Town of Arlington
Town Meeting Procedures Committee

Report to 2026 Annual Town Meeting

Greg Christiana, Chair Ex-Officio

John Worden, III

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In the year since the dissolution of the 2025 Annual Town Meeting, the Town Meeting Procedures Committee met eight times and developed two proposals to amend the Town bylaws that are on this year's warrant: Article 12 (Bylaw Amendment / Town Meeting Procedures Committee Rolling Membership Appointments) and Article 13 (Bylaw Amendment / Adoption of Updated Version of Town Meeting Time).

In recent years the Town Moderator has convened the Committee principally to advise him about matters that are solely his responsibility. However, the Committee's formal role (Town Bylaws Article 1 Section 8) is to "report to the Town Meeting on matters related to Town Meeting procedures." Accordingly, we met in March to consider a resolution brought by citizen petition under Article 89.

The Committee notes with gratitude the service of its founding member, John Worden, who has elected not to run for reelection this year. Since the Town bylaws restrict Committee membership to the Town Moderator and current Town Meeting members, Mr Worden's eligibility to serve will end with the Annual Town election.

Pilot Project: Reporting on Warrant Article Hearings

This year, volunteers have been tracking publicly available information about hearings that are conducted by the Finance Committee, Redevelopment Board, and Select Board about warrant articles. Where available, these can include agendas, minutes, and hearing materials. The Town Clerk has been publishing this information, frequently revised, on the Town website.

This project began as an answer the requests of Town Meeting members, in a survey, for more time to consider proposals brought before Town Meeting. The Moderator asked two Committee members to consider this problem. They identified information about these proposals that is publicly available before the referring bodies publish their reports.

The Committee expects to learn from this experiment. Meanwhile, we thank Town Clerk Juli Brazile and the following volunteers: Jagat Adhiya, Edward Blundell, Leonard Diggins, Annie LaCourt, Marina Popova, Steve Revilak, and Stacie Smith, and project coordinators Rebecca Gruber and Adam Auster, all of whom made this service possible this year.

Article 89 RESOLUTION / HYBRID TOWN MEETING

To see if the Town will vote to support the implementation of hybrid capabilities for Town Meeting; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of Alexander Bagnall and ten registered voters)

VOTE AND COMMENT TO TOWN MEETING:

VOTE: Committee refers this resolution to Town Meeting (4-1)

COMMENT: The Town's exploration of hybrid participation at Town Meeting began with the Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee[1], formed by the 2023 Special Town Meeting. Though this resolution is nonbinding, the Committee expects its disposition to provide important input on whether to take further steps toward a remote-hybrid option for Town Meeting.

Committee members do not all agree about the form, if any, that hybrid meetings should take. The Committee expects that Town Meeting will be consulted again if further explorations lead to proposals to change the format of Town Meeting.

RECOMMENDED VOTE:

Whereas, the Moderator has the latitude to allow for remote participation.

Whereas, we have much of the technology already in place for remote participation, including audio and video capture.

Whereas, the costs associated with the equipment and personnel support required for hybrid Town Meeting fall within a fairly wide range and need to be more specifically determined.

Whereas, a limited pilot implementation could provide much needed information about the equipment and personnel costs.

Whereas, the next contract for a voting system (clickers) will include provisions for location-agnostic vote tabulation.

Whereas, attending an in-person meeting two nights a week for several weeks is a significant barrier to participation for reasons related to family responsibilities, travel, etc.

[1] The report of the Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee to the 2025 Annual Town Meeting: https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/73849/638811829568300000

Whereas, neighboring towns, including Lexington and Belmont, have implemented hybrid Town Meeting.

Whereas, a hybrid format has the potential to significantly enhance participation for Members with mobility, health, and/or other challenges.

Be it hereby resolved that it is a goal of the Meeting to remove unnecessary barriers to participation in our Town government.

Be it hereby resolved that it is the will of Town Meeting that the Town continue to take the next steps in creating the capability for Town Meeting Members to participate in Town Meetings remotely, beginning with a limited-size pilot.