



# Town of Royalston

## Guide to Town Meeting

### Annual and Special Town Meetings

#### What is a town meeting?

A town meeting is a meeting of eligible voters and functions as the town's legislative body. As such, it considers –

- Acceptance of new laws, amendments to laws, and elimination of laws
- Budget proposals and other monetary matters
- Other issues, such as the acceptance of gifts of lands, participation in state programs, etc.

Town meeting is run by the town moderator, who maintains order and declares the outcomes of votes. The town clerk records all votes and takes minutes.

#### What's the difference between annual and special meetings?

Each town must hold an annual town meeting; Royalston's is on Friday after the first Monday in May at 7 pm. Special town meetings may be called as many times during the year as necessary. Both are posted on the town website and, usually, in the local newspaper.

#### May voters call a special town meeting?

Yes. Two hundred registered voters or 20% of the total number of registered voters, whichever is less, may request a special town meeting by signing a petition. Consult with the town clerk about the procedure. This kind of meeting must be held no later than 45 days after the Select Board receives the request.

## The Warrant

#### What is a warrant?

The Select Board prepares the warrant, which lists a meeting's time, place, and agenda, posted in public places and on the town website. It must be available at least seven days before an annual meeting, and at least fourteen days before a special meeting.

#### What are articles?

Articles are items on the warrant, such as the budget, other financial proposals, amendments to bylaws, etc.

#### May voters place articles on the warrant?

Yes. To insert an article in the warrant for an annual town meeting, at least 10 registered voters must sign a written request, including their names and address. To insert an article in a special town meeting warrant, the request must be signed by 100 registered voters or 10% of the total number of voters, whichever is less.

If you want a sample of an article to use as you draft yours, look at the record of a previous town meeting, available on the town website. All such petitions must be submitted to the town clerk before the date when the Select Board "closes" the warrant. The town clerk will validate the signatures.

# How Town Meetings Operate

## What is the quorum for a Town Meeting?

In Royalston, if even a single voter appears, the town meeting may start and conduct business.

## Who may attend, speak and vote?

Any member of the public may attend a town meeting. Non-voters may speak at the discretion of the moderator or the town meeting itself. Any registered voter may vote, in Royalston by a show of hands or (in rare cases) by standing, ballot or checklist.

## How does an article come up for discussion?

Usually, the discussion proceeds in order through the warrant. Sometimes, the meeting may agree to take an article out of order. Royalston's annual town meeting, for example, usually considers school-related articles first so that school officials do not have to wait through the whole warrant.

For each article in turn, a town official or a voter will "move" it (i.e., move it to the floor), and a second official or voter will second it. If an article is not moved or not seconded, the meeting passes over it.

## How do I speak in debate?

Raise your hand and wait for the moderator to acknowledge you, and then stand up and state your name and address. Make your comments to the moderator, not to the town meeting

You may attack a previous speaker's argument, but do not attack the speaker. For example, do not say, "The previous speaker is dead wrong." Instead, say something like, "I disagree with the argument we just heard."

Since you make your comments to the moderator, you may not directly debate or ask questions of a previous speaker unless the moderator grants you permission.

Royalston bylaws prescribe that unless the meeting allows, you may not speak more than twice on any question except to correct a mistake or misstatement or to make an explanation, and you may not speak more than five minutes.

# Procedure and Motions

## Do I need to know "parliamentary procedure" to attend a town meeting?

No, the moderator will take care of it.

## What do the following terms mean?

Sometimes a town official or a voter will make a special motion.

<i>The Term...</i>	<i>Means...</i>	<i>Vote Required</i>
To postpone an article indefinitely	To defeat it	Simple majority
To table the question	To defeat or postpone it	2/3
To move the previous question	To cut off debate and vote on the issue at hand, which might be the main question or a proposed amendment to the article	2/3
To raise a point of order	To ask for a ruling on proper procedure	Moderator's ruling

## If I'm not familiar with making motions, how do I make one?

Rather than make a motion that may require the moderator to untangle and decode it, stand up and ask the moderator from the floor how to make a motion to achieve what you want to do. If your motion is to amend an article, put that amendment in writing and give it to the town clerk.