

ACCESS TO TOWN MEETING (ATM) COMMITTEE

Diane Wood *Chair*

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The Access to Town Meeting (ATM) Committee was established by the Select Board in September 2021 with the charge to investigate, research, advise and recommend to the Select Board what actions the Town can take to encourage attendance and to increase participation at Town Meeting, including but not limited to consideration of the date/time of Town Meeting, what services the Town might offer, and educational, technological and outreach activities the Town could undertake. The Committee presented its process, background, and initial findings five months later, with the final report out of Recommendations to the Select Board made in April 2022.

Annual Town Meeting Low Attendance Challenges

YEAR	LOCATION	ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ATTENDANCE	REGISTERED VOTERS	%
2022	WA Field	285	17,921	1.6
2021	WA Field	275	18,154	1.5
2020	WA Field	301	18,335	1.7
2019	Abbott	768	16,907	4.4
2018	Abbott	540	17,004	3.1
2017	Abbott	1151* 2 days	17,049	6.7

Membership

Initially, Committee Membership totaled 15, but was subsequently reduced to 11 to better accommodate the challenges of meeting a quorum each month.

ACCESS TO TOWN MEETING (ATM) COMMITTEE -Continued

Activities and Deliverables

- Presented the ATM Committee goals, a working process, and background to the Select Board in February 2022.
- Conducted an internal Committee Brainstorming Session of ways to improve attendance
- Developed, distributed, and conducted a MA Town Survey to solicit input on what other MA Communities have done to increase attendance at Town Meetings. Analyzed the results from 42 communities received, contacted similar communities, and used the data to compile final Recommendations.
- Developed, distributed, and conducted a Westford Community Survey to solicit Westford residents input about attending Town Meeting. Analyzed results from >800 Westford respondents and used the data to compile final Recommendations.
- Presented 34 final Recommendations to the Select Board in April 2022.
- Worked with the Town Moderator and Town Manager to encourage the implementation of those Recommendations for the June 2022 Annual Town Meeting.
- The Committee continues to conduct research and at the start of FY 2023 is revisiting an option of providing child care, researching Annual Town Meeting date changes, as well as floating the potential for remote participation voting.

ATM Committee Link and Documents

For further details about the ATM Committee including presentations, Survey Questions, and final Recommendations, please refer to:

westfordma.gov/1436/Access-to-Town-Meeting-ATM-Committee