

Town of North Hampton Deliberative Session
February 4, 2017
North Hampton Town Hall

Welcome to the annual Town Deliberative Session. This is our annual opportunity to meet as a legislative body, a gathering of all registered voters who wish to participate. This is neither a Select Board meeting nor a Budget Committee meeting (or hearing), though the Select Board members and Budget Committee members are here, participating as registered voters, just as you and I are. This is our meeting.

Because we sit as a legislative body, the rules of participation must be established so that any discussion that occurs does so with civility and decorum. Under New Hampshire law, it is the Moderator who conducts the meeting. Accordingly, the Moderator traditionally establishes rules for the conduct of the meeting. The Moderator's rules will be followed unless challenged and the Meeting votes to overrule the Moderator, or to suspend the rules with respect to the issue at hand.

Under our form of Town Meeting, we deliberate and possibly amend the Articles in the Warrant today, but we actually vote on the posted Warrant Articles, by casting official ballots, the second Tuesday in March. Accordingly, we are limited in what we can do this today: we are able to amend or modify but not change the subject matter of any Article. We are able to change dollar amounts in money articles. Discussion will be limited to what can be done at this meeting.

We will proceed in the following manner: The Town Moderator will read the Article or project the language of the Article a screen which can be viewed here and on Channel 22, for those watching at home. If there is to be discussion on the Article or there are those who wish to amend the Article, the Article will be moved and seconded before any discussion takes place or any amendments are entertained. Usually, the Moderator will recognize the moving party to speak first and then others will be allowed to speak, in turn. All who wish to speak will be allowed a turn before anyone is allowed a second turn.

Moderator's Rules

Rule Number 1: No one speaks without first being recognized by the Moderator.

Rule Number 2: Only one person has the floor at a time; accordingly, discussions between parties (dialogues) are not possible. When a speaker asks a question and someone volunteers to answer, the questioning party yields and no longer has the floor or is recognized to speak.

This is a meeting for the registered voters of the Town. Others may attend and observe, but nonvoters will generally not be allowed to speak unless they have something helpful to contribute to the meeting and the Moderator waives the no-speech rule with permission of the meeting. Town administrators and staff, who may not be registered voters, may be permitted to speak under this waiver provision. There are more than 3,200 registered voters in the Town.

Rule Number 3: If you wish to speak or to vote on amendments, you must register with the Supervisors of the Checklist to secure a colored "voter card". Please show the card when you rise to speak or when you vote so that the Moderator knows you are a voter.

The meeting is recorded and televise live. Accordingly it is necessary to use a microphone when you are recognized to speak; in addition use of the microphone will help those present in the hall to hear clearly what you have to say.

Rule Number 4: All speakers must use a microphone.

It is sometimes difficult to explain amendments unless the amendment or amended version of an Article can be read or projected on the screen to voters. Also it is confusing to amend amendments.

Rule Number 5: The Moderator will entertain only one amendment at a time and all proposed amendments must be in writing.

As mentioned earlier, decorum and civility are paramount. We are here to make progress, not to win arguments and that concept underlies the Moderator's responsibility.

Rule Number 6: The Moderator will decide if a speaker is out of order in his or her statements or questions and may terminate the speaker's right to continue.

On Articles generating significant interest, many speakers may wish to make statements or ask questions.

Rule Number 7: All who desire to speak will queue up at the microphone and all those wishing to speak will be allowed to speak before any speaker has a second turn.

Rule Number 8: We will not be bound by Robert's or other published rules of order but will follow a simplified version of such rules primarily requiring a motion and second on an Article before any discussion may ensue.

After an Article is amended, the vote taken on the amendment may be reconsidered at any time during the meeting, unless a vote is taken to Restrict Reconsideration on such vote. Once reconsideration is restricted, the restricted vote cannot be reopened for discussion again at this meeting. A restriction on reconsideration will prevent going back to an article for further discussion even if not amended the first time around.

Articles will be discussed debated and possibly amended and then placed upon the official ballot for final vote on Election Day as presented or amended at this meeting.