

Wanted: Candidates for Town Boards and Committees

Too busy? No excuse! This is important work.

Dennis Fenton, Andover Select Board (Retired)

Dennis Fenton, a long-time member of the Select Board, wrote these words in 2009 when he decided to retire from the Board. With his permission, we're re-running this to encourage people to consider becoming a candidate.

First, the fact that you are busy is not a legitimate excuse! Everyone can use that one, but it's the town's well-being that is at stake, so we all have to find time to do the things that are really important to us.

What background should you have to run for a Town office? There's no one right answer to that question. George Upton, for example, took an appointment to fill a vacancy on the Board of Selectmen before the moving van was completely unloaded when he came to Andover. He went on to win re-election. George only had on-the-job training, which is the hard way.

Other Town officers have taken different paths. All these folks had one thing in common – as a part of the community, they wanted to give something back to Andover.

A Good Candidate

What makes a good candidate? The first item on any candidate's agenda should be what is good for the majority. When a new problem arises, the solution is not the easy way out, but what serves our town the best.

As a member of a Town board or committee, you are one of the overseers of our town whose job it is to manage the town's resources and problems. When a vote is taken, be supportive even if you might like something a little different.

Your main charge is to have needed services provided to the town at a reasonable cost. An important tool available to you in pursuit of that goal is the Budget Committee. Their job is to review all budgets in town and present the budget to be voted on at Town Meeting, School District Meeting, and the meetings of the various precincts.

The Budget Committee takes the prejudice out of an individual budget as they look at the big picture. It is important that we all, boards and citizens, listen very closely to the story they tell each year as they attempt to keep our tax rate at a manageable level.

Share Your Talents

To all you good folks out there: You are not too busy to make a commitment to share your many talents. Being a member of a Town board or committee is not a thankless job. People appreciate your willingness to serve, and you will be surprised how many times you are told this.

I don't know who will sign up, but you are out there. This is for your town. It is all worthwhile. Good luck!

The filing dates for candidates to file with the Town Clerk are Wednesday, January 25, through Friday, February 3.

Anyone Can Write a Warrant Article for March Meetings

Requires signatures of 25 Andover voters

Charlie Darling, *Beacon* volunteer

Traditionally, the Select Board writes the warrant articles for Town Meeting and we, the voters of Andover, flock to Town Meeting to discuss and ultimately vote on each article. The articles that we accept, including the total budget figure, pretty much control how the town is run for the coming year.

But it's not just the Select Board that can put an idea (in the form of a warrant article) before Town Meeting to be voted on. In fact, anyone can do it.

Of course, there are a few rules:

1) The warrant article must be delivered to the office of the Select Board by the fifth Tuesday before Town Meeting. This year, that will be Tuesday, February 7.

2) The warrant article must be signed (legibly!) by at least 25 registered Andover voters. Each signature will be checked against the Town's checklist. If fewer than 25 of the signatures can be matched on the checklist, the article won't be added to the warrant.

3) According to RSA 39:3, the Select Board may make "only such minor textual changes as may be required," so the burden is on the writer of the warrant article to be sure it is worded clearly and that it calls for an action that Town Meeting can legally take.

The rules for getting a petitioned warrant article on the Andover School District warrant are pretty much the same. The rules are in RSA 197:6, and the main difference from the rules described above is the deadline for peti-

tions. A petition must be presented "to the school board or one of them not later than 30 days before the date prescribed for the school district meeting or the second Tuesday in March, whichever is earlier." For 2023, that deadline would fall on Saturday, February 4, which is 30 days before the Monday, March 6, School District meeting.

Any Other Business

If, for whatever reason, you can't meet all those criteria, you may still be able to put your issue in front of Town Meeting. The last article of the warrant is always "To transact any other business that may legally come before [Town Meeting]." That's your cue to be recognized by the moderator and put your issue before the voters.

But there's a catch: to be legally valid, any motion at Town Meeting must comply with NHRS 39:2, which requires that "The subject matter of all business to be acted upon at the town meeting shall be distinctly stated in the warrant, and nothing done at any meeting shall be valid unless the subject thereof is so stated."

So if your idea needs to be legally valid – if it expends money or changes an ordinance or something like that – then "any other business" is not the time to bring it up. Even if it were passed by the meeting, it wouldn't be legally valid because it would not meet the requirement of NHRS 39:2.

On the other hand, a motion that has no legal effect, such as honoring someone or expressing the meeting's support for an organization or a cause, works just fine as "any other business."



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