

Glossary of Terms Used at Town Meeting

Article – An item of business for Town Meeting to discuss and decide on. Per Montague By-Laws, articles are taken up in the order they are printed in the warrant unless Town Meeting wishes to change the order which can be accomplished with a motion made, seconded and approved by a 2/3 vote.

Budget - Financial plan for the fiscal year of proposed expenditures and proposed means of financing them.

Capital Exclusion - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specified period of time.

Cherry Sheet - Named for the color of the paper traditionally printed on, details the estimated State aid to be received by the Town.

Debt Exclusion - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specific expenditure (usually for a specific time period).

Excess Levy Capacity - The difference between a community's maximum tax levy limit and the amount it actually levies in real property taxes.

Fiscal Year - The town fiscal year for the proposed budget begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

Free Cash - The amount of surplus revenue not spent from previous fiscal year over and above uncollected taxes that is certified by the State. It is available for appropriation by Town Meeting.

Hand Count – When a majority or 2/3 vote can not be determined by the Moderator, a hand count is called for. Each voter is given a card upon entering the meeting. When the Moderator calls for those in favor and against you simply raise your card at the appropriate time and keep it in the air as the tellers count the cards. The tellers will give the count to the Moderator, and the Moderator will read the final results.

Levy Limit - Under Proposition 2½ the maximum amount that the town can raise in property taxes is 2½% more than the maximum it was allowed to raise for the prior fiscal year plus adjustment for growth.

Majority Vote - A vote of one half plus one of the Town Meeting Members present to pass an article.

Moderator – The Moderator's job is to preside over and regulate the proceedings of Town Meeting. They declare the outcome of all votes. It is also the Moderator's duty to rule on all points of order. In Montague, the Moderator is elected during the town election and serves a term of three years.

Motion – There are many different types of motions however what they all have in common is proposing some sort of action at Town Meeting. The most common, the "Main Motion", is used to open a warrant article for debate. Another common one is the motion to "amend" which allows a Town Meeting member to make changes or additions to a pending motion.

Move the Question - A motion to vote to end debate on a pending motion. It may not be preceded by an opinion on the motion by the maker, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

Point of Order – When a member of Town Meeting has a question as to Town Meeting procedure, that member should rise and state "Point of Order". That member should not interrupt another speaker unless allowing that speaker to continue would cause a furthering of procedural error. After stating your point of order it will be ruled on by the Moderator.

Reconsideration – To bring a previously discussed article back on the table for renewed attention and a new vote on the original question after further debate.

Reserve Fund - The fund established by Town Meeting for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures. Transfers from fund need to be approved by the Finance Committee.

Unanimous Vote - When all of the Town Meeting Members present vote in favor of a motion.

Voice Vote - The Moderator may decide a 2/3 or majority vote by voice in situations where the result is obvious. When the motion is put to vote, the Moderator will say "all those in favor" at which point those in favor of the motion should say "yay". The Moderator will then say "all those opposed" at which point those opposed should say "nay" or "no". If the vote is unanimous or only a handful or less of people vote on one side while everyone else votes on the other, the Moderator may call the vote. Otherwise, the Moderator may find it difficult to call the vote and will call for a hand count. If seven or more members question the vote immediately by rising and saying "I doubt the vote", the Moderator will ask for a hand count and declare the counted vote as final.

Warrant – Published at least 7 days prior to Town Meeting at the hands of the Board of Selectmen, the warrant lists a meeting's time, place, and agenda. A warrant is also known as a warning. A Town Meeting's action is not valid unless the subject was listed on the warrant. The selectmen will insert into the warrant all subjects which are requested of them by 10 or more registered voters in the town.

2½ Override - A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to permanently increase its levy limit.

2/3 Majority Vote - The appropriation of money requires a vote of 2/3 of the Town Meeting Members present to pass an article.