

Town Meeting Improvement Committee Charter

Background: On June 30, 2026, Greensboro held a Special Town Meeting to discuss and vote on two articles proposed by a petition from voters. One directed that future articles on budgetary matters be decided by Australian Ballot and the second directed that public questions be decided by Australian Ballot. Both measures were rejected by the Town Meeting. During the meeting, several problems with the way we conduct town meeting were identified that negatively affected participation and engagement, and the suggestion was made to set up a committee to explore these problems and propose solutions. At its July 8 meeting, the Selectboard approved the following resolution:

A subgroup of the Selectboard and staff will write up a description for a committee that will address ways to improve the effectiveness and inclusion of Town meeting, as discussed at the recent special town meeting, and will solicit letters of interest from those who wish to serve on the committee.

1. Establishment

The Greensboro Selectboard hereby establishes the Town Meeting Improvement Committee (TMIC) to explore, evaluate, and propose changes to improve the participation and effectiveness of Greensboro's annual Town Meeting. The TMIC shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Selectboard and, as such, shall be subject to all applicable provisions of Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

2. Purpose

The Committee will evaluate our practices around conducting our annual town meeting, identify problems with those practices, and make recommendations to the Selectboard for improvements.

3. Timing

The Committee will be formed by September 9, 2026 and will complete its work and submit its report to the Selectboard by November 15, 2026.

4. Implementation

The Selectboard will consider the recommendations of the Committee and implement those changes it determines are practical and helpful in time for the March 2027 Town Meeting. Some recommendations may be implemented at a later time.

5. Responsibilities

- a. Solicit the views and suggestions of Greensboro voters through various methods the Committee believes most useful, such as a public forum and/or an online survey.
- b. Research how other towns have improved the effectiveness and participation of their town meetings.
- c. Target outreach to people who find it difficult to attend town meeting in its current configuration.

6. Questions to explore

The following are examples. The Committee has the latitude to explore other issues as they see fit.

- a. What day and time would be the most convenient for most citizens?

Note: Under state statute, town meeting must take place on the first Tuesday of March, but “Vermont law gives towns the flexibility to hold Town Meeting at a time it believes will be more convenient for its voters.” Communities may choose to hold their floor votes on any of the three days before Town Meeting Day. (*A Citizen’s Guide to Town Meeting Day*, Office of the Vermont Secretary of State).*

- b. How can we make it easier for parents, seniors, and people with disabilities to attend town meeting? For example, should we offer on-site childcare, rides for people who cannot drive or don’t have access to a car, and hearing assistance devices to those with hearing loss?
- c. Should we use electronic voting (“clickers”) during the meeting in place of paper ballots?
- d. How could the agenda and flow of the meeting be better organized and managed so that more time could be devoted to the most important matters?
- e. Should we place a time limit on discussion for each article? Note that the body can always extend debate with a majority vote.
- f. Which types of articles deserve the most time and attention? Which ones deserve less?
- g. Should some time be spent early in the meeting on the basic rules of parliamentary procedure, so voters know how to accomplish specific tasks, for example extending debate, changing the order of the articles, postponing consideration of an article to a later date or time?
- h. Should we have a parliamentarian present who can advise the moderator on parliamentary procedures and advise voters who want to make a motion?
- i. Such other questions as the Committee shall determine.

7. Membership

Seven voters appointed by the Selectboard which shall seek members with a diversity of ages, family status, professions, and experience. Any registered voter may request to join the committee.

8. Work product

A report with a prioritized list of recommendations shall be submitted to the Selectboard.

*https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/sos/Elections_Division/election_info_resources/town_meeting_local_elections/citizens_guide_vermont_town_meeting_2008.pdf