

Important information for every registered voter

A single vote can make the difference

Town Meeting...Every Vote Counts

Welcome to Weston!

Congratulations on being a registered voter in Weston. Voting is the most precious civic right and responsibility. In Weston we have an institution that depends on your participation as a free and democratic citizen. It's called Town Meeting.

Town Meeting is a form of government for over 290 of the 351 communities in Massachusetts. It has been the local legislative institution since 1633.



What is Town Meeting?

Town Meeting is the local legislative body that provides for essential public services, such as police, fire, education, roads, water, and libraries. These services are funded directly through local taxes placed on real estate and personal property.

Your neighbors serve on boards and committees that determine how much money is needed to provide these services and how these services will be delivered.

Weston's registered voters have the opportunity to approve or reject their recommendations by voting at Town Meeting. Voters also determine local by-laws. In the Town Election, voters elect their neighbors for several boards and committees.

Why is my vote in Town Meeting so important?

Who knows better about your neighborhood, your personal circumstances, your ability to pay local taxes than you? Town Meeting provides a unique forum for you to share your concerns with your neighbors. You can directly participate in and influence the debate and witness the outcome of the vote.

The quorum for Town Meeting to convene is only eighty registered voters. As a result, your presence is essential and when a vote is taken in Town Meeting, each vote matters.

When do Town Meetings convene?

Weston's Town Meeting takes place in May on the Monday after the Town Election. If there is urgent business or the required number of voters have petitioned the Board of Selectmen, a Special Town Meeting may be called. Very often Weston has a Special Town Meeting in the Fall, usually in November.

Voters are informed of Town Meetings through the posting and mailing of a warrant to all households at least a week before the meeting and by notices in the local media.

Do I have to be a public figure to speak at Town Meeting?

No. Everyone who attends town meeting is important. If you have a particular "expertise" or experience that can help others make a decision on an issue, please share it as a volunteer on a Town committee, write an email or letter to the appropriate officials, or speak out at public hearings and at Town Meeting.

How do I prepare for Town Meeting?

Long before a Town Meeting convenes, many people are collecting and distributing information, holding public hearings, and learning about the issues. No item of business at a Town Meeting can be discussed unless it has been included in the warrant. The Board of Selectmen is responsible for setting the warrant (agenda), which may include articles of their own initiation, or those requested by a specified minimum number of registered voters by petition.

In preparation the proponents of each article will have produced reports and recommendations and, in many cases, held public hearings to hear and address concerns prior to Town Meeting. Local government committees

are required to post their meetings and agendas in a timely manner and to take minutes of their meetings. Voters should take the time to attend these meetings, read the minutes and reports, and attend public hearings in order to be prepared for the debate and vote at Town Meeting.

What about the Town Election?

The Annual Town Election is an integral part of Town Meeting. Weston elects local leaders such as the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Planning Board and Moderator, and votes on certain ballot questions the first Saturday of May.

How do I get more involved in governance?

Serving as an elected or appointed official may involve a commitment from one to five years, depending on the office. For a full list of committees and their appointing authorities, visit www.weston.org.

Every citizen also has a voice as a public observer at committee meetings, public forums, at Town Meeting and at the ballot box. At any time, feel free to speak with town officials to become educated in the issues of interest.

Other ways to stay informed

- Subscribe to www.westongrapevine.org to receive messages on municipal and school topics of interest to you.
- Visit www.weston.org for town information on line.
- Visit www.westonschools.org for school information on line.
- Read the print edition of **The Town Crier** or read it on line at www.wickedlocal.com/weston.
- Visit Weston Patch at www.Weston.patch.com
- Attend Budget Hearing, Candidates Nights, and other informational sessions.
- Watch **Weston Media Center** on TV. Visit westonstudio.posterous.com for the complete program schedule.
- Join the League of Women Voters

Who's Who

Moderator - is the presiding officer of Town Meeting, elected by voters to enforce orderly debate according to State law, Weston by-laws and customs; and to declare the vote. The Moderator also appoints the members of the Finance Committee and several other Town committees. Contact the Moderator at moderator@westonmass.org for advice on speaking at Town Meeting or to learn about appointments to certain committees.

Town Clerk - registers voters, processes changes in voter information; records all votes passed at Town Meeting as declared by the moderator, swears in newly elected or appointed officials; posts meetings and public hearings, and processes petitions for warrant articles and nominations for public office.

Town Manager - conducts the daily business of Town operations, including oversight of municipal departments and management of the budget as approved by Town Meeting. The Town Manager can be contacted at townmanager@westonmass.org.

Board of Selectmen - is elected by the voters; oversees the Town Manager's administration of Town business; sets the time and place for Town Meeting and prepares and issue the warrant for it.

School Committee - represents a large portion of the budget and is elected by the Town's voters to oversee the operations of the public schools.

Town Counsel - works on behalf of the Selectmen to ensure that the articles are legal and complete. The Moderator may consult with counsel on difficult questions but is not bound by Town counsel's opinion. Town counsel is also available to answer legal questions from the floor.

Finance Committee - appointed by the Moderator to advise the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting on financial matters before them.

Town Meetings may establish special committees to investigate, report and/or carry out substantive action. Visit www.weston.org for a full list of committees, contact information and their appointing authorities.

Town Meeting and Election Calendar

March	The Town Caucus is held on the first or second Monday in March to nominate candidates.
Mid-March	A candidate may file nominating papers with fifty signatures of Weston voters with the Town Clerk before the deadline in mid-March.
April	Deadline to register to vote in Town election and at Town Meeting
May	Annual Town Election for Town offices is held the 1st or 2nd Saturday in May. This year it will be 5/11/13. Town Meeting is held the Monday following the Town Election.