

# **GREENSBORO TOWN MEETING IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Notice Of Special Meeting:** Wednesday October 7 at 3 PM

**Location:** Town Hall meeting room with remote option\*

*(\*find meeting link on town calendar on the town website: [greensborovt.gov](http://greensborovt.gov))*

## **AGENDA**

- 1. Call to order:** 3 p.m.
- 2. Additions to the Agenda**
- 3. Approve draft minutes from 9/24 and 9/30 meetings**
- 4. Comments/questions on Brian's writeups**
  - White board notes from 9/30 meeting
  - Questions for local officials
  - Questions for other towns
- 5. Reports**
  - Conversation with Susan Clark
  - Conversations to date with other towns
  - Cost of doing a mass mailing for survey
- 6. Committee member assignments**
  - Contacting towns/town officials/individuals
  - Town Meeting survey
  - Focus group meetings
- 7. Other business**
  - Determine questions to ask town treasurer at a future meeting
- 8. Adjourn**

# **GREENSBORO TOWN MEETING**

## **IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Sept. 24, 2026 – Minutes (*DRAFT*)**

**Members present:** Dede Stabler, Brian Titus, Janet Long, Beth Meachem, Karl Stein, Jennifer Ranz

**Members absent:** Mateo Kehler

**Others present:** Josh Karp, Fran Recchia

**Called to Order:** 4 p.m.

#### **ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Committee member introductions

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee members introduced themselves and spoke about why they want to serve on the Town Meeting Improvement Committee (TMIC). Town Administrator Josh Karp clarified he is serving on the TMIC as a non-voting, ex-officio member.

#### **ORGANIZE COMMITTEE**

- 1. Elect chair.** Jennifer Ranz moved that Brian Titus serve as Chair and Karl Stein serve as Vice-chair. Dede Stabler seconded the motion which carried unanimously.
- 2. Elect clerk.** Karl moved that Josh serve as clerk. Janet Long seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

#### **REVIEW COMMITTEE CHARTER, MEETING SCHEDULE, WORK PLAN**

Brian said with a 11/15/26 deadline, there is not a lot of time for the TMIC to complete its work, so the committee will have to stay focused and stick to a schedule. It was agreed that the committee should meet weekly.

Josh noted that the Selectboard would likely grant more time if requested.

Karl said the TMIC will likely turn into a longer-term committee.

All committee members have read the charter. It is understood that while the charter suggests items for research and discussion, it gives the TMIC considerable freedom to choose what it wants to focus on.

It is understood that the TMIC will be following the open meeting law, which includes requirements for posting agendas and minutes.

Dede asked how TMIC members will know whether the Selectboard will be receptive to the committee's ideas. Beth said the job of the committee is to do the research, then to educate the public and Selectboard about its findings and explain its recommendations.

Brian suggested that a logical next step would be a brainstorming session to understand what people like about traditional Town Meeting, and what can be improved. After that, committee members would decide what areas of research to pursue. Committee members agreed with this approach.

Research could include speaking to other towns about their experiences improving town meeting, public outreach, and understanding the limitations of state statutes.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 5 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted - Josh Karp*

# GREENSBORO TOWN MEETING IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

**Sept. 30, 2026 – Minutes (DRAFT)**

**Members present:** Dede Stabler, Brian Titus, Janet Long, Beth Meachem, Karl Stein, Jennifer Ranz, Mateo Kehler

**Members absent:** None

**Others present:** Josh Karp, Fran Recchia

**Called to Order:** 3 p.m.

## **ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Having missed the first committee meeting, Mateo Kehler introduced himself and spoke about why he joined the committee.

It was agreed that to speak, committee members will raise their hands to be recognized by the chair, to minimize talking over each other.

## **BRAINSTORM SESSION**

- 1. Pros and cons of Town Meeting's traditional structure.** *[see attached notes on p.3]*
- 2. Ways to research improvements to Town Meeting**
  - It was agreed that a short set of questions will be created and used when contacting other towns about their town meeting processes.
  - Karl and Mateo will have a phone conversation with Susan Clark to get advice and a short list of towns to contact.
- 3. Options for gathering public input**
  - The committee discussed strategies for gathering community input on Town Meeting. Existing surveys from other towns will be reviewed for ideas.
  - Discussion of sending a postcard to all registered voters, possibly with a link to a Town Meeting survey.

- Discussion about organizing small neighborhood meetings around town to discuss residents' thoughts about Town Meeting, as was done during the planning stages for the new firehouse.

### **NEXT MEETING**

- Committee members agreed that the regular meeting time will be Wednesdays at 3 PM.
- At the next meeting (10/7), committee members will work out 1) who will contact which towns using the drafted questions, and 2 ) who will develop survey questions and figure out how the survey will be distributed.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 4:05 p.m.

# Town Meeting Improvement Committee: Whiteboard notes from 9/30

| <u>Likes</u>                                             | <u>Needs Improvement</u>                                                                                                | <u>Challenges</u>                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brings neighbors together                                | Provide better access to comprehensive information                                                                      | How do we bring younger voters to the town meeting? Professionals, parents, disabled?                                         |
| Provides an opportunity to amend articles                | Provide child care for parents attending the meeting                                                                    | Are paper ballots the most effective method of voting?                                                                        |
| Allows the community to connect with each other socially | Provide better access to elderly and disabled voters                                                                    | Can meetings be shortened?                                                                                                    |
| Encourages civil, friendly compromise                    | Provide education to voters regarding budget appropriations                                                             | Are there too many paper ballots at the town meeting?                                                                         |
| Every person has an equal direct voice in the discussion | Prioritize warrant items to facilitate a more efficiently managed town meeting                                          | Can we improve our voter's understanding of the Australian Ballot process?                                                    |
| Encourages grassroots activism                           | Increase attendance at budget meetings<br>●                                                                             | How can we improve communication with voters?                                                                                 |
| Blends civic duty with a historic town tradition         | Provide transportation to the meeting for voters who need it                                                            | How can we make the operation of town business more transparent?                                                              |
| Voters can question budget expenses line by line         | Educate voters so that they understand the process for amending articles                                                | Can we simplify the budget to make it more understandable to town voters?                                                     |
|                                                          | Build an understanding of commitment between select board and voters regarding budget decisions                         | Would it be useful to conduct a Robert's Rules "boot camp"?                                                                   |
|                                                          | Create a process of public engagement, communication, and education prior to town meeting to increase voter empowerment | How can we improve our understanding of participation in the town decision making process so that voters feel more empowered? |
|                                                          | Address feeling that decisions are made by a passionate minority, "rule by the few"                                     | How do we increase voter participation?                                                                                       |

## **Questions for local officials and the town moderator:**

### **Attendance and Accessibility**

- What trends have you noticed in overall attendance and demographic diversity at town meeting over the past five years?
- What are the biggest logistical or scheduling complaints you hear from residents who do not attend?
- Would shifting the start time (e.g. to an evening slot), changing the day of the week, or offering hybrid/remote participation options help or hurt participation?
- Are childcare, transportation, or physical accessibility hurdles limiting attendance for families or seniors?

### **Meeting Flow and Procedure**

- From a moderator's perspective, what are the most common procedural hang-ups or points of confusion for voters on the floor?
- How effectively do our current rules handle complex debates, amendments from the floor, or heated disagreements without derailing the agenda?
- Are warrant articles written in a way that average residents can easily understand before and during the vote?
- What has been our experience with balancing traditional floor votes versus moving specific items to the Australian (paper) ballot?

### **Communication and Pre-Meeting Engagement**

- How well do informational pre-meetings, public hearings, or budget informational sessions work to clear up questions before the actual floor vote?
- Are town reports and budget breakdowns reaching residents early enough, and are they presented in an accessible format?
- What additional tools (such as slide projections, online summaries, or FAQ guides) could make complex budget items easier to digest in real time?

## Questions for other towns that have made changes in the town meeting process:

### Process & Improvements

- **What prompted your improvement project?** (e.g., low turnout, long lines, confusing floor amendments, or a lack of accessible information?)
- **How is your town meeting structured?** How do you vote? How do you structure your agenda? Do you prioritize agenda items?
- **Which solutions did you implement?** Did you shift to Australian ballot for certain articles, adopt hybrid/virtual informational meetings, change the meeting day/time, introduce electronic voting clickers?
- **How did you manage the transition?** What kind of public education was needed to help voters adapt to the new format?

### Engagement & Accessibility

- **How did the changes impact voter turnout?** Did you see a shift in demographics, such as more young families, working residents, or seniors participating?
- **What accessibility improvements were made?** How did the project address needs like childcare, transportation, language translation, or physical ADA compliance?
- **How did you balance efficiency with traditional deliberation?** If moving to an Australian ballot, how did you preserve the "community voice" and debate aspects of the traditional floor meeting?

### Legal & Governance Challenges

- **Did Vermont statutes (Title 17) create hurdles?** How did you navigate Secretary of State guidelines, warning requirements, and mandatory timelines?
- **How did town officials react?** What was the feedback or resistance from the Selectboard, Town Clerk, or Moderator, and how did you build consensus?
- **What were the unexpected costs?** Did printing extra ballots, hiring more election workers, or buying voting technology strain the town budget?

### Evolution & Advice

- **How do you measure the success of the project?** Beyond voter turnout numbers, what qualitative feedback did you receive from residents?
- **What would you do differently next time?** What unexpected bottlenecks or unintended consequences arose during the first meeting under the new system?
- **What advice would you give to another Vermont town** looking to modernize or improve their town meeting process? What can you share with me to help our town work through this process (survey questions, questionnaires)?
- **Is there anyone else** that I should speak with?