

TMMA MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2005
Cary Library, 7-9 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:
Wednesday, September 14, 2005, 7:00 p.m.
Site: TBD

Attendance

TMMA Officers:

Gloria Bloom, Chair
David Horton, Vice-Chair
Andy Friedlich, Treasurer
David Kaufman, Communications Officer

Precinct Officers:

1 – Joel Adler; Jonathan Cole
2 – Alessandro Alessandrini
3 – (None)
4 – Steve Turner
5 – Sam Silverman; Eph Weiss
6 – Alan Lazarus
7 – Marsha Baker; Jim Courtemanche
8 – Anne Frymer
9 - Vicki Blier

Town Officials/Board and Committee Members/Citizens:

Marge Battin, Town Moderator
John Bartenstein, Appropriation, Pct. 1
Dick Battin, Pct. 8
Jeanne Krieger, Chair, Board of Selectmen, At-large
Deborah Brown, Appropriation, Pct. 7
Shirley Stolz, Capital Expenditures, Pct. 8
Joyce Miller, Conservation, Pct. 7
Charles Hornig, Planning, Pct. 8
Hank Manz, Board of Selectmen, At-large
Ellen McDonald, Pct. 4
Donna Hooper, Town Clerk
Margaret Counts-Klebe, League of Women Voters, Pct. 7

Jane Pagett, Pct. 6
Edith Sandy, Pct. 6
Helen Cohen, Chair, School Committee, Pct. 9

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Gloria Bloom.

Lt. Detective Joe O’Leary described the preparations made town-wide to respond to the visit by members of the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC), Topeka, Kansas, on the previous weekend. Lt. Det. O’Leary described how the Lexington Police Department gained information about the WBC, contacted communities that had experienced visits from the group, developed a knowledge base of what visits to communities by the WBC are like, rose to the group’s level of sophistication, collaborated with police and Tsongas Arena officials in Lowell, saw the visit as a community issue, and talked about how the police department formed partnerships and collaborated with Lexington community groups, including the school department, Interfaith Clergy Association, and No Place for Hate Steering Committee, to develop a response to the WBC that was appropriate and dignified. A round of applause was given to Lt. Det. O’Leary and the entire Lexington Police Department, under the leadership of Chief of Police Chris Casey, for all of the work it did to create a safe, dignified community response and to ensure the safety of Lexington citizens, as well as that of the WBC.

The major focus of the meeting, following Lt. Det. O’Leary’s presentation, was a **“wrap up” discussion of this spring’s Town Meeting. Town Moderator Marge Battin** was the featured speaker and did what she does so well: provided information and moderated and guided the discussion skillfully.

Topics covered were:

- A suggestion was made to **present Planning Board warrant articles at a TMMA information session**, prior to the beginning of Town Meeting, so that members can have more time to think about them and to gain more information about them, due to their complexity.
- It was expressed that it would have been helpful to have the “financial” committees provide information to Town Meeting about the **Community Preservation Act**, as an example. This led to a discussion and the observation that information about some articles did not get to committees soon enough so that they could provide a response/opinion to Town Meeting. Marge Battin described the information provided to “citizens” who write warrant articles that tells them to whom to give the information and whom to see, e.g., town boards or committees. She recommended that the major committees assume the responsibility to inform ad hoc committees under their purview what the

- appropriate process is to submit a warrant article. “Late breaking” information impedes the process of getting a warrant article into final form for Town Meeting.
- Several **boards and committees** felt that the **7:30 p.m. starting time of Town Meeting** sessions this year “hamstrung” their ability to meet and to cover their agendas relevant to Town Meeting, since they typically hold meetings on the same days that Town Meeting is in session. Town Meeting members will be polled at a future date, as to their preference for a starting time to the sessions.
 - **Physical Arrangements at Cary Hall:** Visibility of board members, lighting, acoustics, and ambient noise in the corridors were raised as problems. Improvements might include asking board members to stand when speaking, improve the sound system, post signs on the doors to ask members to keep them closed during sessions and to talk away from them so as not to disturb people in the hall, and to post signs in the refreshment area to remind people to speak quietly and hold conversations elsewhere. While the question of whether or not another venue might be more desirable to hold Town Meeting sessions, it was noted that holding sessions at Cary Hall has a certain significance because of the history of the hall and, on a practical level, its proximity to the Town Office Building makes it far easier for town officials to bring materials to and from Town Meeting. It was agreed that the **TMMA Executive Committee** (TMMA officers and precinct officers) will meet after a couple of Town Meeting sessions to review the “physical arrangements” and any “improvements” made at Cary Hall to mitigate the concerns.
 - **Process for Submitting Articles:** Marge Battin distributed a handout titled “Process for Submitting Citizen Articles for Annual Town Meeting Warrant” that was published in the December 9, 2004 issue of the Lexington Minuteman. Discussion on the topic included the possibility of posting articles on the town’s Web site (or TMMA’s?) to give Town Meeting members a chance to familiarize themselves with them. It was expressed that this would be particularly useful regarding articles associated with the Planning Board. A question was raised regarding the value of the Planning Board meeting with TMMA for an information/question-and-answer session prior to Town Meeting, or, at the very least, providing a “heads up” by the Planning Board to Town Meeting members to forthcoming articles. No decision was reached on the question or suggestion.
 - Marge Battin stressed and emphasized that the **“point of entry” for submitting an article to the warrant and motions and amendments** is the **executive secretary of the Board of Selectmen** in the Town Office Building. People must observe the “point of entry” and **not contact town counsel** to initiate the process.
 - **Length of time devoted to presentations:** Marge Battin recommended **five minutes maximum on each committee report** being presented under Article 2 so that we can get to debate. She is considering cutting back the presentation of **all articles to ten minutes, except for budget presentations – 20 minutes. Major committees** like the planning board **will be granted 15 minutes.** Although Marge Battin will monitor the standards of behavior of presenters and presentations, she wants to be careful not to interrupt the flow of a presentation.
 - Some **criticisms of Town Meeting sessions** (mostly by new members) included the time spent on the “tree” article; those members who seem to speak on every

- topic; hearing embarrassing questions asked; and the tone of voice of some speakers. No true conclusions or resolutions were reached, but Mrs. Battin did share her concern about not imposing the moderator's taste on a presentation.
- Are “**movies**” an appropriate medium and format to present information about an article? It was suggested by the speaker that they are not an appropriate medium for Town Meeting. Mrs. Battin opined that we might need to look at the constitutionality of preventing “movies” being used in presentations at Town Meeting.
 - What is the most **efficient and effective way to present capital items** to Town Meeting? Should they be lumped together or split in presentations? No resolution was reached.
 - **Communication and Continuity:** It was expressed that there is a need to “stitch together” what goes on/does not happen over the years in the town, i.e., track or report what did happen or what did not happen, as an aftermath of Town Meeting actions. Perhaps the town manager's office could prepare such information so that Town Meeting would be able to sense “continuity” and know clearer how obligations and votes on articles were implemented and how they affected the town.
 - Regarding a comment expressing a preference to **delay a vote on Article 2 reports** until they are discussed, it was clarified that by voting to “accept” the reports, it is only the physical reports themselves, not their content or merit, that we are voting to accept.

The publication **Town Meeting in Lexington** is in need of revision. It is a handbook designed to familiarize new Town Meeting members with the workings of Town Meeting and can also serve as a reference for all participants in Lexington government including Town officials, committee members, and citizens. The League of Women Voters (LWV), represented by Margaret Counts-Klebe, volunteered to revise the booklet. The cost of publishing the original handbook was borne by LWV and TMMA. One hundred (100) copies will be produced and will cost approximately \$250, half to be paid by LWV and half by TMMA. It was voted to pay for half of the cost of the project (approximately \$125.).

Treasurer's Report (Andy Friedlich): As of April 30, 2005, balance on hand is **\$4,283.47**.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m., in the midst of a torrential rainstorm!

Respectfully submitted,

David Horton, Acting Clerk

(Attachment: TMMA MINUTES)