

Message when presenting the Australian ballot petition to the Selectboard on 4/8/26

I'm submitting a petition with two articles about switching how Greensboro votes on "all budget articles" and on "all public questions" at Town Meeting. If these articles pass at a Special Town Meeting, we would simply separate the discussion of town issues from the voting, and we would vote in private. The Selectboard can decide how much discussion and interaction the town has before we vote. Some other towns that use the Australian ballot system have a "Pre Town Meeting" to discuss everything on the Warning, have a meal together, and do whatever else they want. A "Pre Town Meeting" can be essentially the same as a Town Meeting, just without any voting.

There has been lots of discussion over many years about how to increase participation at Town Meeting. This petition is another attempt to increase voter participation and let more people have their say about what happens here in Greensboro. **There is a lot of desire in Greensboro to switch to the Australian ballot method of voting.** Not everyone who signed this petition may ultimately vote to switch to Australian ballots, but every signer wants to have a Special Town Meeting to discuss these articles. On Town Meeting Day in March 2026, about 170 people used Australian ballots to elect our officers even though there wasn't a contested election. This was many more people than the number of people who voted "from the floor" at Town Meeting on any of the three articles where votes were counted (102 people voted on the Community Meals program, 81 people voted on the budget, and 54 people voted on the Town Clerk's residency). Participation plummeted as Town Meeting dragged on for hours.

This petition contains the signatures of about 107 voters. This is more than 15% of the voters in Greensboro. Only 35 signatures were required, but the response from the public was very positive.

- 32% more voters signed this petition than voted on our \$2.5 million budget.
- 95% more voters signed this petition than voted "Yes" on our \$2.5 million budget.
- Many more voters signed this petition than signed the petition about our Town Hall.

I have three requests for our Selectboard:

- First, I ask that the Special Town Meeting be held in the evening (perhaps starting around 6:30 pm) on a weekday, ideally on a Wednesday or a Thursday. Scheduling this Special Town Meeting for a weekday morning would be a slap in the face to everyone who signed the petition and everyone who is not able to come to a meeting in the middle of a work day.
- Second, I ask the Selectboard to remember that you were elected to represent the people in our town, and not just the people who can attend an all day Town Meeting. I'd like you to take an active role and encourage voters to try the Australian ballot method of voting at one or two Town Meetings and see how things go. If it turns out that we don't like this method of voting, we can easily switch back.
- Third, I ask you not to post the signatures and addresses of the petition signers that I'm submitting here. It's a security risk and it would serve no purpose other than to potentially make some people uncomfortable about exercising their statutory right to petition their Selectboard.

Thank you for your consideration.

