

Plans for March Town and School Meetings

A working group of Town and School officials has been meeting regularly to discuss options for our upcoming Town and School Meetings. After considering our successful meetings and voting this past year, as well as the various options currently available to Towns and School Districts, the working group, Board of Selectmen, and School Board have made tentative decisions as to how our Town and School Meeting voting days and business meetings will be conducted this year.

Because the elections proceeded so smoothly last Fall, we will use a similar voting set-up and similar social distancing and health protocols for the official ballot voting portion of our Town and School Meetings. This voting will occur as usual on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at the Community Center, and the polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The drive-through voting option that was used for last year's School Meeting is no longer permitted. The only drive-through option that is now permitted under current laws would require the polls to be open in Bow from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., therefore it was rejected as impractical and unworkable. Instead, drawing upon, and using the facility sanitizing, the individual use of masks and the social distancing protocols that the School District has developed for in-person school instruction, the two business meetings will be held in a masked, social distancing format at Bow High School. Presently, the dates for the School business meeting is March 12 and the Town business meeting is March 17.

The High School auditorium will be the primary room for the business meetings, but voters will be seated so that they are appropriately socially distanced from all other voters who are not part of their family group. In addition, the Band Room and Chorus Room, as well as three double classrooms, will be set up with socially distanced seating and full audio and video connections to the Auditorium and each of the remote rooms. An Assistant Moderator will be present in each of the remote rooms, and voters in the remote rooms will be able to fully participate in the meetings. Voters in the remote rooms will vote in place and the Assistant Moderators will report the results of the individual rooms' voting to the Moderator in the Auditorium.

Voter check-in will be set up in such a way as to appropriately separate voters and to protect the poll workers. Student volunteers will be on hand to escort voters to the remote rooms, should that be necessary. In addition, all voters will be given floor plans showing the locations of the remote rooms, as well as the locations of available bathrooms.

On both the official ballot voting day, and at the business meetings, all participants and voters will be requested to wear masks. Any voters who refuse to or are unable to wear masks will be seated separately in one of the remote rooms. Similarly, any non-voters

who wish to observe the meeting will be seated separately in one of the remote rooms. In addition, we will ask all voters to self-screen prior to the meeting. Voters who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to stay home so as to protect the rest of the voters. The two business meetings will also be live-streamed on YouTube so that anyone can watch the proceedings (though not participate) from their homes.

Finally, both the Town and the School Moderators retain the authority to postpone either their official ballot voting days or their business meetings if the conditions deteriorate between now and March such that, in their opinion, the voting day or the meetings should be postponed.

Voters who have questions or comments concerning the Meetings should feel to contact members of the Board of Selectmen or School Board, the Town Moderator or the School Moderator.

Submitted by

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