

Initial Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communications

April 18, 2011

This document represents the Initial Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communications. This report flows out of the following questions that the Ad Hoc Committee directed to Town Meeting Members (TMMs) at the beginning of its investigation:

1. What information do you most want (and either don't get, or don't get in time) as a Town Meeting Member?
2. What is the best way to send you information?
3. Which current forms of communication DO work for you? Which do NOT?
4. What should be changed to ensure that you have the information you need to make an informed decision on every Warrant article?

Summary of Recommendations

As a result of this data collection, conversations with Town Meeting Members and other Town officials, and extensive committee deliberations, the Ad Hoc Committee commends the ten (10) recommendations provided below as being reasonable to improve Town Meeting communications. The recommendations are set forth in three sections:

Part 1 presents recommendations regarding the scheduling of the tasks involving sessions when Town Meeting convenes. Many, but not all, of these recommendations relate to the Annual Town Meeting; some apply to either the Annual Town Meeting or to a Special Town Meeting. The recommendations include:

- ✓ Recommendation #1: Modify the first day of Town Meeting to be the second Monday of May.
- ✓ Recommendation #2: Expand the schedule of events leading up to Town Meeting, with the Warrant delivered earlier and pre-Town Meeting events spread over more weeks.
- ✓ Recommendation #3: Encourage and facilitate pre-Town Meeting precinct caucuses.

- ✓ Recommendation #4: Supplement the existing LWV Town Meeting briefing night (on *non-budget* warrant articles) with a second evening briefing presented by the Warrant Committee for *budget-related* articles.
- ✓ Recommendation #5: Schedule an annual Community Forum on the future direction of Belmont.

Part 2 presents recommendations regarding Town Meeting as an institution (or organization) rather than as an event. The recommendations include:

- ✓ Recommendation #6: Increase electronic communications with TMMs.
- ✓ Recommendation #7: Create an ongoing Town Meeting Communications Committee, first, to implement improvements in providing information to Town Meeting Members, and second, to ensure that communication—print and electronic—continues to improve on a long-term basis.
- ✓ Recommendation #8: Identify and clarify a process by which Town Meeting can obtain more information on a topic and keep that topic “alive” rather than disappearing.
- ✓ Recommendation #9: Implement a TMM Orientation which includes providing a written “Town Meeting Member handbook.”

Part 3 presents a recommendation with a long-term view of organizational innovation that the Committee believes will improve communications both within Town Meeting and between Belmont’s local government infrastructure and Town Meeting Members. The recommendations include:

- ✓ Recommendation #10: Organize a Town Meeting Member Association

In the detailed discussion of the recommendations below, each recommendation is supported by a parallel six-item presentation:

1. What problem is being addressed;
2. What is the Committee’s recommendation;
3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem;
4. What next steps are necessary;
5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation; and
6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations.

The members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communications are listed in Attachment A. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee thus far has occurred between September 2010 and April 2011.

A second phase of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee begins with the release of this Initial Report. The Committee hopes to engage in an interactive community process through which it might obtain feedback to its ten recommendations from Town Meeting Members, from officials and staff of the Town, and from other stakeholders. The objective of this community engagement process is to formulate what proposals, if any, might be presented at a Special Town Meeting for decisionmaking to be held in the Fall of 2011.

Part 1: Recommendations for Town Meeting as an “Event”

Town Meeting convenes as Belmont’s legislative body at least once each year. Known as Annual Town Meeting, the spring session of Town Meeting is set by Town By-Law as beginning the fourth Monday of April. Considerable effort is devoted to preparation for a session of Town Meeting. That effort is directed toward determining: (1) what decisions should be presented to Town Meeting for deliberation; (2) what materials are necessary to provide an adequate basis for decisionmaking; and (3) what mechanisms could/should be used to communicate that material to Town Meeting Members (“TMMs”). This first set of recommendations addresses the process of preparation for the “event” of Town Meeting.

Recommendation #1:

Modify the first day of Town Meeting to be the second Monday of May.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Beginning Town Meeting on the fourth Monday of April consistently creates conflicts for Town Meeting Members (TMMs). The fourth Monday of April scheduling is generally the first Monday after Belmont’s April school vacation week. As a result, many TMMs miss important events occurring the week before. One illustrative event is the pre-Town Meeting briefing sponsored by the League of Women Voters.
- b. As has become increasingly evident in recent years, making final decisions on the Town budget is often held hostage to state budget decisions made by the legislature. As a result, the local budget is “not ready” to be presented to Town Meeting at the end of April, let alone ready to be presented in time for discussion opportunities before Town Meeting begins.
- c. Much of the preparation for Town Meeting must occur before Town Meeting begins. The current time schedule, however, provides for an inadequate time between the time the Warrant is delivered to TMMs and the time Town Meeting begins. It is difficult for public discussion and consideration to occur in the abbreviated time period. The time for public

hearings and/or educational forums by proponents of warrant articles is nearly non-existent.

- d. Not only Town Meeting Members need to be prepared for Town Meeting, but public officials must be prepared as well. With local elections occurring on the first Monday of April, there is insufficient time for newly-elected officials (e.g., Selectmen, School Committee members, Town Clerk, Town Moderator, Treasurer) to prepare for Town meeting. In addition, new TMMs have insufficient time between the election and Town Meeting to prepare.

2. What is the Committee's recommendation:

- a. The first day of Annual Town Meeting should be set to be the second Monday of May.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Extending the beginning day of Town Meeting to the second Monday of May will significantly reduce conflicts with Belmont's school vacation week. Events may be scheduled at times when TMMs are more likely to be in town.
- b. Extending the beginning day of Town Meeting provides a longer period for newly-elected local officials to prepare after the April election.
- c. Extending the beginning day of Town Meeting allows two weeks of additional time for all aspects of Town Meeting preparation, including committee meetings, public discussion, media coverage, precinct caucuses, and other initiatives.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. Town Meeting would need to vote to amend the General By-law which establishes the first day that Annual Town Meeting meets.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Town Meeting.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. Extending the first day of Town Meeting will provide more time to receive state budget news, but may not solve the budget time issue. The proposal will help, but will not resolve, the need to obtain state budget information.
- b. The benefits from extending the first day of Town Meeting into May will not be realized if the whole time line slips. The benefits from extending the first day of Town Meeting into May will be enhanced by adoption of Recommendation #2 below as well.
- c. Extending the first day of Town Meeting applies only to the Annual Town Meeting. There is no corollary to Special Town Meetings.

- d. It should be noted that the Town Clerk has expressed reservations about the reduction of the time period available to complete all Town Meeting-related requirements of the Clerk's office before their June 30th deadline.

Recommendation #2:

Expand the schedule of events leading up to Town Meeting, with the Warrant delivered earlier and pre-Town Meeting events spread over more weeks.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. The compressed time frame between the time that the Warrant for an Annual Town Meeting is circulated to TMMs and the time that Town Meeting convenes impedes the ability of TMMs to learn about the issues, impedes the process of soliciting public input, and impedes the ability of proponents of warrant articles to educate TMMs on the scope and significance of articles;
- b. The compressed time frame places extreme pressure on the Warrant Committee to consider Warrant articles at the same time it is engaged in its budget responsibilities.
- c. The compressed time frame places very tight constraints on the opportunity for precinct caucuses.
- d. The compressed time frame provides little opportunity for public feedback on Warrant articles in general, or to the specific motions related to those articles.
- e. The compressed time frame allows little time for the media to explore proposed Warrant articles in the local press or for other stakeholders to provide public education.

2. What is the Committee's recommendation:

- a. The Warrant should be closed earlier as part of any expansion of the overall scheduling of events leading up to Town Meeting.
- b. The schedule of events leading up to Town Meeting should be expanded, with the Warrant delivered earlier and pre-Town Meeting events spread over more weeks.
- c. Attachment B-1 presents the current schedule of events leading up to an Annual Town Meeting. Attachment B-2 presents the Ad Hoc Committee's vision of an expanded Town Meeting schedule of events.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Creating an expanded schedule for the events prior to Town Meeting would allow for an expanded education, discussion and public input process.
- b. The expanded schedule would provide early notice to TMMs of what issues will be presented to Town Meeting for decision.
- c. The expanded schedule would provide additional time for public discussion both between TMMs and between TMMs and their constituents.
- d. The expanded schedule would provide early notice to all Town committees of Warrant articles propounded by *other* committees. For example, the Warrant Committee would have early notice of articles that the Planning Board intends to advance. This “early notice” allows the heads of all Town committees to take notice of Warrant articles from committees other than their own.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. Ad Hoc Committee may craft a resolution proposing a new schedule to be presented to Town Meeting for consideration after receiving further input from the full range of stakeholders.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. The Board of Selectmen exercises decisionmaking over when to “open” and “close” the warrant.
- b. Other boards and committees (e.g., Warrant Committee, Planning Board, School Committee) exercise decisionmaking over the timing of their pre-Town Meeting hearings, forums, and other events and tasks.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. The wording of warrant articles would not have to be finalized when the warrant is closed; rather, the wording would be finalized before the Selectmen sign the warrant and deliver it to the Town Clerk’s office, which would occur later in the process as detailed in Attachment B-2.
- b. An expanded schedule for pre-Town Meeting events could be utilized on a trial basis. Town Meeting could decide whether a one-year trial is sufficient or whether a two-year trial is “better.”
- c. The proposal for an expanded schedule of pre-Town Meeting events applies only to Annual Town Meeting, not to Special Town Meetings.

Recommendation #3:

Encourage and facilitate pre-Town Meeting precinct caucuses.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Some TMMs, especially newly-elected ones, are not prepared at Town Meeting. They often do not take those steps needed to understand the issues to be presented to Town Meeting prior to the time that the first day of Town Meeting arrives.
- b. Even TMMs who seek information and discussion often lack a mechanism to pursue their interest.
- c. Many presenters at Town Meeting do not have an opportunity before Town Meeting to determine whether their presentations or “message” are addressing TMM concerns/questions. As a result, Town Meeting presentations are sometimes not as helpful or informative as they might be.

2. What is the Committee’s recommendation:

- a. Individual precincts should be encouraged to hold pre-Town Meeting caucuses and facilitated in their efforts should they do so.
 - i. Town Clerk would assure that public meeting rooms are made available for Precinct caucuses.
 - ii. Precinct caucuses should be announced as public meetings.
- b. Each precinct at its caucus could elect a captain charged with arranging the next caucus.
- c. Not every caucus needs to operate in the same way; nor do they need to consider the same things. It is appropriate to leave to each individual precinct what the caucus “agenda” would be. Town Meeting Members in each precinct may decide if they want to invite a speaker; if they want to discuss a particular issue; if they want to review the entire Warrant; and the like.
- d. While each precinct may set its own “agenda” for the precinct caucus, the expectation is that each caucus will direct its attention to articles appearing in the Warrant.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Caucuses provide forums with appropriate size and composition. They are small enough for an efficient discussion, and yet large enough to provide a wide range of points-of-view,. Accordingly, they are good vehicles for raising issues that are likely to arise at Town Meeting.
- b. Attending caucuses would be good for proponents to find out before Town Meeting whether their presentations are meeting the needs of TMMs.
- c. Caucuses would be good mechanism to generate questions that Town leadership (e.g., Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Planning Board), or other proponents of warrant articles, might seek to address at or before Town Meeting.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. Since the Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communication has representatives from each precinct, Ad Hoc Committee offers to take responsibility to ensure that precinct caucuses happen before the 2012 Town Meeting. The Ad Hoc Committee members will offer to work with the Town Clerk on how to organize this.
- b. Once the initial caucus is convened, it will become the responsibility of Town Meeting Members in each precinct to pursue caucuses prior to subsequent Town Meetings.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. The Town Clerk will facilitate precinct caucus scheduling.
- b. Responsibility for making rooms available lies with the Town Clerk.
- c. Responsibility for choosing a Precinct Captain lies with each individual precinct caucus.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. Some precincts already routinely have precinct caucuses prior to Town Meeting. This recommendation is intended to have precincts emulate these practices, not to replace existing practices.
- b. While precinct caucuses should be announced as a public meeting, they are not subject to the Open Meetings law. Naturally, transparency is preferred since the purpose of the caucus is communication and preparedness.
- c. Holding precinct caucuses in a public meeting room is intended to ensure the caucus locations have a “neutrality” about them. TMMs should not be reticent to attend based on *where* the caucus is held.

Recommendation #4:

Supplement the existing LWV Town Meeting briefing night (on non-budget warrant articles) with a second evening briefing presented by the Warrant Committee for budget-related articles.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Pre-Town Meeting briefings by the League of Women Voters (LWV) provide insufficient time to discuss both budget and non-budget issues in a single evening. A two- to three-hour session is simply insufficient time to surface and address questions regarding both budget and non-budget articles.
- b. In recent years, there has often been a very limited budget discussion.

- c. In recent years, the budget is sometimes not available by the night on which the League provides its pre-Town Meeting briefing.
- 2. What is the Committee's recommendation:**
- a. Retain the LWV pre-Town Meeting briefing for non-budget articles.
 - b. Add a Warrant Committee briefing before the Town Meeting in proximate time to the Town Meeting sessions that will consider the budget articles.
 - c. Both of these briefings are for background information and explanation, not for advocacy or discussion of the merits of the articles.
- 3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:**
- a. A bifurcated pre-Town Meeting briefing will allow for more focused attention on the budget and more time for questions.
 - b. A bifurcated pre-Town Meeting briefing will allow for a budget briefing even if the Town Meeting consideration of the budget is postponed until a later date.
- 4. What next steps are necessary:**
- a. The Warrant Committee would need to agree to take on the additional task of providing a pre-Town Meeting briefing specifically on budget articles.
- 5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:**
- a. The Warrant Committee should present the pre-Town Meeting briefing, with appropriate input and participation of relevant Town departments.
- 6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:**
- a. It is always necessary to be sensitive to the number of meetings already required of Warrant Committee members, who are community volunteers.
 - b. What constitutes a "budget article" need not be defined in advance. It can be operationally defined from year-to-year.

Recommendation #5:

Schedule an annual Community Forum on the future direction of Belmont.

- 1. What problem is being addressed:**
- a. Town Meeting discussions are limited to the articles in the Warrant. It is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to gain the broader "context" since broader questions are "beyond the scope of the Warrant."

- b. “Big picture” issues do not generally present themselves as specific decisions placed before Town Meeting.
- c. Town Meeting is placed in a constantly reactive mode, rather a pro-active mode.

2. What is the Committee’s recommendation:

- a. An annual community forum should be scheduled that is “future-oriented.”
- b. While the community forum should be open to the general public, it should prove important to educating Town Meeting Members of what is likely to come before Town Meeting over time.
- c. The annual community forum:
 - i. Should address both “town” and “school” issues;
 - ii. Should address “big picture” issues;
 - iii. Should be “future oriented”;
 - iv. May, but need not, address financial/budget issues;
 - v. Should involve presentations by the Town/School leadership, but should provide an opportunity for public feedback.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Providing an annual community forum allows thinking not only of the short-term, but of the long-term as well.
- b. Providing an annual community forum compels Town/School leadership to think through not only the substance of the broader picture, but to think through how to communicate that broader picture to the public (including TMMs).

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. Request Town Moderator to schedule a “community forum” for 2011.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Town Moderator should schedule and select topic(s).
- b. The Board of Selectmen (BOS) and School Committee (SC) should present, with staff presentations as appropriate depending on the topic to be addressed.
- c. There may be a role for the Vision Implementation Committee in sponsoring and/or hosting such an annual community forum.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. While the focus of such a community forum is on improving the knowledge of TMMs, it should be a community event.
- b. To be effective, the community forum should be made into an “event,” not merely “yet another meeting.”
- c. The expectation is that the community forum would usually include short talks on State of the Schools and State of the Town, but in some years

- could focus on some special issue(s). The format and topics need not be the same each year.
- d. The Ad Hoc Committee acknowledges that the Town has previously done such forums, but discontinued them due to the lack of attendance.
 - e. Because of the heavy workload of “budget season” from January throughout the spring, it might be advantageous to hold Community Forums in the fall.
 - f. Different committees have engaged in similar processes at differing times.
 - The Vision Committee at the time the Working Vision for Belmont’s Future was adopted;
 - Sustainable Belmont at the time the Climate Action Plan was written;
 - The Planning Board at the time the Comprehensive Plan was being prepared.
 - The Vision Implementation Committee at the time the Envision Belmont report was prepared.

Part 2: Recommendations for Town Meeting as an “Organization”

Town Meeting is more than simply the event of gathering Town Meeting Members together to deliberate on decisions that are placed before it in the Warrant. Town Meeting exists as an institution even between sessions of Town Meeting. Indeed, much of the work of Town Meeting Members occurs (or should occur) when Town Meeting is *not* in session. This work involves information gathering, communication not only between TMMs and their constituents but also between TMMs and local officials, and efforts to ensure the adequacy of preparation for when Town Meeting is called together.

This second set of recommendations is designed to address the process of communication to and within the organization of Town Meeting when Town Meeting is not in session.

Recommendation #6:

Increase electronic communications with TMMs.

- 1. What problem is being addressed:**
 - a. Much of the relevant information behind Town Meeting decisions is from previous years, but that information is hard to find; there is an incomplete institutional memory.
 - b. The cost of mailings inhibits people from sending TMM necessary information to educate them on specific topics.

- c. Town Meeting operates in the midst of a broader change in culture: people expect to find information on the web. It is easier to search for information if it is on the web.

2. What is the Committee's recommendation:

- a. The Town should adopt specific steps to improve electronic communications with TMMs. Attachment C sets forth a proposal on increased electronic communication.
- b. The Town should adopt specific steps to make the Warrant for each Town Meeting, along with supportive information, available electronically. Attachment D sets forth recommendations regarding the presentation of the Warrant.
- c. The Town Clerk should continue to expeditiously move forward with a TMM option to receive information by e-mail.
 - i. The Town Clerk's existing efforts should be acknowledged and assisted by meaningful feedback from users (both those providing information and those receiving information).
- d. While the primary purpose of this recommendation is convenient access to information regarding current Warrant articles, it would also be appropriate to have links to information on Town Meeting procedures, explanations of topics which arise at many Town Meetings (e.g. what is "Free Cash").

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Electronic communication, which involves more than simply communicating via e-mail, creates an enduring source of information. Information is not "lost" or made inaccessible over time.
- b. With electronic communication protocols established, accessing information is made more convenient. Either TMMs or the public could access a web site from home or from a library. TMMs and the public could access the Web at any time, not just at the time of the relevant public hearing.
- c. Increasing use of web-based provision of information is in many ways "more public" than a one-off public hearing.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. The Town Clerk is currently implementing new policies regarding communication to TMMs by e-mail.
- b. Improvements in electronic communication should start very simple and become more sophisticated over time.
 - i. A first step is to post on a web site the normal information that is physically mailed to TMMs for each Town Meeting, and to add links from committees proposing specific articles to a web page giving background information supplied by the committees.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Town Clerk should have oversight authority for the website.
- b. The Town Meeting Communication Committee (as presented in Recommendation #7) should assist in ways outlined in Recommendation #7.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. In the longer term, the Ad Hoc Committee would hope that volunteers, donations, a foundation grant, or a Town Meeting budget allocation would improve the web design.
- b. This is the official Town website. The web site should provide information. The Town website is not an appropriate forum for “discussions.”

Recommendation #7:

Create an ongoing Town Meeting Communications Committee, first, to implement improvements in providing information to Town Meeting Members, and second, to ensure that communication—print and electronic—continues to improve on a long-term basis.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. While information provided to Town Meeting Members should come from official sources, the process of instituting improved communications will be time-consuming for Belmont’s limited staff resources.
- b. Editorial oversight from a dedicated group can help ensure that explanations of warrant articles and motions are consistent, clear, and useful to Town Meeting Members as they consider them.
- c. Such a group can also determine effective ways to update TMMs concerning significant developments during the Town’s budget process.
- d. The current website devoted to Town Meeting is limited in form and function.

2. What is the Committee’s recommendation:

- a. The Moderator should create a committee that is comprised of Town Meeting Members along with representatives from other major Town bodies, similar in composition to the Capital Budget Committee (i.e., representatives of various stakeholders along with members appointed by the Moderator).
- b. This Committee would meet periodically during the months preceding Annual Town Meeting (beginning each January) to oversee the process of communicating with TMMs about the warrant, the motions that will be voted upon, and the development of the budget for the upcoming fiscal

year. It would also meet in advance of Special Town Meetings as needed for similar purposes.

- c. Once initial standards have been achieved for improved print and electronic communications, this Committee would consider further improvements as the needs for Town Meeting information evolve.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. Just as the Ad Hoc Committee has been able to focus on the need to improve Town Meeting communications, ongoing and focused efforts will be needed to implement changes to Town Meeting communications in both the near- and long-term.
- b. A Moderator-appointed Communications Committee will ensure that information is disseminated with the active cooperation of the official bodies whose work is the basis for Town Meeting.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. The Town Moderator would agree to institute such a Committee, determine its charge with input from the official Town bodies represented on the Committee, and appoint Town Meeting members for multi-year (staggered) terms as is done with other Moderator-appointed committees.
- b. The Communications Committee would begin a regular series of meetings in January 2012 to review and help disseminate information about the 2012 Annual Town Meeting.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. The Town Administrator's office is the appropriate source of staff support for the activities of the Committee.
- b. The primary responsibility for ensuring clarity of Warrant and Motions should remain with Staff, as assisted by the Committee.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. This recommendation does not assume that the Town Clerk's office will need to lend support (or invest time) in this Committee's efforts to communicate about warrant articles, the motions, or the budget. At the same time, the Committee would in no way be a substitute for the statutory obligations of the Town Clerk's office in posting notices pertaining to Annual or Special Town Meetings.
- b. Since the Town Clerk has the primary for communications with Town Meeting Members, the Town Clerk should have a level of involvement as sought by that official.
- c. Other recommendations from this Ad Hoc Committee, particularly regarding electronic communications and formatting of warrant articles, would be a significant area of responsibility for an ongoing Communications Committee.

- d. The “editing” function and the long-term communications functions of the proposed Committee are distinct tasks. It is expected that the manner of performing these tasks will evolve over time.

Recommendation #8:

Identify and clarify the process by which Town Meeting can obtain more information on a topic and keep that topic “alive” rather than disappearing.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Issues come up at Town Meeting that get lost after they are raised and acknowledged to be legitimate concerns.
- b. Town Meeting sometimes does not have enough information to be sure it is making a sensible decision, but it is not clear to most TMM how to ensure that we get that information.
- c. Often the topic where information is missing is a recurring issue. So even if there is not time to obtain and present the missing information before the vote on the current article, it would be good to obtain the information before the issue arises again.
- d. Sometimes, people follow up on a Town Meeting discussion, and obtain the info or even completely resolve the issue, but that subsequent action is not consistently reported back to TM, giving the *impression* that the issue was dropped.
- e. There is an existing mechanism that allows a TMM to request further study and a report back on questions arising from an article at TM. However, Town Meeting Members are either unaware of this mechanism, or are not accustomed to using this mechanism.

2. What is the Committee’s recommendation:

- a. Each Town Meeting should have an “Article 2” counterpart to the existing “Article 1” reports from Town officials. An “Article 2 report” would involve a designated person (Committee, elected official, staff, other) providing a report to Town Meeting requested in a previous session of Town Meeting. Article 2 would set a place in the Town Meeting agenda for reports back to Town Meeting.
 - i. While an “Article 1 report” would involve any report by a local official, an “Article 2 report” would specifically involve a report back to Town Meeting on a topic requested by a previous Town Meeting.
- b. Town Meeting Members should be educated about the full range of procedural options available to them in responding to a Warrant article. Town Meeting Members need not simply vote “yes” or “no” in response to a warrant article. For example, they could make a motions to request further investigation and a report back with missing information.

- c. Town Meeting Members should receive, along with the copy of the Warrant circulated prior to Town Meeting, a standardized list of permissible motions and the rules on when each is appropriate.
- d. This education process should also occur in conjunction with implementation of the training set forth in Recommendation #9.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. There is not a need to create new processes to improve communications between Town Meetings. Existing processes are adequate to address the problems; they are just not being adequately used.
- b. Existing processes allow a Town Meeting Member to identify a knowledge gap and to propose a solution by referring a specific question to a specific person or committee.
- c. By placing such a request in a motion, Town Meeting is given the opportunity to vote whether it agrees, as a body, with the need for the information.
- d. Committees may report back in-person to Town Meeting or to a designated office (e.g., Town Moderator, who might then ask them to give an Article 2 report is that is appropriate).
- e. Committees may also work to resolve the issue (not simply the knowledge gap) that underlies the question that has been referred to them.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. The Board of Selectmen and Town Moderator should institutionalize and routinize “Article 2” reports.
- b. A Town Meeting Member orientation should include training on the existing allowed process of referring an article to a committee (or to some other designated person).
- c. The Moderator should prepare a standardized list of available motions, which list should be circulated with the Warrant for each Town Meeting.
- d. The Town Administrator should prepare for all Committee chairs guidance on presenting to Town Meeting as well as on post-Town Meeting activity. This guidance should include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Basic information to be included in presentations;
 - ii. Anticipating questions to be answered in presentations;
 - iii. Clarity of presentations;
- e. Committee chairs should receive education on their own committee’s post-Town Meeting activity. When, for example, a proposed article fails because of a perceived lack of information, the responsibility lies with the committee to come back with the information and to contact the Moderator to schedule the time appropriate to make responsive reports.
- f. The Town should, as part of an electronic warrant, provide links from the Town Meeting website to information responsive to Town Meeting discussions.
 - i. See, Attachment D (including a proposal for an electronic Warrant).

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Town Meeting can express its “endorsement” of receiving Article 2 reports.
- b. The decision on how to routinize such reports falls within the decisionmaking purview of the Moderator and the Board of Selectmen.
- c. The Town Moderator should determine, for any specific Town Meeting session, what topics are appropriate for reporting back to Town Meeting through the Article 2 process.
- d. The Moderator should take primary responsibility for delivering the information on permissible motions at a Town Meeting Member orientation.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. As with an Article 1 report, an “Article 2” process can be available but it need not be used at every Town Meeting session. Some Town Meeting sessions will involve laying Article 2 on the table because no reports are available or appropriate.

Recommendation #9:

Implement a TMM Orientation which includes providing a written “Town Meeting Member handbook.”

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Many new Town Meeting Members do not know the procedures of Town Meeting or the expectations of the responsibilities of Town Meeting Members.
- b. Many new TMMs do not know the particular lines of responsibility in the Town for budgets, warrant articles, etc., or the timeline for developing and including articles in the Warrant for a Town Meeting.

2. What is the Committee’s recommendation:

- a. Each year the Town should deliver a Town Meeting Member orientation. All TMMs should be invited, especially newly-elected.
- b. The Town should revise and re-publish the Belmont Town Meeting Member handbook. The handbook should be made available to all new TMMs and posted on a Town Meeting web site.
- c. See Attachment E for the proposed outline of a TMM handbook. This is consistent with, but is not identical to, the table of contents of the existing Belmont Town Meeting Member handbook.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. An annual TMM orientation will allow the Moderator, Town Staff, experienced Town Meeting Members, and others as appropriate, to provide in-person education to new TMMs as well as provide annual “refresher” education to existing TMMs.
- b. A TMM orientation would address not only the procedures of Town Meeting, so that new TMMs do not feel “lost,” but would also provide information on the duties and responsibilities of a person serving as a TMM.
- c. Increasing the level of comfort with substance and procedure is expected to increase the comfort level of new and existing Town Meeting members to actively participate in deliberations.
- d. A TMM orientation would increase the knowledge level of what TMMs may do, and should do, in their capacity as TMMs between Town Meeting sessions.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. The Ad Hoc Committee will provide list of suggested topics and some informative material for an initial “orientation” session for all Town Meeting Members.
- b. Discuss with Town Clerk and Town Moderator the feasibility of offering the first “orientation” in April 2012 (subsequent to Town elections but prior to Town Meeting).
- c. Seek volunteer(s) to revise the existing Belmont Town Meeting Member handbook, taking into account the existing Belmont handbook and handbooks from other communities.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Town Clerk’s office to organize orientation.
 - i. Town Moderator has expressed interest in helping to deliver orientation.
 - ii. Solicit volunteers to help as needed.
- b. Solicit volunteers to update Belmont’s Town Meeting Member handbook.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. Other organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, may want to have a role in either the publication of a new handbook or the sponsorship of an orientation or both.
- b. In addition to Belmont’s existing TMM handbook, a number of Town Meeting Member handbooks also have been published in other communities. There is no need to develop original content for Belmont.

Part 3: A Long-Term Structural Recommendation for Town Meeting

While the recommendations presented in Parts 1 and 2 above involve short-term responses to particular problems, many of the “problems” to which those recommendations respond indicate that benefits might flow from a longer-term structural response as well. The creation of a Town Meeting Member Association would help provide a consistent structure through which to address many of the issues identified in this Initial Report, both involving the preparation for Town Meeting and the recognition of Town Meeting as an entity or institution even when not in session. A Town Meeting Member Association would provide continuity to Town Meeting as an institution over time.

This third recommendation is designed to address the structural issue of continuity.

Recommendation #10:

Organize a Town Meeting Member Association.

1. What problem is being addressed:

- a. Many communications issues are outside the purview of the Town acting in its governmental capacity.
- b. Some issues affect Town Meeting Members as Town Meeting Members, with no office or person specifically responsible to be accountable for resolving or addressing them.
- c. Some valuable tasks that would benefit Town Meeting Members as Town Meeting Members are not appropriate for staff, e.g. website with discussion forum.
- d. Town Meeting Members, as Town Meeting Members, need an advocate to ensure that they have the information they need, in understandable, timely, and convenient formats.
- e. Town Meeting sometimes has poor follow through.
- f. No institutional structure of Town Meeting members exists that can provide assistance to officials such as the Town Moderator and Town Clerk in implementing new ideas. Town Meeting is focused only on this year’s Warrant articles. A Town Meeting Member Association could take a broader view.

2. What is the Committee's recommendation:

- a. Belmont should organize a Town Meeting Member Association. Successful models of TMMAs exist in other communities.

3. Why the Committee thinks the recommendation will help address the problem:

- a. A Town Meeting Member Association can provide a structure for maintaining continuity and accountability for efforts that need to exist beyond a given Town Meeting (e.g., ongoing communication, follow-up of "parking lot" topics, training of new TMMs, preparing for TM, etc.)
- b. A TMMA can provide an organizational structure for efficiently coordinating and directing the efforts of TMMs who want to help their fellow TMMs (e.g., by tracking various efforts, providing a structure to manage volunteer activity, providing an outlet for directing the enthusiasms of TMMs for given projects, serving as a "clearinghouse" to track disparate efforts and avoid duplication of work, etc.)
- c. A TMMA could eventually give the organizational framework for coordinating the implementation of the other recommendations (e.g., a Communication Subgroup of the TMMA could implement the communication recommendations, building on the continuity and organization of the TMMA itself instead of having to re-create all the infrastructure that a standalone committee needs to create; or the TMMA as an entity can help work with the town on implementing a new budget schedule/process, without having to wait for a TM to throw people together).
- d. A TMMA can form a long-term peer group, affording a context in which TMMs can learn about each other and share their knowledge about what it means to be a TMM or about specific issues that are coming up in a TM; this would enable coherent mentoring, information sharing, etc. and in a way that has some continuity over time.

4. What next steps are necessary:

- a. The Ad Hoc Committee offers to organize an initial meeting of Town Meeting Members potentially interested in a Town Meeting Member Association. Subsequent progress will depend on a group of TMMs forming an organizing work group and pursuing the task.
- b. Interested Town Meeting Members should continue work to collect and circulate information on the structure and operation of TMMAs in other communities.
- c. Interested Town Meeting Members should meet with, and collaborate with (to the extent appropriate), the Government Structure Review Committee, which also recommended organization of a Town Meeting Member Association.

5. Who should be responsible for ongoing implementation:

- a. Organizing a TMM Association must flow from TMMs. It cannot be delegated to Staff.

6. Other miscellaneous notes and relevant observations:

- a. Funding of a Town Meeting member Association would be expected to come from dues, grants and other sources.
- b. The structure and operation of a Town Meeting Member Association is expected to grow and become more defined over time. Its functions may be “staged” over the longer-term.
- c. A TMMA would not be a political organization, but a peer organization. Bylaws should be put in place to assure that the organization would not be usable to forward any particular agenda.
- d. Several of the recommendations included in this report of recommendations by the Ad Hoc Committee may ultimately become functions of a Town Meeting Member Association. Such function might include, for example:
 - i. Providing a Town Meeting Member orientation;
 - ii. Providing increased electronic communications, including web-hosted information on pending Warrant articles;
 - iii. Facilitating precinct caucuses;
 - iv. Tracking issues from one Town Meeting session to future Town Meeting sessions.
 - v. Maintaining an up-to-date Town Meeting Member Handbook.

Attachment A
Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on
Town Meeting Communications

Anne Donohue, Precinct 1

Sue Pew, Precinct 2

Christine McVay, Precinct 3

Kevin Cunningham, Precinct 4

Thayer Donham, Precinct 5

Nancy Marsh, Precinct 6

Bill Green, Precinct 7, Co-chair

Scott Stratford, Precinct 8

Roger Colton, At-large, Co-chair

Sami Baghdady, Planning Board

Pat Bruschi, Warrant Committee

Attachment B-1
Existing vs. Recommended Schedule of Pre-TM Events

Event/Task	2011 Annual Town Meeting Schedule	Recommended Annual Town Meeting Schedule ¹
January: Week 1		Open Warrant
January: Week 2		
January: Week 3		
January: Week 4		Close Warrant (last Monday)
February: Week 1		Finalize ("sign") Warrant
February: Week 2		Distribute Warrant to TMMs
February: Week 3		Committee hearings. Public education and discussion process.
February: Week 4		
March: Week 1		
March: Week 2	Open Warrant (March 9 th)	
March: Week 3	Close Warrant (March 21 st)	
March: Week 4	Finalize ("sign") Warrant (March 28 th)	
April: Week 1	Distribute Warrant & Motions to TMMs (April 7 th)	
April: Week 2	Warrant Committee/LWV briefing (April 14 th)	
April: Week 3	Deadline for filing amendments (April 20 th)	
April: Week 4	Town Meeting begins (April 25 th)	Warrant Committee/LWV briefing
May: Week 1		Deadline for filing amendments
May: Week 2		Town Meeting begins
May: Week 3 (and beyond)	Additional TM sessions (if necessary)	Additional TM sessions (if necessary)

¹ See, Attachment B-2 for further explanation of recommended schedule of pre-Town meeting events.

Attachment B-2

An Expanded Schedule for Belmont's Town Meeting March 2011

Overview: The Ad Hoc Committee on Town Meeting Communications has recommended that the date of Town Meeting be moved from the last Monday of April to the second Monday of May. While that proposal has merit standing on its own, many of the benefits of adopting that proposal could be enhanced if the tasks undertaken in preparation for Town Meeting were undertaken on an expanded schedule.

Objectives:

1. To provide Town Meeting Members (TMMs) early notice of the issues that are intended to be presented to Town Meeting;
2. To expand opportunities for participation in processes that might allow TMMs to inform themselves of the merits of warrant articles to be presented to Town Meeting;
3. To expand opportunities for public discussion, including media coverage, regarding warrant articles to be presented to Town Meeting;
4. To lessen the conflict between the time allowed for the Warrant Committee to consider non-budget warrant articles (where appropriate) and the time the Warrant Committee devotes to preparation of the budget;
5. To improve the likelihood that the Warrant Committee might have sufficient budget information to circulate a proposed budget prior to Town Meeting.

Recommendation:

The outlines of a pre-Town Meeting schedule are presented in the attached flow chart of pre-Town Meeting tasks. The flow chart, by necessity, also captures other recommendations advanced in the Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee. The recommended pre-Town Meeting schedule includes the following elements:

1. The Town Meeting Warrant should “close” no later than the last Monday of January.
 - a. The Warrant provides notice of the issues to be considered at Town Meeting. It does not necessarily provide the exact language to be voted upon at Town Meeting. That language is provided in the “motions” that are subsequently circulated.

- b. Because the Warrant need not contain the exact language to be voted upon, closing the Warrant early does not adversely affect Town officials preparing the budget. Budget Warrant articles need not contain actual numbers.
2. The Warrant should be expeditiously circulated in hard copy to all TMMs and posted on a Town Meeting web site.
 - a. Circulation of the Warrant in hard copy may be required by law.
 - b. Circulation of the Warrant in writing, however, does not preclude also posting it to a Town Meeting web site as a “living” Warrant. See, recommendation regarding improved use of electronic communications and corresponding attachments.
3. While the contents and presentation of the Warrant are subject to a separate recommendation by the Ad Hoc Committee, from a scheduling perspective, the Warrant should include:
 - a. notices of all public hearings scheduled on articles contained in the Warrant. Some articles may not be subject to public hearings;
 - b. the proposed order at which the articles are anticipated to be considered at Town Meeting.
4. Actual “motions” to be voted upon by Town Meeting should be circulated at the same time they are currently circulated (i.e., mid-April). The fact that the date of TM is recommended to be modified to mid-May should not result in a corresponding delay in the circulation of the “motions” to be voted upon.
 - a. Providing a longer time period between when motions are circulated and Town Meeting begins allows TMMs more time to review and understand the actual motions to be voted upon.
 - b. Providing a longer time period between when motions are circulated and Town Meeting begins allows TMMs more time to prepare amendments, if desired, prior to the deadline for submission of amendments (three-days before the day on which an article is to be considered).
5. During the time subsequent to the circulation of Warrant but prior to Town Meeting, precinct caucuses should be encouraged and facilitated. At this time, no specific time period has been designated as “precinct caucus time.” Precinct caucuses have been addressed in a separate recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee.
6. The budget process is assumed to occur on a parallel track with the process directed toward non-budget warrant articles. Early circulation of the warrant neither improves nor detracts from the existing process relating to the budget and circulation of the Warrant. The existing process

does not contemplate including the proposed budget in the Warrant at the time the Warrant is circulated.

7. The expanded time frame contained in this recommendation provides for additional time for pre-Town Meeting briefings.

Notes:

1. It is understood that while Town Meeting may “endorse” or “recommend” a schedule such as that outlined above, the Town Meeting schedule is ultimately within the decision-making purview of the Board of Selectmen.
2. Implementing a schedule such as that outlined above may be appropriate on a trial basis for a one- or two-year period, with a review at the end of the trial of whether TMMs believe the expanded schedule to be helpful in their preparation for Town Meeting.

Attachment C

Recommendation One: enhance the Town Website with more Town Meeting Information, including a dedicated Town Meeting Member page with frequent updates on the proposed operating and capital budgets for the upcoming fiscal year; updates on warrant articles as more becomes known about what the impact would be if they are passed or defeated; and information about the responsibilities of being a Town Meeting Member.

++Give Town Meeting more prominence on existing home page (i.e. its own tab on the right hand column).

++ Newly developed content for Town Meeting Members would include three components:

- 1.) *Budget information* (initial proposed Town, School, and capital budgets, as well as updates as the budget season progresses);
- 2.) *Warrant Articles* (including explanations of each article, sponsorship of articles when relevant, and the impact of passing or defeating the article); (*Separate proposal coming from Kevin Cunningham on visual layout as well as editorial explanation of warrant)
- 3.) *“Being a Town Meeting Member”* (* Separate proposal coming from Nancy Marsh on TMM orientation)

Detailed information of what might be included on these additional web pages is outlined in Addendum A: “Suggested Web Content”. Suggestions on who should be responsible for preparing and posting these enhancements are outlined at the end of each action item.

Recommendation Two: increase use of email to communicate with Town Meeting Members.

Suggestions on implementation are in Addendum B: “Email Communication”.

Recommendation Three: develop a Town Meeting Member Association that would include a website/or other social network for informal discussion of town issues. (* Separate proposal coming from Kevin Cunningham on a TMM Association)

Addendum A (Suggested Web Content)

1. BUDGET INFORMATION

1A. Budget Background. Would contain such information as:

Intro: A one-page overview: “understanding Belmont’s budget”. Total spending, enterprise budgets, state charges, debt service, etc. explained in overview fashion. (How Belmont gets from its total budget to its operating budget, then major areas within the operating budget.)

Would **link** to info on:

- ***Current Fiscal Year:*** budget (PDFs, taken from official Town/School budgets, including the Capital Budget, as approved by Town Meeting)
- ***The Budget Timeline:*** the process, with a breakdown of all the stages between initial January budgets and the final budget that is brought to Town Meeting. This explanatory timeline should integrate the relevant stages of the **state** budget process—and how the state budget process (and changes in state aid) complicates our local budget process.
- ***Current Fiscal Year’s Warrant Committee and Capital Budget Committee reports*** (PDFs, as distributed when the prior Town Meeting was held).
- ***Longer-term budget history:*** school spending, Town spending, state aid, etc. to give at least 5 years of previous history (note: the school budget handout for TM typically contains this information already).
- ***Longer-term projections,*** as available from public documents, on revenues/expenses/capital needs (note: this would include the existing 5-year capital budget plan, plus any long-term projections like the multi-year estimates developed via “Mega Meeting” processes).

(This Budget Background information would be the responsibility of the Warrant Committee, with input from Town and School administrators as needed. The Moderator should also be consulted, particularly on the overview of Belmont’s budget and the budget timeline. A “webmaster” from the Town’s IT Department would develop the overall website)

1B. Upcoming Fiscal Year budget information.

Beginning in January:

Initial proposed Town/School budgets, as presented by the Town Administrator to the Board of Selectmen and by the Superintendent of Schools to the School Committee. When posted to the Town Meeting Member section of the Town website, the Town and School budgets should

include a one-page narrative of major changes (cuts/adds, debt service changes, estimated state aid, etc.) as an overview in comparison with the current fiscal year.

Beginning in February:

Significant revisions to proposed Town/School budgets, reflecting BOS/SC/WC deliberations on revenue estimates, state aid estimates, revisions to cuts/adds, etc. since the initial proposed budgets were presented. Should include a one-page narrative of major changes in comparison with the current fiscal year (cuts/adds, etc.), as well as changes in relation to the initial proposed budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. By no later than the end of February, the information should be as current as possible as the intense March budget period begins. It should also include the initial list of potential Capital Budget items (when submitted by Town and School departments).

Beginning in March:

Weekly updates on revised Town/School budget figures, based on weekly Warrant Committee meetings. To be posted to web site no later than Friday by Town Administrator's office.

As Town Meeting materials are prepared:

- PDFs of final budget (identical to what is mailed to TMMs);
- changes, if any, in budget or revenue figures (from BOS/WC) after the final budget is mailed;
- the list of Capital Budget items that will be funded;
- PDFs of Warrant Committee/Capital Budget Committee reports for the upcoming Fiscal Year;
- the list of streets that will be repaired/rebuilt in the upcoming Fiscal Year.

Following completion of Annual Town Meeting:

- PDFs of final budgets as voted by Town Meeting.
- updating of Budget Background material (see 1A. above) on longer-term budget history and longer-term budget projections as applicable.

(This Upcoming Fiscal Year budget information, including updates to the posted information, would be the responsibility of the Town Administrator's office, with input from the School Department and the Warrant Committee as needed. A "webmaster" from the Town's IT Department would provide technical support to the website. The budget information should be confined to public documents, including budget updates, once they have been presented to the Warrant Committee at posted public meetings. Since the Warrant Committee meets

virtually every Wednesday night in the weeks leading up to Town Meeting, weekly updates in March should be posted each Thursday or Friday after the documents have been presented at that week's Warrant Committee meeting.)

Addendum A (Suggested Web Content), cont.**2. WARRANT ARTICLES**

This section of the web site would include:

- a list of the warrant articles for the upcoming Town Meeting (PDFs of the warrant plus the language of the motions, as mailed to TMMs);
- the proposed order of discussion (when determined by the Board of Selectmen) for warrant articles;
- “what this means” information (updated as deliberations/queries bring the meaning of warrant articles into clearer focus). Include sponsoring body (if applicable), intended purpose, what a “yes” (or “no”) vote means, and whom to contact for further information prior to TM discussion of the warrant article in question; (*Separate proposal coming from Kevin Cunningham on language and layout of warrant)
- votes on articles taken by boards and committees (BOS, WC, CBC, Planning Board, etc.) in advance of Town Meeting action, including vote totals “in favor” and “opposed” on articles whose approval (or disapproval) is not unanimous
- after Town Meeting, information as to whether or not each warrant article was approved, including standing or roll-call vote totals where applicable.

(This Warrant Articles section would be the responsibility of the Town Administrator’s office, with input from the Town Moderator, Warrant Committee, Board of Selectmen, Capital Budget Committee, and Planning Board as needed.)

Addendum A (Suggested Web Content), cont.**3. BEING A TOWN MEETING MEMBER**

This part of the website would be a series of resources for new, experienced, and potential Town Meeting members. Sections could include:

- How to run for Town Meeting
- The role of Town Meeting in Belmont's governance
- Upon Election:
 - Preparing for TM
 - Understanding the rules involving Amendments, Scope of Articles, etc.
 - The Roles of Committees/Boards reporting to TM (WC, CBC, Bylaw Committee), including a roster of members for each committee that includes the current chairperson, terms of office for members, etc.
 - The Roles of Major Boards (BOS, SC, Planning Board) who implement decisions taken by TM. Should include contact information so that TMMs can pose BOS questions to the Town Administrator's office, BPS questions to the Superintendent's office, Planning Board questions to the Town Planner's office
 - Understanding Zoning and the role of TM in amending the Zoning By-Laws
 - A "Moderator's Message" about effective TM representation
- Understanding TMs vs. STMs; timelines, notifications, purposes
- Ongoing issues, such as the definition of "free cash", funding of Town employee pensions, special education, Minuteman Career/Technical High School, etc.)
- A FAQ section, to add additional information as the need becomes known

(Sections could be text-based, "webinar" video segments or discussions, or other multi-media items as appropriate. The Belmont Media Center could be asked to provide technical expertise and production of video or other multi-media items.

This part of the website would be developed and kept updated under the direction of the Town Moderator. An ongoing Town Meeting Member Communication Committee, similar to the By-Law Committee, could devote energy to the website on an ongoing basis.)

Addendum B: Email Communication

- Town Meeting Members should be strongly encouraged either to provide an existing email account or establish a separate email account to receive communication about Town Meeting from Town officials (and potentially from residents of their precinct as well: see next bullet). Requests for email addresses, like the request recently sent by the Town Clerk's office, should be sent to all Town Meeting Members on an annual basis to keep the email distribution list as current as possible.
- The Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and other Town officials must develop an acceptable policy for the uses of email addresses provided by Town Meeting Members. Email addresses should not be made available to the general public, including town residents in the Town Meeting Member's precinct, without the express consent of Town Meeting Members. Town officials should determine whether TMM email addresses should be kept confidential, solely for use in distributing official Town communications while keeping email addresses anonymous to the general public, or whether TMMs should have the option of making an email address available to the general public.
- Town Meeting Members should be given the option to receive almost all documents via email. The only legal requirement for paper distribution is the warrant itself.
- The Town Meeting venue should be able to support wireless Internet access for an increasing number of Town Meeting Members who want to access electronic resources during Town Meeting.

Attachment D

PROPOSAL FOR AD HOC COMMITTEE ON TM COMMUNICATIONS *Changes to the Warrant Documentation Process*

15 March 2011

The following suggestions are intended to make the Warrant article information more available, more useful, and more complete. They follow an analysis of the existing Warrant documentation content and style, and add ideas from other Towns' Warrants.

Proposal 1 does not necessarily imply Proposal 2, though Proposal 2 presumes something substantially like Proposal 1.

1) Make design changes to Official Warrant sent out to TM Members via regular mail

a) Retain per-Article elements currently included in official warrant:

1. Article number
2. Article title
3. Official statement of article
4. Brief summary of article
5. Vote required for passage of motion (simple majority vs. two-thirds majority)
6. Departmental reports expected from...
7. Your vote area
8. Final Action of TM (Vote result: Y/N/Dismissed – or [new] “Parking Lot”)

b) Add per-Article elements to official warrant:

1. Proposed order of presentation (i.e., when in sequence item might be taken up)
2. Sponsor/Submitter of article
3. Additional details (if any)
4. Statement of main motion(s) (if available)
5. A “yes/no” statement about (each) motion
(NOTE: must be neutral - this is NOT a “pro/con”)
6. Departmental recommendation (if relevant and available; may include vote count of specific body if split)
7. Type of vote actually undertaken (voice/standing/count)
(added to “Final vote of TM” section)
8. Pointer to related TM action (reference to previous action to which this is a follow-up, if any)

- c) Format warrant to clarify elements more systematically:
 - 1. distinguish *article* itself from *motions* that enact the article's intent
 - 2. make other layout revisions to support readability and reusability (see below)

2) Create electronic system to maintain warrant-related information and generate warrant

- a) Store warrant elements as fields in electronic database system:
 - 1. follow elements defined above
 - 2. create web-based interface for entry, maintenance, export of this data
 - 3. create access/audit controls to limit access to appropriate parties
 - 4. limit WRITE/EDIT access to very few, official agents (Town Clerk/TA)
 - 5. allow anyone to VIEW posted data
- b) Generate paper warrant from electronic system:
 - 1. warrant is a snapshot of warrant data as of printing
 - 2. system will auto-generate PDF file for printing/electronic distribution
 - 3. warrant will be time-stamped to indicate "As of" date/time
 - 4. design of warrant will be adjusted to allow easy automation (plus usability)
- c) Allow other agents to access official data source (READ-only)
 - 1. make data available (read-only) for easy export and use in external systems
 - 2. such access would be explicitly NOT sponsored by town officials
 - 3. allow other groups to add article-specific features, such as pro/con statements, question/answer information, links to related sites (e.g., WC/PB video), or even general blog (possibly restricted to TM Members only, and disallowing anonymity), etc. - all such uses not to be construed as Town-sponsored

Attachment E

PROPOSAL FOR AD HOC COMMITTEE ON TM COMMUNICATIONS

Town Meeting Member Handbook: Outline

15 March 2011

The following is proposed content for a standalone document to orient (and serve as a reference for) Town Meeting Members, both new and old. As a document, it should be edited rarely, so that it can be distributed in paper form to new Town Meeting Members in substantially the same form as to past members. The same content could also be posted on the web, where additional information could be associated with it – see proposed topics for the website, which expand on these and link to related material.

Table of Contents

A. HOW TO RUN FOR TOWN MEETING

- requirements
- submitting paperwork
- running
- follow-up

B. THE ROLE(S) OF A TOWN MEETING MEMBER

- about Town Meeting (it's both an event and group)
- role of TM in town government
- individual responsibilities of TMMs
- where to learn about town issues (info sources, list of committees, etc.)
- [The role of the Town Meeting Association]

C. ABOUT WARRANT ARTICLES (Understanding/Sponsoring)

- assessing the need for an article
- getting an article assembled/submitted
- about the Bylaw Review Committee's role
- about the Warrant Committee's role
- additional advice to sponsors of warrant articles

D. ABOUT TOWN MEETING [the event]

1. Introduction

- purpose of TM, etc.
- TM as event vs. TM as civic body
- annual TM versus special TM, etc.

2. Preparing for TM: Before TM

- about the warrant
- information sessions
- committee (etc.) meetings
- who to contact
- other resources

3. Participants in the meeting

- Public (all members of public)
 - Member (define quorum)
 - Moderator
 - Town Clerk
 - Town Counsel
 - Tellers
 - Committees and other Town agencies
 - Guests
4. Motions
- assessing the need for a motion
 - subject of the motion (= article in warrant, determines scope)
 - order of consideration
 - formal requirements for motions (who, how, format, etc.)
 - guidelines for building/presenting a case
 - notice to moderator
 - reconsideration
5. Debate
- persons authorized
 - permission of the moderator
 - identification of the speaker
 - conduct
 - disclosing personal or financial interest
 - time
 - repeated speaking
 - maps and other aids (e.g., for planning articles)
6. Voting
- method
 - majority
 - ballot vote
 - roll call
 - no secret votes
7. Adjournment/Dissolution
- adjournment
 - dissolution
8. Record of meeting
- who, what form, etc.
9. Reference to Town Meeting Rules/Practices
- Acts of 1925 (etc.)
 - Town Bylaws
 - Town Meeting Town (1962)

Appendix A. Definitions

Appendix B. Town Committees, etc.

(The information from this section -- particularly 3-7 -- should be provided, in summary form, in the warrant document, as a "Summary of Parliamentary Procedures", etc.)

[E. TOWN MEETING ASSOCIATION BYLAWS]