



BOXFORD 2020 Annual Town Meeting

Greetings to all Boxford Voters. Whether you have attended many Boxford Town Meetings in the past, or this is your first; this year's meeting will be somewhat different than previous meetings. Below are answers to some expected questions that briefly summarize the general procedures of Town Meeting and the specific NEW rules instituted as part of the town's response to COVID-19.

If you have further questions about the Town Meeting procedures not answered below, feel free to email Town Administrator Alan Benson at abenson@boxfordma.gov and he will find out the answer and respond to your inquiry. Residents may also contact the Town through the Town website www.boxfordma.gov, the Town's Facebook page, or by calling the Town Hall main number, 978-887-6000.

What is Town Meeting: Our town government's legislative body that appropriates monies to be expended by the town, adopts laws such as zoning and general bylaws, and sets public policy.

Who leads the meeting: Town Moderator Jerry Johnston.

Location: Masconomet Regional High School, 20 Endicott Road, Boxford. This year, due to COVID, the Town Meeting will be held OUTDOORS, under a tent on the Roberts' Football Field.

Date: SATURDAY, September 12, 2020.

Time: Town Meeting will start at 10 a.m. Check-in will open by 9 a.m. Please arrive early as the check-in process may take longer than usual given the social distancing and other COVID restrictions of this meeting.

Where to enter: Police and other public safety personnel will be on site to direct you to parking areas and the queuing area for access to the meeting.

What will happen if the number of citizens showing up exceeds the maximum capacity of the tented area: There will be over 300 socially distanced chairs under the Tent area. If more space is needed, additional seating will be available, socially distanced, on the football field bleachers.

Who can attend and vote: ALL registered Boxford voters.

How to check in: To enter the meeting give your address, and confirm your name with one of the many Town Clerk checkers when it is your turn in line. They have a list of registered voters by precinct and will check the names on a computerized system.

Required quorum: 50 voters.

Can children attend with their parents: While non-voters can be admitted as "guests of the meeting," that has not traditionally included children. Given the COVID restrictions, most or all of the available seating will be needed to accommodate Boxford voters. There are no plans to offer childcare at this time.

COVID Requirements: The Board of Health and the Moderator has determined that mask wearing – over the mouth AND NOSE - is **required** from exiting one's car, all the way through check-in and including being seated at Town Meeting and will continue to be **required** to be worn throughout the duration of Town Meeting. Mask wearing will also be **required** when leaving one's seat and while speaking at the microphone. (Yes, you can be heard clearly when you speak through the mask at a microphone.) Votes will be by raised cards, not voice votes.

What if I cannot wear a mask due to medical reasons or I choose not to wear a mask for personal reasons? There will be a “non-mask wearing seating section”. The only distinction to this section is that the persons seated in this area are not required to wear their mask during the duration of Town Meeting. However, except for medical reasons, masks are still **required** from exiting one's car, all the way through check-in and including being seated at Town Meeting and to get to your seats and also **required** when leaving one's seat and while speaking at the microphone. The non-mask wearing section would also include its own microphone.

Will the mask wearing requirement be enforced? The Board of Health and the Moderator's mask-wearing rules will be enforced on scene and non-compliance could include being determined to be “disruptive” to Town Meeting and non-compliant voters may be removed from the meeting.

What if I forget my mask? Disposable masks are available on site.

Seating. As voters arrive, after check in, they will be escorted to the front of the tent and fill in the chairs at the edge of the tent inward toward the middle, row by row. (Like a wedding!) At the end of Town Meeting, voters will exit the meeting from the back first, in reverse order. Those not able or willing to wear masks during the duration of the meeting will be seated in an area at the back of the tent. Voters MAY NOT congregate in groups in the parking lots before or after the meeting.

Can I leave the meeting after the article(s) I am interested in are addressed: Yes, but participation in the entire meeting is encouraged to ensure a continuing quorum and full voter participation in the discussion and vote on important issues that affect our lives. Please leave in a manner least disruptive and most socially distanced from the voters that remain.

Are Bathroom facilities available? Yes. Bathrooms inside the school are accessible to voters as needed. Cleaning personnel are on site to periodically clean the facilities frequently throughout the duration of the meeting.

How to Prepare for Town Meeting: READ the town warrant. A copy was mailed to all households in town and is available on the town website: www.boxfordma.gov . Also, READ the BACK-UP information available for each article on-line at <https://www.town.boxford.ma.us/atm-documents> . Email questions to Town Administrator Alan Benson at abenson@boxfordma.gov and he will find out the answer and respond to your inquiry. Residents may also contact the Town through the Town website www.boxfordma.gov, the Town's Facebook page, or by calling the Town Hall main number, 978-887-6000.

Fiscal Year 2021 Town Budget: The Fiscal Year actually started back on July 1st, the Town has been operating with special permission of the State Department of Revenue until the actual budget is determined at this delayed Town Meeting.

The proposed \$35 million FY2021 Town Budget is found in Article #2 and on pages 11 and 12 of the Warrant. Detailed back up information on the three major components of the budget, 1) the "Non-school" budget, 2) the Elementary School Budget and 3) Boxford's share of the Masconomet Regional High School budget, is found as part of the backup materials at <https://www.town.boxford.ma.us/atm-documents> .

"Non-school" budget questions may be addressed to the Director of Municipal Finance, Kathy Benevento at kbenevento@boxfordma.gov.

Elementary School Budget Questions may be addressed to the Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations, Steve Greenberg at sgreenberg@tritownschoolunion.com

Masconomet Regional High School Budget Questions may be addressed to the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Jeff Sands at jsands@masconomet.org

When Article #2 is presented for consideration, the budget will be considered by printed budget section (General Government, Financial Administration, Public Safety, etc.). The Moderator will read aloud each line item in each section as printed on pages 11 and 12. If a voter has a question or wishes to propose an amendment, on a specific line item; when that line item is read, the voter should shout out the word "QUESTION". The Moderator will then recognize speakers, allow debate, and resolve any amendment votes for that section before moving on to the next section. **IMPORTANT:** Once a section is completed and all questions, debate and amendments

are resolved, the Moderator will NOT return to that section – the opportunity for further debate, questions, and amendments on that section will be closed.

The overall Town Budget reflects an increase of 1.4% over last year. The Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee are highly cognizant of the devastating economic impact resulting from governmental responses to COVID-19. As such, the two committees proposed to partially offset the real estate tax impact of the budget increase with a transfer of \$150,000 of existing reserve funds known as Free Cash to lower the tax impact. (**See Article #3**) While not all state revenues are known at this time, it is projected that this offset will limit the real estate tax increase to less than 1.0% for FY2021.

Fiscal year 2021 Capital Expenditures: The Town’s capital expenditures are usually funded by either a transfer of existing reserve funds, known as Free Cash, or by approval of long-term Debt. Warrant articles funded by long-term debt require a 2/3rds majority to pass.

A grouping of nine capital items are combined in Article #5 and listed on page 10 of the warrant. Further information on each of these items is available as part of the backup materials at <https://www.town.boxford.ma.us/atm-documents>. These items are combined in one article because the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee and where appropriate, the Permanent Building Committee have all agreed that these items are necessary and appropriate for acquisition in FY2021. Typically, there are few questions on these items, however, the Moderator will read each one and entertain any questions, debate and amendments Town Meeting voters may have.

Articles #6, #7, and #8 are also capital expenditure articles. These are presented individually to allow for expanded presentation and expected debate. Articles #6 and #8 will be presented as long-term debt articles and will require a 2/3rds affirmative vote to pass.

Community Preservation Articles: Articles #10, #11 and #12 are Community Preservation Articles. Boxford adopted a 3% surcharge on a portion of Real Estate taxes which are deposited into a restricted fund for statutorily limited purposes. As an incentive to communities to adopt this surcharge, the State provides grant funds annually to be added to the Town’s amounts. For more general information about the Community Preservation Fund, visit <https://www.communitypreservation.org>.

Bylaw Articles: Town Meeting also determines the Town Bylaws that establish the form of governance and set regulations within the town. At this meeting there are two bylaw articles, #13 and #19. The first is definition change to the existing stormwater regulation bylaw and the second is a proposal to change the name of governing body from “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board.” Both require majority vote to pass.

We hope this information has been helpful. See you at Town Meeting on September 12th!