

# 1. Introduction & Board History

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This handbook is to serve as a resource for the Board of Selectmen, other officials and agencies of Town of Arlington government, and the public by setting forth the Board's basic functions, policies, and procedures. Companion policies, including those pertaining to permits and licenses are codified elsewhere in the interests of allowing this handbook to be an efficient foundation for consistent, transparent, and effective Board administration. In short, this document provides:

- Reference material for presently serving members of the Board on significant policies and procedures;
- Guidance for citizens and Town employees on Board policies, and procedures;
- Education for new Board members in the interests of continuity of effective Board governance; and
- Serve as a model of policies and procedure for other boards and communities.

*The Handbook shall be periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate at the annual goal setting workshop of the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager.*

## Overview

In Arlington the number of Selectmen is determined by the Town Manager Act, Chapter 503 of the Acts of 1952 as amended. Hence, the Board of Selectmen is comprised of five elected residents who serve three-year terms. They are elected on the following cycle:

Two are elected one year;

Two are elected the following year; and

One is elected in the third year of a given Board election cycle.

## Town Manager Act §3

The primary duties and responsibilities of the Board are described in Part 2 herein.

# 6. Town Meeting

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**T**own Meeting is the historic form of government for towns throughout the Commonwealth. Arlington has adopted a “representative” form of town meeting pursuant to G.L. c. 43A, in which 252 elected citizens of the Town from 21 precincts serve as Arlington’s legislative body. The Board of Selectmen serve many important functions in the Town Meeting process – opening the warrant, holding substantive hearings on proposed warrant articles to be considered at Town Meeting, and ultimately participating in Town Meeting to present the Board’s recommendations.

### A. The Warrant

For the annual Town Meeting, the meeting cycle begins in December with the opening of the “Town Warrant,” which is the instrument for calling a Town Meeting and must contain a list of all items to be acted upon at Town Meeting with reasonable specificity. Pursuant to Title I, Article 1 §2 of the Town Bylaws, the Town Warrant for annual meetings opens no later than the first week of December, and closes no earlier than the last Friday of the following January. The Board must post due notice of the opening and the closing of the Warrant consistent with the laws of the Commonwealth and the Town Bylaws. Further, all articles to be included are managed by the Selectmen. Hence each article, regardless of its proponent must be submitted in writing and electronically to the Office of the Board of Selectmen before the closing of the Warrant. There are three means by which articles may be submitted:

1. The Board of Selectmen place an article on the Warrant by vote.
2. The Town Manager, an official Town board, commission, committee, or department head requests placement of an article on the Warrant. These

requests are honored as a courtesy and do not reflect the Board's position on the article itself.

3. Ten Registered Voters submit an article by petition. Registered voters are required to sign the petition by hand and each signature must be accompanied by an address.

Citizen proponents of warrant articles should, as a precaution, obtain more than ten signatures of registered voters supporting their petition. Further, citizens are strongly encouraged to contact Town Counsel in a timely fashion in order to ensure their proposed articles seek action within Town Meeting's authority, are provided to appropriate Town bodies for hearings, and are in best practicable form.

Following the closing of the Warrant in January, the Selectmen arrange the format and order of the Warrant articles. The Board may receive input from other Town bodies and officials, but ultimate discretion remains vested with the Selectmen.

As a final note, some articles placed on the Warrant under the Selectmen's jurisdiction may require extra considerations, such as notice to owners of real property in instances of eminent domain takings. In such instances, the Office of the Board of Selectmen is charged with providing notice or taking other extra measures as may be required.

## **B. Warrant Hearings & Report of the Board of Selectmen**

After the close of the Warrant, the Board of Selectmen conducts hearings on warrant articles within their jurisdiction. Matters within the Board's jurisdiction are generally any article not subject to review by the Finance Committee (articles seeking appropriations of funds) or the Arlington Redevelopment Board (zoning articles).

Board Warrant Article Hearings may be conducted as a part of regular meetings of the Selectmen, or as special meetings, but generally follow the same procedures and rules set forth in Chapter 5.

The objective of Board Warrant Article Hearings is to develop recommendations of the Board on each article before it by majority vote, to be set

forth with the comments in the Report of the Board of Selectmen in advance of Town Meeting. Proponents of articles under the Board's jurisdiction should attend and be prepared to present arguments in favor of their article at the appointed hearing. Failure to present at the Board Warrant Article Hearing deprives the Board and the Town the opportunity to fully examine and debate the issues to be advanced by the proposed article. *As such, absent good cause shown, the Board will not recommend positive action on any article which fails to be presented at its appointed Board Warrant Article Hearing regardless of the substance of such articles.*

Where the Board supports taking some action contemplated by an article, regardless of how it appears before the Board, the Selectmen, with assistance of Town Counsel, shall develop a motion for Town Meeting to take a specific action. Where the Board opposes an article, it will recommend a vote of "no action" to Town Meeting in its report, *including those instances where "no action" is urged because the Selectmen lacked a meaningful opportunity to vet an article because a proponent did not present it at hearing. While respecting Town Meeting's prerogative, the Board especially urges the Moderator and Town Meeting Members to procedurally and substantively support "no action" recommendations in such instances where article proponents fail to present at the appropriate Board Warrant Article Hearing and thus leave the details of their proposal to be presented for the first time on Town Meeting floor.*

### **C. Town Elections**

Generally held on the first Saturday of April, the Town Election is called by the Selectmen, and serves to elect Town officers including Town Meeting Members, as well as place appropriate ballot questions to the voters. See Town Bylaws, Title I, Article 1, §1. Town Elections are technically part of the annual Town Meeting, but no other substantive business, such as actions on warrant articles are taken at such time as Town Meeting Members have yet to be determined until polls are closed and votes counted.

Both polling hours and locations are designated by the Board of Selectmen. Polling has generally opened at 8:00 a.m. and closed at 8:00 p.m.

Election officers working the polls are appointed in accordance with G.L. c. 54 §12 and include the following for each precinct:

- Warden,
- Clerk,
- Inspectors, and
- Tellers (known as “reliefs”).

#### **D. Town Meeting**

The legislative business of Town Meeting is convened at a time and place designated by the Selectmen, usually on the fourth Monday in April for consideration of all articles in the Warrant, except election. See Town Bylaws, Title I, Art. 1 §1.

Town Meeting has been historically held at Town Hall, starting at 8:00 p.m. with adjourned meetings held on the following Wednesdays and Mondays, or as otherwise voted by Town Meeting, until the conclusion of all business.

The Town Moderator calls Town Meeting to order, and generally presides over Town Meeting. The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen is the spokesman for the Board at Town Meeting and presents the Board’s positions as voted in the majority and codified in the Report of the Board of Selectmen. The Chairman may however designate any other member of the Board to speak on the Selectmen’s behalf, and it is the position of the Board that individual Selectmen should have the privilege to be recognized by the Moderator at Town Meeting regardless of their status as Town Meeting members.

Further information on the conduct of Town Meeting may be found throughout Town Bylaws, Title I, Article 1.

#### **E. Special Town Meeting**

Special Town Meetings are those meetings of the Town’s legislative body outside of the schedule and cycle for the annual Town Meeting. A Special Town Meeting may be called at the discretion of the Selectmen and the call is also issued by a Special Town Meeting Warrant.

A Special Town Meeting must be called by the Selectmen upon petition of 200 registered voters within forty-five (45) days of receipt of said petition.

The Warrant for a Special Town Meeting must be posted for notice in accordance with all legal requirements. The time and place of the meeting is determined by the Selectmen. The Warrant is also usually kept open for one business day.

Finally, it should be noted that for any Special Town Meeting, articles by citizen petition must be submitted with the signatures and addresses of 100 registered voters rather than the ten (10) required for the annual Town Meeting. However, in nearly all other respects, Special Town Meeting functions with the same procedures as the regular annual Town Meeting.