

General Terms and Definitions

Town Meeting: The Town Meeting (TM) is the *Legislative* Branch of Government for the Town of Upton. The Board of Selectmen (BOS) is the *Executive* and the Attorney General (AG) is the *Judicial*. The BOS calls the TM and develops the Warrant (see below.) The town must have one Annual Town Meeting (ATM, 1st Thursday in May) and can also have Special Town Meetings (STM) throughout the year. There is usually one STM in the fall; others may be called as needed.

Warrant: The warrant (or “Warning”) is the list of items (Articles) that will be discussed at the TM. The articles range from accepting the Town Budget, to purchasing equipment for various departments, or buying/accepting land for the Community. The warrant must be posted at three (3) locations in town (typically the Town Hall, Library and Post Office) and is on the Town’s Website. It needs to be posted seven (7) days before the ATM and fourteen (14) days before a STM.

Articles: As stated above, the articles are the items to be addressed and voted on at TM. They are general in nature, and gives the citizens an idea of what the sponsor of the article wishes to do. A typical article may look like the following: “To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate, appropriate from available unappropriated funds, transfer, or borrow the sum of Three Thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) to purchase a computer for the Building Inspector, or to take any other action relative thereto.”

Motions: A motion (usually derived from an article) gives the specifics that the sponsor of an article wishes to do. Using the example above, a motion from this article could look like; “I move that the Town vote to raise and appropriate Three Thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) to purchase a computer for the Building Inspector.” Any motion that is financial in nature must have a recommendation from the Finance Committee (FC.) There are times when motions need recommendations from the Capital Budget Committee (CBC), Planning Board (PB), or the Community Preservation Committee (CPC); to name a few.

Amendments: Amendments can be made to motions for minor changes to that motion before the TM. Using the example above, an amendment could be “I move to amend the amount of money from \$3,000 to \$2,500.” If the amendment has support (a 2nd) then the discussion will be on the amendment itself. When discussion is complete, it will be voted up or down. If it passes then the TM will go back to discuss the motion “as amended”, if it fails then the TM will go back to the original motion.

Debate: Most motions that come before TM can be debated. Exceptions to that rule occur when certain procedural questions require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote. For some of those questions debate is cut off after the motion (and a 2nd) is made.

Method of voting: Most votes will be done by voice vote. If the Moderator cannot determine if the motion passes or fails by the voice vote, the Moderator will then ask for a standing vote. Two tellers will count (and double check with each other) votes from each section. After all the votes have been gathered, the results will be given to the Moderator and announced to the TM. The results from a standing vote are final. For a voice vote, if seven (7) or more registered voters stand to question the Moderator’s call then a standing vote will be taken.

Secret Ballot: A secret ballot will be done if a motion is made, seconded, and then passes by a majority vote. A motion for a secret ballot is out of order if a question has already been moved, or if a voice vote has already been taken.

Quantum of votes: Most votes require a majority to pass (i.e. 25 yes, 24 no is passing by a majority.) Some votes require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote (i.e. 100 YES, 50 NO is passing by $\frac{2}{3}$ majority; 100 YES, 51 NO is failing a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote.) The quantum for all “non-majority” votes will be indicated by the Moderator.

Moving the question: After debate has occurred on the question at hand, a voter may wish to “move the question.” This means they’ve heard enough debate and they wish to vote. A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote is required to move the question.

Reconsideration: An individual who voted with the prevailing side on an issue may move to reconsider the disposition of that question. Notification must be done within one (1) hour of the vote on the question, and they need to explain the reason for reconsidering the vote. After debate the motion to reconsider requires a majority vote.

Flow of the Meeting

1. At the appropriate time with a quorum present the Moderator will call the meeting to order.
2. The Moderator will ask the **Town Clerk** if the warrant is legal.
3. The Chair of the **Board of Selectmen** will be recognized for the Pledge and/or Moment of Silence.
4. The Moderator will ask for a motion to accept any visitors.
5. The Moderator will thank individuals involved with helping to set up and run the TM.
6. The Moderator will ask those present to turn off any personal electronic devices.
7. The Moderator will ask all first time attendees to the TM to stand and be welcomed.
8. The **General format** of the meeting will be as follows:
 - a. Each article on the warrant will be taken in the order listed and they will appear on the screen
 - b. For each article -
A resident will make a **motion** derived from that article
The **Finance Committee** will make a recommendation if motion is financial in nature
If necessary, other Boards will make recommendations
The **mover** will have the floor to make comments if they wish to do so, it will then be open for discussion
After discussion (if any) the TM will vote (only Registered voters from Upton may vote)
All motions (or amendments to motions) must be in writing and handed to the Moderator
 - c. If an individual wishes to speak about the motion on the floor, the voter should:
Raise your hand and/or get in line behind the microphone
When recognized, state your name and address (first time)
Make your statement about the **motion that is on the floor**...
When finished speaking, you must sit down or go to the back of the line

NO PERSONALITY STATEMENTS WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE FLOOR.

What does that mean: If someone has just spoken, and you're next to speak; you can't say that the previous speaker has no idea what they are talking about; or any other **unkind** statements. You could say: "I disagree with the previous speaker's point relating to the amount of money needed for this item, etc...." You need to say "previous speaker" and not the individual's name. This helps to keep it **less personal** and **more professional**. It would be a good habit to say "through the Moderator" because technically that's what is happening.

9. Only one person can speak at a time ...
Never interrupt another speaker unless you have a **point of order** (i.e. can't hear the speaker)
10. Control of the meeting ...
If the Moderator determines that it becomes necessary to ask a speaker to **stop** talking, this is what will be done -
 1. The Moderator will say "Sir/Madam stop speaking and step back from the microphone."
 2. If necessary, the Moderator will tell the individual what the issue is.
 3. The Moderator will ask the individual if they can continue in the appropriate manner.
 4. Presuming yes, the individual will continue.
 5. If the infraction continues, the Moderator will ask the individual to take their seat.
 6. If the individual does not take their seat, the Moderator will ask them to leave the meeting.
 - 7.. If they choose not to leave the meeting, the Moderator will ask the officer to remove them from the meeting, and it will be recorded in the minutes (and on local cable access)

NOTE: This is NOT a legal document, it was prepared by the Moderator to give the citizens a general outline of the Flow and the terms and definitions that occur during TM. To obtain more information, a citizen may contact the Moderator, read Upton's by-laws, obtain Town Meeting Time (TMT), or read through Massachusetts General Laws that pertain to Town Meeting.