

TMMA Executive Committee Meeting
Minutes for December 11, 2024
Virtual Meeting (via Zoom)

Attendees:	Precinct	Attendees:	Precinct
Bridger McGaw	6 TMMA Chair	Joyce Murphy	5
Noah Michelson	1 TMMA Treasurer	Marc St. Louis	5
Brielle Meade	8 TMMA Clerk	Innessa Manning*	6
Vicki Blier	9 TMMA List Moderator	Andrea Fribush*	6
Bob Avallone	8 TMMA Website Manager	Meghana Khanolkar*	7
Valerie Overton*	1	Benjamin Lees*	7
Tanya Gisolfi-McCready*	1	Heidi Pasternak*	8
Laura Swain*	2	Betty Gau*	8
Bronte Abraham*	3	Alicia Morris*	9
Frank Smith*	3	Vineeta Kumar	9
Norman Cohen	3	Diane Donovan	9
Ruth Thomas*	4	Deborah Brown	At large
Wendy Manz*	4	Jonas Miller, Director of Communications	
Andy Friedlich*	5		

*Denotes Precinct Officers

The Chair Bridger McGaw called the meeting to order at 7:34pm as quorum was confirmed.

- I. **Welcome and Opening** - Bridger McGaw opened the meeting and asked members to update their Zoom name to include their precinct number. He noted our next meeting would be January 15, 2025.

- II. **Officer Reports and Updates**

Clerk's Report—Brielle Meade submitted the draft minutes for the October meetings to the group for review and approval over email. Tanya Gisolfi-McCready was inadvertently left off the attendee list and was added after the minutes were distributed. The October minutes were unanimously approved as edited.

Treasurer's Report—Noah Michelson reported no financial activity since the last report. Most of our annual expenditures are in March and April so some activity will be forthcoming in 2025.

Website Manager's Report— Bob Avallone updated the Town Meeting member spreadsheet on the website with a few new members.

Email List Moderator's Report—Vicki Blier and Bob Avallone provided an update on the list migration to Groups.io.

- Vicki sent a final message to all members on both lists, and after she confirms everyone is receiving the new group messages, the transition will be completed.
- Bob set up subgroups in Groups.io to replace the precinct alias email lists. For the public to contact TMMs, they can send a single email to the precinct subgroup, and this should be seamless (it works the same way as before). One issue is that a

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moderator/admin needs to approve every message that comes in from the public for these precinct groups. Bob and Vicki will team up to approve all messages coming in.

- Vicki Blier plans to review the membership and remove folks that should no longer be in the group shortly.

Vicki and Bob also updated the group on public requests on the Lexington List regarding the Google Group archives and availability of messages in the future. The plan is currently that the Google Group will be archived and be available online to the public as long as Google allows.

- Benjamin Lees recalled he asked if the archives from Google Group could be imported to the Groups.io account last meeting, and if this is possible, we should check into it depending on effort and cost.
- Vicki checked and this is a feature we can pay Groups.io for, for potentially a couple hundred dollars.
- Heidi Pasternak said she read through the posts about this, and that the issue may be that Town Meeting doesn't feel as transparent as it could be to folks. She believes that whatever we can do to be more transparent is in TMMA's best interest. If it costs say \$200 to import the archives, then we should do it.
- Noah Michelson asked if we could turn off posting for all but the admin so we can continue to post once a month to keep the group "live" so Google does not remove it completely.
- Bob agrees that since people can save messages from the group that they want, and that since Google will likely give a warning if they shut it down, that this is not really an issue. We can download all the messages once we get a warning about losing our data if needed.
- No one believes TMMA has any legal reasons to keep this archive. This is not a primary source of information. Town Meeting is explicitly exempt from the open meeting law.
- Meg Khanolkar wondered if besides the public request, it would be helpful for Town Meeting members to have this information too.
- Laura Swain explained that, as an example, the state has a 7-year requirement for holding on to public records. She thinks the piece that is most useful to the public would be how TMMs voted, which is available from the Town.
- Bridger wrapped up – we will look into how much it would cost to import the Google archives into Groups.io, and we can take the next few months to decide what the next steps are pending that information.

III. Project Updates

- TMMA Sponsoring a Lex250 Essay Contest– Bridger McGaw invited Deepika Sawhney to talk about an essay/poetry competition she has been running for the past few years to gauge TMMA's interest in taking a role sponsoring the competition going forward. Deepika has been supporting this contest for the last two years with the help of the LHS Writing

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Club and LHS Poetry Club. Any student who studies here in Lexington can submit an entry. The prompt is "My truth is..." A number of TMMs have volunteered to judge, including Vickie Blier, Bridger McGaw, and Valerie Overton. There is an award ceremony, and every child's submission gets feedback. Deepika believes that TMMA may be a great place for this competition to be sponsored from going forward. It would be a great way for TMMs to connect with students in Lexington. Vicki and Bridger talked about their experience being involved in this effort. Bridger would like us to think about how we influence kids in town about governance, public engagement, and the public process and this might be a good fit for us to sponsor and engage with youth. He will send the link to the submissions from last year for folks to check out. Deepika also explained that this is not a huge lift, it lasts only about a month. Bridger asked folks to email him and Deepika if they are interested in more information.

- Feedback from members on Special Town Meeting (STM) 2024 – Bridger McGaw asked all precinct officers to collect feedback on STM from their precinct members, and to share any novel suggestions with the group.
- Bylaw Review Working Group – Bridger McGaw provided details of the working group discussions surrounding five issues of importance.
 - **Changing the start time of Annual Town Meeting and STM.** They discussed the pros and cons of moving the meeting time to 7pm. They acknowledged that the option of remote participation enhances flexibility. The group recommends that TM start at 7pm, and no new issues start after 10pm without a formal vote of 2/3 of members.
 - Alicia Morris mentioned that since joining TM, most meetings have ended around 10:30pm. She wondered if this change would just add half an hour at the beginning or is asking for something more.
 - Bob Avallone was concerned that folks may have a hard time getting to TM by 7pm if they work out of the house. He also wonders how this is different than how Deborah does this now.
 - Laura had similar concerns as Bob and also thought we already needed a vote to have a topic come up after 10pm.
 - Bronte Abraham mentioned that Deborah Brown does a great job managing this and shifting things around so that the votes after 10pm are very fast. She would not want to take control away from Deborah so we are stuck going for extra days.
 - Andrea Fribush said she remembered someone suggesting that the video presentations not being shown to save time. She thinks since we are supposed to come prepared to TM, that this would be a good idea.
 - Noah Michelson agreed that the way the meeting is currently run, it's normal practice to have shorter topics taken up later, and that requiring a vote to take up topics after 10pm may actually increase the time needed for some of the smaller, faster votes, where we would now need a vote to proceed before the actual vote.

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- Betty Gau also wondered if the videos needed to be shown as they seem very redundant. She also appreciated that with the hybrid option you can participate from home if you can't make it by 7pm.
- Vicki Blier pointed out that the Town Moderator has absolute control and there is nothing that we can decide here that can change the order of how she feels she wants to put things. She suggested we do a poll of all members instead of making a decision ourselves.
- Alicia Morris commented that although the videos may be redundant, it was clear to her that many TMMs had not watched the videos ahead of time so they are necessary.
- Andy Friedlich said in terms of the videos, hopefully TMMs have already seen them, but they are also played for the public's benefit. He would like to ask other boards and committees to get their input on start times as well.
- Wendy Manz thinks trying an earlier start time and then polling membership would be a good idea.
- Deborah Brown mentioned that they tried a 7pm start time in the past, and there was pushback from the Select Board, who were often still meeting at that time. The finance committees had related issues, when their meeting before TM was held remotely, and they expressed some concern about finishing their meeting and then getting to the hall to meet in person. She suggests checking in with these folks. She also mentioned that the start time of the first night of TM is up to the Select Board, not her or this group. She also reminded the group that at any time someone can stand up with a point of order and ask for a motion to adjourn if it is getting late.
- **Roberts Rules versus Town Meeting Time:** the working group discussed that references in the bylaws to Roberts Rules are not accurate and should be updated to Town Meeting Time. They will ask Cary Library about having copies on hand for reference.
 - Deborah Brown mentioned that a new updated version is being released shortly so if Cary or TMMA plans to acquire more copies, we should wait until the new release.
- **"Calling the Question":** the working group discussed whether there should be a majority or a 2/3 requirement for this vote, issues with transparency and allowing the public to speak, and if there should be a minimum time requirement for debate before the motion is allowed.
 - Deborah Brown mentioned that the majority threshold is in our bylaws. In many other communities it is a 2/3 requirement, and if we want to do that, it will be a bylaw change. It is tradition in Lexington to get in a line to call the question; in some other communities, you can just stand up in place and yell out.
 - Bob Avallone believes majority is good enough and that with 2/3 it could hold up debate indefinitely.
 - Heidi Pasternak mentioned she has been next in line to speak when someone calls the question, and it doesn't feel great to be about to speak and be cut off.

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- Betty Gau added that with a majority vote, there could still be a large group of people that haven't made a decision yet and want to hear more debate, so requiring 2/3 would give us more confidence that most of the people in the room are ready to vote and have heard enough.
 - Noah Michelson noted that he thinks the current practice is fine. He's not necessarily opposed to changing to 2/3, but as people have said, every time the question is called, there is generally an overwhelming vote after so this is really simply about time management and not people needing to hear more to make a decision.
 - Andy Friedlich agreed with Noah. The working group saw a range of viewpoints, and he likes the middle of the road leaving the process as is, including having to get in line to call the question. He does think a 2/3 requirement could be helpful.
 - Bridger appreciates everyone going through this exercise, and also expressed appreciation to Deborah for participating in our discussion. He is going to compile the notes and then will schedule some time to further talk about it.
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- TMMA Patriots Day Parade/Float plan – Bridger McGaw informed the group there will be no morning parade this year (only the afternoon parade). He put in an application to save a place for TMMA. If we would like to march in the parade, someone needs to volunteer to plan this - reach out to Bridger if you would like to be involved.
 - New Member Orientation Working Group update –Noah Michelson gave a quick update on two of the group's efforts: ideas about implementing a mentorship program and updating the educational materials we provide to new members. He would like the go-ahead from the executive committee to take on updates to the "Town Meeting in Lexington" document. The working group proposes making technical and factual updates, hybrid/virtual participation updates, and structural and formatting changes in the document. Bridger McGaw made a motion to let the working group continue their effort; it was seconded and approved. The working group will proceed with editing the document and will bring a revised draft back to this committee in late January/February.

Regarding the mentorship program, Vicki Blier circulated a draft document with more details. Folks should review the document and send feedback to Vicki. She can bring a revised draft back to this committee in January that incorporates everyone's opinion.

- TMMA Connect! Ice Cream Social – Bridger McGaw confirmed this event is in the works, and will be sometime right after the election in March where we can all get together. Vicki Blier noted that she led this effort last year but she cannot lead this time around. Anyone interested in spearheading the planning should reach out to Bridger, Vicki, and Betty Gau.

IV. New Topics

Folks can reach out to Bridger McGaw with ideas at any time if they have any additional topics to add to future agendas.

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 pm. The next Meeting will be on January 15, 2025, at 7:30 PM conducted online via Zoom.