

**Town Moderator & Town Clerk  
2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting Protocols**

In the interests of providing a safe environment for the conduct of our Fall Annual Town Meeting and in concert with the overriding effort to protect the public and town employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, the following protocols and procedures will be implemented. **All plans and operating procedures have been approved by the Walpole Board of Health and reviewed by Town and public safety officials and other stakeholders.** All the usual standards and accommodations of our Town Meetings will continue, other than where noted. Our primary interest is to assure both the safety and legitimacy of our Town Meeting. Updates to these protocols as well as availability of all Town Meeting resources and information can be found at [www.walpole-ma.gov](http://www.walpole-ma.gov).

**Risk**

- Continuous risk assessment and contingent planning are being conducted throughout the planning of this event and will remain ongoing during the period leading up to Town Meeting. Data related to the spread of COVID-19 in our town strongly suggests that community spread of COVID-19 has significantly slowed and the number of active cases is diminishing. This data supports the responsible phased re-opening and reconstitution of many public and private functions in our town and statewide. If during the period leading to the event community spread or other conditions related to COVID-19 change, local health officials will provide input on the risk assessment. In the case of a negative risk assessment, the Moderator has the ability to postpone the meeting due to a public health/safety issue.
- A record of attendees and participants will be maintained should there be a need for contact tracing.
- All staff and volunteers associated with this event have reviewed and acknowledged the Town of Walpole's COVID-19 Employee Standard Operating Procedures and participated in the self-screening/self-certifying process.

**Venue**

- The meeting will be held outdoors at the high school football field. Scientific evidence is clear that an outdoor venue is much safer than indoors.
- A diagram of the field layout can be seen here [www.walpole-ma.gov](http://www.walpole-ma.gov)
- Handicapped Parking will be designated closest to the snack shack.

**Pre-meeting and Check-in**

- Check-in will begin at 9:00AM. When RTM Members arrive please remain in your vehicle until your appointed check-in time. RTM members will line up at each entry point. The line to check-in will be overseen by Board of Health Officials in order to ensure sufficient physical distancing per ground markings.
- Check in Time for each precinct is as follows:
  - 9:00AM-9:15AM precinct 1 & 2
  - 9:15AM-9:30AM precinct 3 & 4
  - 9:30AM-9:45AM precinct 5 & 6
  - 9:45AM-10:00AM precinct 7 & 8
- If Town Meeting Members are unable to check in at your designated check in time you will be accommodated and allowed to check in when you arrive.
- Signage detailing safety protocols will be posted at the entrances

- In accordance with the Select Board's Declaration of the State of Emergency, the Town Administrator and the Board of Health have ordered that all individuals over 2 years of age shall cover their mouth and nose with a mask or cloth face covering while attending Town Meeting if they are unable to maintain a distance of approximately six feet from every other person.
- Individuals who are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability are exempt from this requirement and will be accommodated.
- Masks or face coverings will be required throughout the check in process. The Town will provide masks for those who do not have them.
- Tables will be installed and check-in will be by the paper attendance list used at all Town Meetings attendees are to state their name and address. Names should be stated loudly and clearly. Masked and gloved staff will manage the process.
- A care package including a bottle of water, sunscreen and hand sanitizer will be left at all of the chairs for Town Meeting Members. Please plan to bring additional water, if needed.
- Paper copies of documentation related to Town Meeting will be delivered on Wednesday, October 7th. No other handouts will be allowed.

### **Seating**

- All seats, implements and venue will be properly sanitized before the meeting. Seats will be set up for single attendees. This allows 15 feet between chairs and 10 yard walking aisles between sections.
- Individuals who may need special accommodations are encouraged to contact the Town Clerk prior to Town Meeting to inform her of the accommodation needed.
- There will be a handicapped designated area that will provide access to those who may need it.
- You will be asked to remain in your seats and area at all times except to speak, utilize a rest room, or when leaving the meeting.
- No congregation of people will be allowed at any time.
- Child care will not be provided.
- Only representative Town Meeting members, Department Heads and Town officials will be allowed on the football field. All non-voters will remain outside the perimeter fencing.

### **The Meeting**

- Our goal for the meeting is to balance discussion and debate on essential articles while limiting the length of the meeting. The meeting will be conducted as close to our normal experience as possible while adhering to the deliberative process of any town meeting.
- Expect the Moderator will get straight to the business of the meeting with limited opening ceremony, brief remarks plus a review of safety protocols by the Director of Public Health.
- The consent agenda for routine and non-controversial articles will be included in this RTM meeting packet.
- Motions will only be accepted 24 hours in advance of the meeting. So, all motions need to be received by the Moderator by 10am Friday, October 16th. [Note: This is only to avoid handling of papers by multiple parties, RTM filing motion, and RTM second, Town Clerk, Moderator and Town Counsel.]
- Your courtesy is sought to limit comments and questions to that which is necessary and non-repetitive. Questions and new information are encouraged for the benefit of the meeting. Statements simply stating support or opposition are discouraged.
- Speakers will be limited to three minutes per motion. So, plan your comments accordingly to make the most of your allotted time.

- Efforts by town officials and sponsors are ongoing to make citizens fully aware prior to the meeting of the articles and their merit.
- It is important for all of us to abide by physical distancing standards and other proper behaviors to ensure that we are not creating unnecessary risks to our health and well-being of others during this pandemic.
- If we do not complete the warrant for any reason, the meeting may be adjourned to a proximate date with full intent to hold a subsequent meeting in the moderate future, as necessary.
- Microphones will be set up at the front of the seating area. An array of three microphones on stands will be provided and adjusted for each speaker as they approach the microphone. The speaker should not touch the microphone.
- Only one person at a time is allowed in the speaker's area. Please be mindful of the spacing while you wait to speak.

### **Post the Meeting and Other Matters**

- When the meeting is adjourned, please exit in an orderly fashion. The designated exits will be clearly marked the day of the event.
- The Fire Department will have an ambulance on scene.
- The Police Department will be on hand to help the Board of Health if necessary and to assist with traffic.
- In the event that the meeting cannot be held due to weather Town Meeting will be held on the following day which is Sunday, October 18th at 10AM in the same location.
- In the event of poor weather forecast the meeting may be postponed. A reverse 911 call will alert all and notice will be posted on the town web site. See Weather Protocol below for full details.
- In the event of a rainfall or other surprise weather situation during the meeting, a judgment will be made on the ground.
- The bathrooms at the snack shack will be open.
- Walpole Media TV will provide live coverage of Town Meeting on Comcast Ch.22 and Verizon Ch. 30. Live streaming will also be available on YouTube by going to the Walpole Media Channel.

### **Weather Protocol**

- Five days prior to the event public safety officials and meteorological expertise will be consulted on the predicted weather. If at that time there is some indicator of an extreme weather factor (predicted storm(s), extreme heat/cold) the event will be evaluated.
- Two days prior the weather will be evaluated for the same parameters and actions.
- One day prior the predicted weather for the time of the event will be evaluated. If the weather will not support the event it will be deemed a "no go" and postponed.
- Early on the day of the event, public safety officials and meteorological expertise will be consulted and a go/no go judgment made. The day's weather will be continually evaluated and a decision to cancel or postpone will be made. Due to the logistic concerns and set up requirement, an early decision should be made.
- Due to the use of audio equipment excessive rain is a no go factor. Extreme heat should also be considered as a no go as this event will take place in an open field with minimal shading opportunities. Lightning is a no go. The prediction of thunderstorms would most likely be considered a no go prior to the event. A lightning monitor will be on the field at all times. Weather will be monitored during the event by the safety and operations team.

Finally, each citizen needs to make their own judgment whether to attend. We respect that personal decision and endeavor to make the conduct of the meeting as safe as reasonably possible, guided by state and local public health authorities. Please know that the Governor has signed emergency legislation authorizing the Moderator, after consulting public health officials and the Select Board, to recess the meeting for up to 30 days, and to do so repeatedly if necessary. We will be monitoring the situation with State and Town officials, and if necessary will not hesitate to reschedule the meeting in order to preserve the safety of our neighbors and the legitimacy of Town Meeting as a deliberative legislative body.

Respectfully,

Daniel Bruce  
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