

Town of Burlington, Town Hall Annex
Rules Committee Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2023

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

Rules Committee members present: Myrna Saltman (Chairperson), Gary Kasky (Vice Chairperson), Jeff DiBona, Laura Nichols, Mark Woods.

Also in attendance: Michelle Huntoon, General Bylaw Review Committee

The purpose of tonight's meeting with Michelle was to reopen discussion about incorporating a hybrid meeting option for Burlington Town Meeting and ask what ideas/improvements could be made to the current proposed Warrant article.

Michelle offered some positive reasons for a hybrid meeting format:

- Potentially attract more candidates to run for Town Meeting, given that we struggle to maintain a full complement of Town Meeting Members (TMMs), and many uncontested races.
- People with disabilities, are immuno-compromised, or travel for work would potentially be able to attend remotely.
- Potentially attract a more diverse candidate pool for Town elections.

Concerns about hybrid meetings were as follows:

- Lack of Transparency – currently it is not shown how a candidate votes when doing so remotely. The only information available is the total of remote votes. Additionally, TMMs may have their screen off and we can't verify who is voting.
- Cost – we still do not have a hard number for the cost of conducting a hybrid Town Meeting. Michelle said she would make a request to obtain the information.
- Focus and Commitment - the Rules Committee pointed out that there are potential distractions when calling in remotely that cause people to lose focus on the meeting.
- It is our understanding that voting in a future hybrid meeting format will require a roll call vote which will potentially add hours to the time it takes to complete Town Meeting.

It was also suggested that TMMs be polled first before additional work is done on the Warrant article to ascertain interest in a hybrid format.

The Rules Committee proposed these ideas for offering a hybrid meeting format:

- All TMMs calling in remotely must keep their screen on for the duration of Town Meeting.
- Technology upgrade to show how each remote call in Town Meeting member is voting for an article.
- Log-in security to ensure validity of person logging in to Town Meeting.
- Town Meeting will not be suspended/stopped should the on-line broadcast stop working.

The Committee also continued discussion on enhancing attendance at Town Meeting. Attendance has been approximately 70-75%.

One suggestion is to have each precinct meet separately prior to Town Meeting to introduce each other and to offer assistance to review Warrant Articles, or other facets of Town Meeting. More discussion to follow.

Also discussed was reaching out to the Burlington Schools and general public to provide an introduction to town government and the importance of being engaged as a voter or participating in town government. More discussion to follow.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.

Submitted by Mark Woods, Rules Committee Secretary, TMM Precinct 7.