

2020 Annual Town Meeting: Key Points for Voters Regarding This Year's Meeting

Dear Wareham Voters,

This year, the annual town meeting is coming at a difficult and challenging time, as we address the unique circumstances associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, we think it is important to share detailed information with voters about the plans and logistics for the 2020 annual town meeting, which will be held Monday, June 15 at 7 p.m. in the gymnasium of Wareham High School.

First and foremost, we want you to know that special Covid-19-related public safety measures and precautions are being put in place. The overarching goal is to do everything possible to conduct the meeting in a way that protects the health and safety of attendees, while at the same time upholding our high town meeting standards of participatory democracy. The planning and organization for this year's annual meeting is being done in collaboration with the Town Clerk, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Public Health and Safety officials, and the WHS facilities team.

Below is a summary of the specific steps being taken to help conduct the annual town meeting safely and efficiently.

Please plan to come early to check in, as it will take a while longer with social distancing in place.

- **Meeting Venue:** This year's annual town meeting will be held in the gymnasium of Wareham High School. This venue has been chosen because this will provide the safest venue for conducting a gathering of this type and for guarding against the spread of Covid-19. A secondary meeting room will be the auditorium.
- **Social Distancing:** Safe social distancing measures will be followed for voter check-in and in the arrangement and spacing of chairs placed in the gym. Please follow the safe distancing rules at all times.
- **Check in Process:**

We will be using **only the entrance door near the auditorium** to limit exposure to the school. The Town Clerk will oversee the check in process under guidelines she has developed in the best interest of our citizens.

- **Face Coverings:** Attendees will be required to wear a mask or other type of face covering in order to be admitted to the gymnasium. Those who cannot wear a mask or choose not to wear a mask will be directed to the auditorium.
- **If you are sick or have a fever,** we kindly ask that you do not share your illness with others.
- **Microphone Cleaning and Disinfecting:** Appropriate cleaning supplies will be made available to enable the voter microphone to be sanitized after each speaker.
- **Meeting Efficiency:** A number of steps will be taken to help facilitate a quick, efficient and orderly meeting.
 - **Consent Agenda Motion:** Fewer articles than usual are being included on the annual town meeting warrant, and a number of routine articles (essentially those that must be voted at each annual town meeting) will be combined into what is known as a consent agenda. This consent agenda motion will enable multiple articles to be voted at once, rather than go through each one separately. As a democratic protection under this process, any voter may make a request to take a consent agenda article out of the consent motion. In that case, the article will be considered and voted separately. Many towns in Massachusetts use a consent agenda process as a tool to enhance the efficiency of annual town meetings.
 - **Time Limits for Speaking:** Under the moderator's powers to regulate the town meeting proceedings, Time limits are being put in place for those speaking at town meeting.
 - Anyone presenting an article will be given **up to five minutes** to introduce the article.
 - Comments from voters will be **limited to two minutes**.
 - No one will be recognized to speak a second time on any one issue until everyone who wants to speak has had that opportunity.
 - Rude or disrespectful speech will not be tolerated.

When Town Meeting ends: Please exit row-by-row beginning with the last row, keeping a safe distance from all others.

As always, your input, feedback and questions regarding the plans for the annual town meeting are welcome. You can contact me via email at moderator@wareham.ma.us

We recognize that this is a challenging time and understand that people are being careful and cautious about going out in public. Our hope is that the safety measures and precautions will give voters a comfort level about attending the annual town meeting.

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Thank you and stay safe.
Claire Smith,
Town Moderator