

An Important Note on the 2020 Dover Annual Town Meeting

The COVID-19 virus has had a profound effect on our daily lives. The Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, Town Clerk, Chief of Police, the Town Moderator, the Assistant Town Moderator, and Town Administrator have been working diligently to determine whether we can hold a reasonably safe Town Meeting (TM). We define “reasonably safe” as the same risk of COVID-19 infection as going to the Post Office or buying groceries.

The needs of the Town to pass basic budget items are pressing. Without a budget passed by TM, Town employees would not get their raises until the budget is passed, and the Town could not access free cash to reduce property taxes. In addition, the Town would have to submit monthly budget requests to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue for their approval. This would be cumbersome and might have an adverse impact on Town functions, including education.

Large gatherings of greater than 10 people are prohibited under Governor Baker’s COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Town meetings are exempt from this, but we still need to take measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection for citizens wishing to attend. The Town has sought advice from a Town citizen, Dr. Kevin Ban, Chief Medical Officer for Walgreens whose responsibilities include protecting the health of Walgreens’ employees and customers, and Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School. We are very appreciative for their advice and counsel. Acting on their recommendations and advice from the Dover Board of Health, we have structured TM as follows:

Town Meeting Attendance Protocols

- ***TM will be held at 11 AM on Monday, June 29, at the Dover Sherborn Regional football field, rain or shine.*** We have been advised that an outdoor meeting presents less risk of infection from COVID-19 than an indoor meeting. Moreover, holding the meeting at 11:00, rather than in the evening, minimizes the risk from mosquito-borne diseases.
- ***All attendees must wear face masks for the duration of the meeting*** unless there is a medical need not to. If you have a medical condition and cannot wear a mask, please inform the Town clerk at fhoffman@doverma.org in advance of the meeting so we may accommodate you in a safe manner.
- ***We can safely accommodate only 60 attendees at TM on the football field. If more seek to attend, we will suspend TM until COVID-19 has materially subsided or other circumstances allow us to hold a larger TM.***
- ***To help reduce risk of COVID-19 infection, restroom facilities will be closed.***
- ***All attendees will be required to sit 15 feet apart. Couples will not be able to sit together during the meeting.***
- ***All attendees will have their temperature scanned by Dr. Ban using a non-contact scanner before admission to TM.***
- ***If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, please do not attend.*** Symptoms include:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, or any member of your household is ill or exhibiting symptoms, please do not attend TM.

Town Meeting Procedures

Many Town residents may reasonably decide that it is not worth the risk of attending TM. We have obtained a Court Order from the Norfolk Superior Court that allows the Board of Selectmen to reduce temporarily the quorum requirement to 18 individuals (10% of our normal 175 voter requirement) during the COVID-19 emergency. (Similar rulings have been obtained by other towns in Massachusetts and, as this Blue Book goes to press, the State Legislature has submitted a bill to the Governor that would allow all towns to do this).

As required by the Court Order, the Board of Selectmen has limited Articles to be considered at Town Meeting to those “that are essential to the functioning of the Town’s government” such as the Operating budget, the Capital Budget, our elected officials’ salaries, free cash and the revolving funds. Citizens who were sponsoring other articles have kindly withdrawn their articles and we will consider those articles at our next subsequent Town Meeting. Any article not approved by the Board of Selectmen for consideration at this meeting and any motion not pertaining to articles approved by the Board of Selectmen will be ruled out of order by the Moderators.

Since we need to vote on the budgets before the fiscal year end (June 30), we will hold TM rain or shine so please dress/prepare appropriately. We will only postpone TM due to inclement weather if there are thunderstorms in the area at the time of the meeting. In that case, we will meet the following day on Tuesday, June 30 at 11:00 a.m.

The Dover Police will be showing attendees where to park and they and other Town officials will be directing and instructing citizens on how to check in. Strict social distancing will be required. Chairs will be pre-placed on the football field 15 feet apart. Any materials to be distributed at TM will be placed on the chairs for you. All votes will be taken by voice or raised hand count. A microphone will be available for discussion and will be cleaned after each use.

Please do not gather in groups before or after the meeting. For your safety and the safety of others, please proceed to your chair as directed and leave TM only as directed.

Board of Selectmen Information Sessions

The Board of Selectmen will be holding several information sessions via Zoom during the next few weeks prior to TM to discuss the Warrant articles that will be voted on at TM. Please check the

Town website for details. (Unfortunately, state laws do not allow us to conduct TM, itself, via Zoom.)

Thank you in advance for your patience, understanding, and cooperation as we navigate these very difficult circumstances.

Sincerely,

James R. Repetti, Town Moderator, David M. Haviland, Assistant Town Moderator, Felicia S. Hoffman, Town Clerk.