



ATM COMMITTEE UPDATE

**Westford Select Board Meeting
February 22, 2022**

Challenges/Background

Low Annual Town Meeting attendance:

Year	Location	Attendance	Registered Voters	% of Registered Voters
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* Over 2 days	17,049	6.7%

Charter

- Select Board established 15 Member Committee in September, 2021
- September 2021
 - “The Committee shall 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”

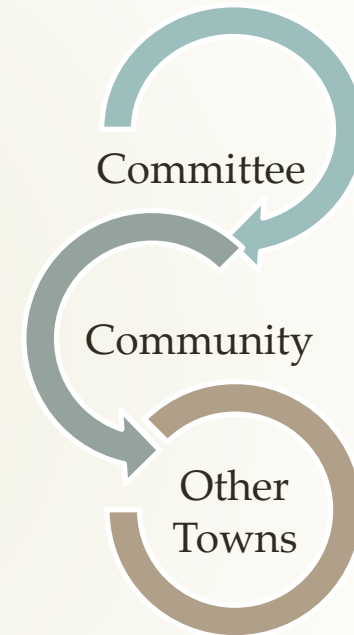
Goal: Increase attendance!

ATM Committee Members (11/15)

- Eric Barber Mingo
- Stefany Eck
- Stephen Edwards
- Linda Greene
- Sally Rosenthal
- Valery Young
- Thomas Barry
- Megan Eckroth
- Kristina Greene
- Dana Riegert
- Diane Wood (Chair)
- Guest Participant: Angela Harkness, Town Moderator

Approach

- Develop Branding
- Conduct 365 degrees research, solicit input, analyze results
 - ✓ Internal Committee (Brainstorming)
 - ✓ Westford Community (Westford Survey)
 - ✓ Other Towns (Town Questionnaire)
 - ✓ Remote Participation (Research Options)



Branding

- Megan Eckroth, Designer



Committee Brainstorming - Internal View

Under separate cover

Three Working Groups Est: October 2021

1. Westford Community Input Working Group
 - Develop and distribute a Survey for the Westford Community.
Analyze results
2. Other Town Data Collections Working Group
 - Research other Towns' Town Meeting participation and challenges.
3. Remote Participation Working Group
 - Research various methods of electronic access to Town Meeting for remote participation of Westford residents, as well as other potential methods of participating in and voting on Town Meeting Warrant articles. Address allowing remote participants the ability to speak at Town Meeting with questions..

1. Westford Community Input

- Working Group: Valery Young (Lead), Stefany Eck, Dana Riegert, Sally Rosenthal
- Rolled out mid-January; 4 weeks. Surveys returned to date: **+800**
- Communicated widely
 - ✓ Social Media, Moderator's Page, Action Unlimited, Wicked Local
 - ✓ Newsletters: Town Manager, WPS, WA, Roudenbush, LWV
 - ✓ Market Basket, Muffins on Main, MillWorks
 - ✓ Hard Copy Surveys: Cameron, Fletcher, Town Hall, Roudenbush
 - ✓ Westford CAT PSA's, Gov't Meeting Announcements
- Focus: Keep it short, concise and quick. Goal was to identify challenges and opportunities, not to weigh in on which changes to make (consensus would be unlikely)



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



Please take this short survey about **Westford's Annual and Special Town Meetings**

- whether you always attend or aren't sure what all the fuss is about.

This survey was created by a group of your fellow residents to improve participation at Town Meeting.



Prefer to take it online?
Scan the QR code or use the link:
<https://bit.ly/WestfordTMsurvey>

I attend town meeting:

- Almost always
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 Never

What makes attending town meeting challenging or impossible for you?

Please choose all that apply.

- Work Conflicts
 Child Care
 Conflicts with other activities
 Lack of knowledge/preparation
 Length of meeting
 Transportation/parking
 Mobility/health considerations
 Religious observances
 Not a US Citizen
 Not a registered voter
 Under 18 years old
 Other (please list): _____

What would make town meeting more convenient or more likely for you to attend?

We want to know who our survey is reaching! Please tell us about yourself.

Age (approx.): _____ Gender identity: _____ Race/ethnicity: _____

Thank you for your time! Please return your survey to the **Library Main Desk**.

Initial Findings

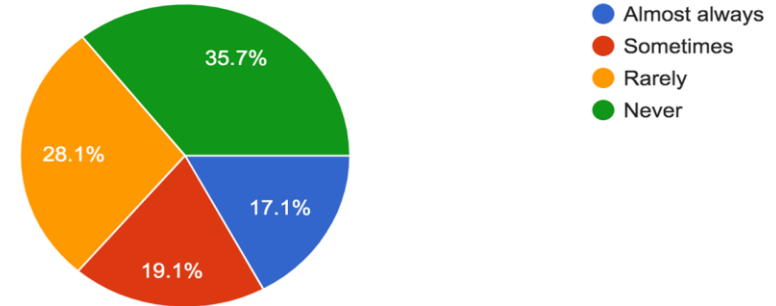
- Reaching a good distribution of residents who do and do not attend
- Recognized weakness – Responses do not fully represent demographics of town's registered voters. (>4% of 17,383 registered voters)

Top answers for “What makes attending challenging/impossible?”

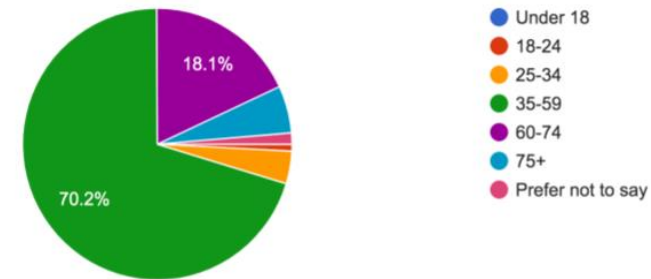
(multiple choice)

- Conflicts with events/activities/work
- Length of Meeting
- ‘It is not challenging for me.’
- Childcare

I attend Annual or Special Town Meeting:
759 responses



Age
746 responses



2. Other Town Data Collection

- Working Group: Kristina Greene (Lead), Megan Eckroth, Linda Greene
- Questionnaires distributed to 259 MA Open Town Meeting Towns via Mass Moderators Association (MMA); **45** Returned (17%)
 - Window: January 12th to February 11th:
 - Group will individually reach out to 21 Towns earmarked as 'market basket' communities i.e.: Bedford, Concord, Groton, etc.
- Goal: Better understand other MA Towns' attendance experiences and be able to leverage any special strategies used to increase attendance.
- Group will reconvene March 1st

Town Questionnaire

Open Town Meeting Survey

“The Town of Westford is investigating ways to increase participation at our Town Meetings. We are asking other Open Town Meeting municipalities for background information for learning purposes. This survey should only take 5 minutes of your time. If you have made significant changes due to Covid, please answer these questions for pre-Covid”

Town Questionnaire- cont.

Under separate cover

3. Remote Participation

- Working Group: Tom Barry (Lead), Eric Barber-Mingo, Stephen Edwards
- SAMPLE of Research Actions to date: Longer term approach
 - Research potential use of a Ballot form of voting
 - Research what Local/State/Fed. laws may need changing
 - Discuss security of remote electronic voting (e.g. token-based electronic security)
 - Review Mass Moderators Association “2040 Town Meeting of the Future”.
 - Research technology advances to allow for more inclusivity

