

TOWN OF BECKET

Minutes
Town Meeting ByLaw Review Committee
9/16/2013
(APPROVED 10/21/13)

Members Present: Bruce Garlow (Chair), Rob Gorden, Ann Krawet, Jeanne Pryor

The meeting began at 1:00 p.m. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of 8/19/13 and the motion passed unanimously.

Rob and Bruce reported on their research regarding the 1765 date that the town was established and events that occurred before the first town meeting was held. The Committee wants to determine when the town was allowed to act as a legislative body. It was suggested that the town meeting books in Town Hall be reviewed for a date and name of who issued the warrant.

Bruce noted that the proposed amended town meeting bylaw just needs minor edits and then will be sent to the Town Secretary for inclusion on the website. A date for a fall special town meeting has not yet been set by the Board of Selectman. A hearing for the proposed changes to the town meeting bylaw will be scheduled prior to the special town meeting. Jeanne shared an update she drafted for the Board of Selectmen on this committee's work with Bruce and it was reviewed.

The draft Town Meeting Handbook was reviewed and the following changes/comments were made:

Dear Voter

Welcome to Town Meeting. The traditional New England Town Meeting is the embodiment of "grass roots" democracy. Becket's Town Meeting has been in place for ? years. ~~It provides the citizens of Becket the opportunity to interact with town officials and vote on matters that affect the workings of the town during the following year.~~ **It provides the citizens of Becket the opportunity to work with town officials and their fellow voters to decide matters that affect the operations of the town for the following fiscal year.** Our Town Meeting is a model of the best in local democracy.

This handbook has been produced by the Town Meeting Bylaw Review Committee, an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. This document is designed to be used by **Becket** voters as a guide to the procedures of our Town Meeting. The ~~conduct of~~ Town Meeting is managed **conducted** by the Moderator in the exercise of his or her discretion, subject always to state law, the Town Bylaws, and Town Meeting votes and traditions.

INTRODUCTION

Town Meeting is conducted in accordance with the laws of the State, the Bylaws of the Town, the traditions and votes of Town Meeting, and the discretion and policies of the Moderator. **The Town Meeting cannot conduct its business without a moderator, a town clerk and a quorum (20) of the Town's voters.**

As the legislative body of Town government, in addition to approving operating and capital appropriations, Town Meeting considers and votes on any changes in the Town's zoning and general Bylaws, accepts or rejects state laws that are subject to local option, requests special state legislation for the Town and ~~passes on~~ **considers** any major changes in Town administrative structure and procedure. An Annual Town Meeting is held each spring on the second Saturday in May and the Selectmen may call Special Town Meetings at other times to deal with Town business. They are **also** required to call such a meeting on the written petition of 200 voters.

PARTICIPANTS IN TOWN MEETING

Town Clerk

~~The Town Clerk records the minutes of each Town Meeting and maintains the official record of all votes taken.~~ The Town Clerk administers the oath of office to the Moderator and other elected and appointed officials. **The Town Clerk's primary duty at town meeting is to make and keep a record of all votes and transactions of the meeting as announced by the Moderator. The Town Clerk's record is the only official record of a town meeting vote and it cannot be changed or corrected except by the Town Clerk who created the record. himself while he holds office.** After town meeting the Town Clerk must issue a variety of certificates and reports to town, county and state officials and prepare the town meeting proceedings (minutes). The Town Clerk serves as chief election official, recording officer, registrar of vital statistics, public records officer and licensing officer. ~~The office of Town Clerk has specific responsibilities in connection with Town-wide elections and the Town census and in a number of other areas.~~ The Town Clerk is a part-time paid official elected by the voters for a three-year term.

Board of Selectmen

The Board of Selectmen serve as the Town's executive authority, with overall responsibility for supervising Town affairs. Its role is defined by state law, the Town Bylaws and Charter and by Town Meeting. **The selectmen are statutorily responsible to call the Town Meeting and to prepare and issue the warrant.** Among the **additional** duties of the Selectmen are to call Town ~~Meetings and~~ elections, appoint the Town Administrator, most department heads and Town officers, all non-elected boards and commissions and to approve the appointments of the Town Administrator. The Selectmen shall execute policies voted by Town Meeting, review and make recommendations on the annual budget and all other warrant articles, supervise the expenditure of funds appropriated by Town Meeting, sign all bonds and notes for borrowings, and serve as the Town licensing board. The Selectmen have the power, and in the case of citizens' petitions are required to, insert articles in the warrant, but only Town Meeting has the final authority to accept, reject or modify the action sought by any article. The three Selectmen are elected for three-year

terms, with one member elected each year, and receive modest stipends intended to reflect the part-time nature of their office.

Town Administrator

The Town Administrator acts under the direction of the Board of Selectmen as the chief operating and fiscal officer of the Town. The Town Administrator supervises department heads and is responsible for the development of the Town's annual budget. See "The Budget" below. The Town Administrator facilitates ~~Town Meeting by overseeing~~ the development and production of the warrant and Annual Town Report. ~~and by processing and distributing warrant articles and other documents to be considered at Town Meetings. [info to be added re TA, contract, etc].~~ **He or she is a professional employee with a three year contract.**

Town Counsel

The Town Counsel is the Town's attorney and is appointed by the Selectmen. Town Counsel generally provides legal representation for the Town in matters in which the Town is involved or by which it is or may be affected. ~~With respect to~~ **At** Town Meeting, Town Counsel, when called upon to do so, provides legal advice to the Moderator ~~during Town Meetings.~~

Finance Committee

~~The Finance Committee is made up of five citizens elected by the Town voters for three year terms, with one or two members elected each year.~~ The Finance Committee studies and makes recommendations on all financial matters to be considered by Town Meeting. This includes all Annual and Special Town Meeting articles, with special concern for the proposed operating and capital budgets for the coming year. In carrying out its duties, the Committee may examine the books and records of any board, committee or officer of the Town to the extent permitted by law. The Finance Committee is the only authority that may approve transfers from the reserve fund for unforeseen or emergency expenditures. ~~between Town Meetings~~

The deliberations of the Finance Committee take place in public meetings, held principally during the period prior to a Town Meeting. The Finance Committee's recommendations are advisory and may be accepted or rejected by Town Meeting in whole or in part. The annual budget is presented to Town Meeting by the Finance Committee, although amendments to the budget may be offered by the Selectmen or the voters. The Finance Committee begins its review of the budget as soon as the Town Administrator submits detailed written estimates to the Committee, which shall be done no later than ninety days prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

A schedule of proposed public meetings and hearings is developed at the beginning of each meeting cycle. A notice of each public hearing or meeting of the Finance Committee is posted on the official bulletin board at least 48 hours before the meeting and is also published on the Town website. Notices are also sent to an e-mail list of people who have signed up for announcements and meeting agendas sent by the Town.

The Finance Committee is made up of five citizens elected by the Town voters for three year terms, with one or two members elected each year. The Finance Committee has a page on the Town website (under "Boards & Commissions") containing a current list of members and a link to meeting agenda and minutes.

GENERAL MATTERS ABOUT TOWN MEETINGS, INCLUDING THE WARRANT AND DRAFTING WARRANT ARTICLES

Articles may be included in the warrant by the Board of Selectmen or by petition of Town voters. Voters may have an article placed on the warrant for an Annual Town Meeting by obtaining the signatures of ten registered Becket voters and submitting the proposed article to the Selectmen before the closing of the warrant on April 1st the third Wednesday in March, for the meeting. Voters may place an article on a Special Town Meeting warrant by submitting one hundred signatures. Citizen petitioners are strongly encouraged to consult with the Moderator or Town Administrator regarding the wording and legality of their proposed articles. If the proposal involves a change in the Town Zoning Bylaws, **petitioners may be advised to** consult with the Planning Board.

THE BUDGET section was discussed and the committee reviewed the budget calendar used by the Selectmen and Finance Committee last year. It was agreed that our Committee will wait, pending the Selectmen's action, on a budget calendar and will use the Bylaws wording instead of real dates. Bruce will incorporate the changes made today and will continue working on it with additional sections to be discussed at our next meeting.

Ann reported that she discussed the purchase of sound equipment with the Town Administrator. It was agreed that the system should be versatile, easy to store and easy to use.

The next meeting was scheduled for October 21, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne W. Pryor

List of documents discussed and/or distributed at meeting:

1. Town Meeting Bylaw Review Committee minutes of 8/19/13
2. DRAFT REVISED TOWN MEETING BYLAW, July 20, 2013
3. Citizens' Petition for Warrant Article form, final version
4. Town Meeting Handbook draft (8 pages) with Ann's and Jeanne's suggestions
5. Budget Calendar FY 2014, revised
6. Town Meeting Bylaw Review Committee update