

Intro to Truro Town Meeting - Frequently Asked Questions

How do I prepare for Town Meeting?

Register to Vote. For each Town Meeting there will be a deadline to register to vote for that specific Town Meeting. Information on how to register and the deadlines are available from the Town Clerk.

Read The Warrant. The Town Meeting Warrant identifies all of the matters that will be brought in front of the Town Meeting body. The Warrant is developed by the Select Board. Once the warrant is published and posted, no other matters can be added to the proceedings. The Warrant also contains basic information on the process, information from the Select Board, Finance Committee, Moderator, and a glossary of financial terms. The warrant is available on the Truro Website, at Town Hall and in various other locations in town.

Attend Pre Town Meeting. For each Annual or Special Town Meeting, a Pre Town Meeting will be held. This is an opportunity to hear from the sponsors of each of the articles and to ask questions. No votes are taken at Pre Town Meeting. It is an information only event.

Attend the Budget Hearing. The Finance Committee is required by Town Charter to hold at least one public hearing on the proposed budget including the school budget. Most often this hearing is a part of Pre Town Meeting.

How do I participate at Town Meeting?

Check-In. All voters need to check-in at the event. Please be aware of the check-in times and arrive with plenty of time before the start time of the proceedings. You don't need ID to check-in. You will be asked for your full name and street address. You will be given a voter card that you will use to cast your vote. The card is yours only and is not transferable to anyone else. You will also be given a motion book that contains the specific motions that will be made for each article.

Non voters do not need to check-in. However, we ask that non voters wait until all voters have checked in before entering. Non voters will be seated in a section that is separate from voters.

Handouts: There will be a table with handouts pertaining to warrant articles. Handouts are prepared by article sponsors, proponents or opponents and they are required to specify the author and contact information on them. Handouts need to meet specific guidelines and are required to be reviewed by the Moderator for compliance before they can be distributed. Please do not place any materials that have not been approved by the Moderator in the handout area. Guidelines for written materials can be found on the Town Meeting page of the Truro website. If you have questions, please contact the Moderator.

Take A Seat: If you are a voter, make sure you are sitting in an area designated for voters. If you are a non-voter, please be sure you are sitting in an area for non-voters.

I want to speak Town Meeting. How do I do that?

Be Recognized By The Moderator: All participants at Town Meeting need to first be recognized by the Moderator before they can speak. In order to be recognized, go to a microphone and wait for the Moderator to acknowledge you and invite you to speak. If you are unable to go to a microphone, please raise your hand and one will be brought to you. Once recognized all speakers will first need to identify themselves by their full name and whether they are a voter or non-voter. You will need to do this every time you are recognized to speak. Speakers are granted up to three minutes for their remarks. If you exceed your allotted time and are asked by the Moderator to wrap up your comments, please do so.

All comments must pertain to the article and motion on the floor. Please be respectful and civil. Do not make things personal. Applause, cheering or jeering is not allowed.

I'm A Non Voter. Can I Speak At Town Meeting?

Yes. Like voters, you follow the same procedure and must be recognized by the Moderator before you can speak and be sure to clearly identify yourself as a non voter when introducing yourself with your full name. Town Meeting does have the authority by motion and a simple majority vote to disallow non voters from addressing the body.

Is There Any Time I Can Speak Without Being Recognized?

Yes. In two very limited situations. One is called a Point of Order. A Point of Order is a question of process. For example, if you believe a motion has not been properly made or a speaker has not been properly recognized. The other is called a Point of Personal Privilege. This relates to your own personal circumstances such as you can't hear the proceedings or you believe there is a question of public safety. A Point of Order and a Point of Personal Privilege are the only two instances when you can speak without being recognized.

How Do I Amend A Motion or Make A New Motion?

If you would like to offer an amendment or introduce a motion, you will need to be recognized by the Moderator just as if you were going to speak. All motions to amend or new motions need to be made in writing and presented to the Moderator, Town Clerk and Town Counsel. If you are anticipating offering an amendment or new main motion and you know this in advance of the meeting, it is recommended that you share it with the Moderator as soon as possible. This allows for the Moderator and Town Counsel to review it to ensure that it is in proper form and within the scope of the article prior to the commencement of the meeting. This will save time at the meeting but it is not a requirement in order to offer amendments or motions.

How Will I Know When It's Time To Vote?

Debate can end in a couple of ways. The Moderator can decide that adequate debate has occurred usually because there are no more speakers awaiting their turn. Voters can also end debate and call for a vote by making a motion to end debate or call the question. This motion needs a second and a two-thirds majority vote to pass. A motion to end debate or call the question can be your only order of business once you are recognized by the Moderator. If the Moderator believes that this motion is premature, they may not accept it.

The Moderator will remind the body what the necessary vote is for passage (simple majority or two-thirds majority) prior to calling the vote on each article.

How Do I Vote?

The Moderator will ask for a show of voter cards. First, for all in favor of the motion, and then for all opposed. Please raise your voter card high in the air so the Moderator can see them. The Moderator calls each vote. If the Moderator is unable to determine whether the vote reached the necessary requirement (simple majority or two-thirds majority), they will ask for a count by tellers. Once again, you will be asked to raise your cards and please hold them high in the air until a teller has registered your vote.

Remember you are voting on the motion contained in the motion book as printed, or amended during the proceedings. You are not voting on the Article itself.

Can I Request A Teller Vote Count?

Yes. If seven voters stand after the Moderators visual call of the votes has been made, a teller count is required.

What If We Can't Get Through The Warrant In One Day?

A motion to adjourn the meeting to a location, date and time certain will be made. It requires a second and needs a majority to pass. When the meeting reconvenes, voters will need to check-in again and quorum will be required before the proceedings can restart.

What If I need special assistance or childcare or transportation in order to attend or participate?

Childcare and transportation services are provided for every Town Meeting. Please refer to the Town website for information on these services. If you need other assistance, please reach out to the Moderator.

How Do I Contact The Moderator?

The Moderator can be reached at moderator@truro-ma.gov.