room and observe. If you want to help count ballots, please contact the Moderator before the polls close to be sure you are eligible.

At this point the Town Moderator in-

troduces the Selectmen and Town Clerk and reads the rules for the conduct of the meeting. The School Moderator starts the School District Meeting with introductions of the School Board and school administration and then goes over the rules.

For years School District Meeting and Town Meeting rules have been minimal and simple:

The Moderator makes rules for the conduct of the meeting and sets them out at the beginning.

The meeting itself can accept or overrule any rule the Moderator sets out.

The state at tax-setting time likes to see the names of the people making the motion and second for each article in the minutes of the meeting. Please state your name so that the clerk can include it in the minutes.

To keep voting straight forward, we request all articles be moved in the affirmative so that a "Yes" vote will adopt the article and a "No" vote will defeat the article. Sometimes if multiple articles deal with similar issues, the Moderator will request that more than one article be open for discussion at once and then when discussion is completed each article will be voted on separately.

In order to speak to the meeting you must be recognized by the moderator.

"RSA 40:7 Debate. - No person shall speak in any meeting without leave of the moderator, nor when any person speaking is in order; and all persons shall be silent at the desire of the moderator, on pain of forfeiting \$1 for each offense, for the use of the town."

Please wait and speak into the portable microphone so that everyone will be able to hear you. While speaking, please address your comments, discussion, and debate to the Moderator at the front of the room and not to individuals in the meeting. You should frame your remarks for everyone in the room and not to any other single person.

Everyone should have the right to freely participate on every warrant article. Therefore the moderator will not recognize a motion to cut off or limit debate or to call the question for a vote until everyone who has sought to be recognized has had an opportunity to speak at least once.

At the same time, the moderator will try not to recognize anyone who has already spoken once on an article until everyone else who wants to speak on that article has done so. Please keep in mind that you need to cover all of your points, because you may not get a second chance to speak to the same article.

Amendments to articles are made, seconded, discussed, and voted on during discussion, if they are germane to the original article. The moderator makes the call as to whether they are germane, subject to override by the meeting. The

amended article is then voted on.

The budget article has traditionally been dealt with by making a motion to adopt the budget as recommended by the Budget Committee and to hold discussion on each section of the printed budget. Amendments to the budget are made and discussed within each section.

At the end of discussion, the meeting votes on the entire budget as amended.

After the budget is adopted, traditionally a motion to limit reconsideration is made that follows state law and requires that the reconsideration, if voted affirmatively, take place at a reconvened meeting at least one week later.

There are five types of voting:

(1) Voice vote, where you are asked to respond "Aye" for a "Yes" vote and "No" for a "No" vote. The Moderator declares the result, or that it was too close for him to determine and goes on to another method of voting.

(2) Count of hands, where the Selectmen or School Board Members are asked to count the raised hands of the "Yes" votes and then the raised hands of the "No" votes.

(3) Division of the room, where the "Yes" votes stand on one side and the "No" votes stand on the other side.

(4) A yes/no ballot, where five voters have requested in writing after the discussion and before the vote a secret ballot. Voters go through the checklist by alphabet and are given a yes/no written ballot to cast.

(5) And finally, a yes/no ballot for a bond issue, where the polls have to stay open for one hour as required by state law.

As moderators, we try to discourage yes/no ballot votes on standard warrant articles, as they take about 45 minutes to process. However, it is the voters' right to request a secret ballot, and if you have your own reasons for requesting such a ballot and five signatures, the Moderator has no discretion but to hold the yes/no ballot.

We only ask that you speak to us before the meeting to review your concerns and the procedure to follow. In fact, if you have any questions about School District Meeting or Town Meeting, call Ed Becker at work at 735-5444 or at home at 735-5338, or Bill Bardsley at 735-5168.

"Point of Order!" These words alert the Moderator that he has fumbled the ball and either misstated something obvious and made a mistake, or he has not made clear the procedural action that the meeting is taking and a voter is confused. Please, if you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask, or even to interrupt. Chances are if you're confused, so are others, especially the Moderator.

In Andover a Motion to Adjourn is only recognized after all the articles in the warrant have been considered, and it completes and concludes this year's annual meeting.



THE DUMPSTER DEPOT®
WASTE RECYCLING SERVICES

How Will You Deal with GREAT SERVICE?



NO FUEL SURCHARGES!

24 Hour Service Guarantee

Commercial ★ Residential ★ Industrial


Accepting All Major Credit Cards

CALL TOLL FREE:

1-866-56-DEPOT

