

Access to Town Meeting (ATM) Committee Recommendations

Date Change & Childcare

Tuesday, November 15, 2022
Select Board

Date Change Working Group

- Working group reviewed following information
 - Westford attendance for last 5+ years: ranges from 225-750+, based on public interest.
 - *Historically, attendance appears to be driven by which articles are on the warrant.*
 - Other Community Input Survey: from 46 other towns, most common is Monday night in May, but still report low attendance
 - Other data points: 2017 town meeting study in Southborough; 2018 Lynnfield research
 - Any date change to Annual Town Meeting would require a change to town bylaws
- Date and day of the week appear to be medium to low factors for attendance
- Recommendation:

At this time, the committee identified no compelling impact on attendance related purely to the date and time of Town Meeting.

Childcare Working Group

- Working group reviewed the volunteer effort (% Equitable Teacher Pay campaign) for childcare at the 2017 Annual Town Meeting with approx 50 children participating
- Other communities offer childcare services that range in logistics:
 - many require pre-registration; often are limited to grades K-5 or a number of available spots; commonly sponsored by town Recreation Dept or other community group; many offer for both weekday evenings and weekends
- Overarching objective is for town to reduce barriers to voter access, as well as investing in civic engagement as a community service
- Recommendation:

Westford should offer town-provided childcare, starting in March 2023.

Demand may be low and unstable until it is consistently offered, promoted and trusted. Committee recommends using an established Town department and starting with a maximum of allowed slots.