

TMMA Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes for January 13, 2021

Virtual Meeting (via Zoom)

Attendees:	Precinct	Attendees:	Precinct
Ben Moroze*	7	TMMA Chair	Andy Friedlich*
Marc Saint Louis	5	TMMA Vice-Chair	Anil Ahuja*
Vineeta Kumar*	3	TMMA Treasurer	John Zhao
Brielle Meade	8	TMMA Clerk	Vinita Verma*
Vicki Blier	9	TMMA List Moderator	Bridger McGaw*
Bob Avallone	8	TMMA Webmaster	Innessa Manning*
Valerie Overton*	1		Fred Johnson
Hongbin Luo*	1		Tina McBride*
Larry Freeman*	1		Taylor Singh
Avram Baskin*	2		Patricia Costello
Ingrid Klimoff*	2		Yu Wu*
David Kaufman*	3		Jim Osten*
Steve Heinrich*	3		Betty Gau*
Delanot Bastien	3		Tom Shiple*
Ruth Thomas*	4		Suzanne Lau*
Nyles Barnert*	4		Deborah Brown
			at large

*denotes Precinct Officers

The Chair Ben Moroze called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM as quorum was confirmed.

- I. Discussion with Town Moderator – Deborah Brown joined the meeting for thoughtful discussion about how virtual Town Meeting worked and what we can expect for this year's Town Meeting.
 - Annual Town Meeting coming up in March: Deborah has formally requested that Annual Town Meeting be held remotely. Andy Friedlich wondered if Lexington needs to enact this with the legislature to confirm that TM can occur virtually again; Deborah explained that as long as the executive order allowing virtual meetings remains in place, there is nothing additional Lexington needs to do for this upcoming Town Meeting.
 - Thoughts on execution of virtual Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting 2020-1, -2, and -3: There were many comments that virtual TM was executed excellently and that the Town staff, Deborah, Joe Pato, and everyone else involved did a great job making this work. The changes Joe Pato was able to implement between the summer meetings and fall meetings made the process even smoother. Deborah highlighted that the amount of time that Town staff put in and the work they did with folks between sessions, on the helpline, and generally throughout TM was really impressive. The group thought the meetings were efficient and were impressed that participation was higher than in a typical year.
 - Thoughts on potential continuation of virtual participation option in the future: this discussion was prefaced by Deborah Brown that possible continuation of virtual participation in TM after the executive order allowing it expires would be dependent on additional legislative action by Lexington to request approval. In general, the group agreed there could be many benefits to allowing both virtual and in-person participation (a hybrid model) at TM but that overall, in-person participation is superior if folks are able. Bob Avallone would prefer in-person TM in the future; Avram Baskin agreed, but also mentioned that he would

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have been unable to attend in person this past fall due to a medical issue, so the virtual option was helpful. Vicki Blier pointed out that the ease of participating remotely may erode attendance in the long run. She thinks if allowed at all, permission to attend virtually should be limited to people with a legitimate reason (hospitalization, mobility issue, other need for accommodation). Betty Gau pointed out a virtual option would provide more flexibility for TM members with young children to attend and participate, and that it might be worth it to try a hybrid model for a trial period. Tom Shipley was in favor of a hybrid model for a trial period, and David Kaufman and Steve Heinrich expressed support for a hybrid model indefinitely as well. Steve said he did not believe the virtual option should be restricted but does agree with Vicki that it would not be good to get to a point where everyone always participates virtually and we miss meaningful face-to-face interactions. Nyles Barnert pointed out that an issue with virtual TM was that we did not get to hear citizens and so he prefers in-person only. Valerie Overton highlighted that a hybrid model would increase inclusiveness for people who need accommodations to participate, allowing people who are ill, those with young children, with disabilities, those who are traveling, etc. to join, and that having a remote option certainly increases diversity, equity, and inclusion. Vicki posited that a hybrid model may create a stratified Town Meeting – with those who show up in person and those who do not have different experiences and opinions. She pointed out that having discussions or arguments face-to-face can be very different than doing so with a faceless person on a computer screen. Avram agreed with Vicki and wondered if important side discussions/caucusing occurs during in-person TM normally; Vicki and Andy Friedlich answered generally no, but there certainly are clarifications and other communication that occur in person. Andy expressed preference for in-person attendance but agreed with Valerie concerning people with disabilities or who need other accommodations. Bridger McGraw pointed out that in-person participation allows tone and nuances to shine through and that virtual presentations lose that and we cannot necessarily see the passion, tone, or meaning as intended by presenters. However, he also sees a lot of opportunity with a hybrid model and thinks we should explore it and be willing to test out something new. Hongbin Luo mentioned virtual meetings are a trend that will continue regardless and so we may need or want to continue keeping up with the technology as we move forward.

- **Suggestions for improving the upcoming virtual ATM:**

- i. **Turn on chat feature.** Bridger McGraw suggested that turning on the chat feature in Zoom could be helpful. Deborah explained that it was turned off because many people were chatting to her and it was impossible for her to monitor the questions coming in while conducting the meeting. Vinita Verma suggested that a staff member could monitor the chat and answer questions or direct to the appropriate person. Deborah will take this information into consideration.
- ii. **Requiring amendments ahead of time.** Deborah is going to implement a strict deadline for submitting amendments ahead of time. She said that Kelly Axtell is doing an amazing job wrangling article sponsors to get their presentations and documents finalized on time so everyone has access to all information early, and this will allow folks to think about motions to amend early as well. Bob Avallone pointed out sometimes amendments arise in the middle of discussions; Deborah knows of course any rule will have exceptions and she will have a mechanism for overriding any rule she comes up with.

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- iii. **Better use of TMMA information sessions prior to TM.** Bridger McGraw suggested that there be more collaboration and meetings or other sharing of information prior to TM so that everyone is more prepared. The group agreed we could leverage the TMMA information sessions better going forward.

Deborah requests the folks contact her with any additional thoughts or suggestions.

- **Feedback from incumbents who decided not to run for re-election:** Deborah wondered if incumbents' decisions not to run for re-election had anything to do with the virtual format of Town Meeting this year. Tom Shiple does not believe that to be the case for the Precinct 9 incumbent not running. Steve Heinrich heard from one incumbent not running that they missed the interaction one usually gets with fellow neighbors at TM and this may have contributed to their decision not to run. Deborah asked that we let her know if we hear from other incumbents on this issue.
 - **Other thoughts and questions:** Avram Baskin wondered if virtual meetings would be possible without Joe Pato; Deborah answered that it would be, but it would be very expensive. Ben Moroze asked if any other towns did similar virtual meetings; Deborah knew that Arlington engaged Joe Pato to run a similar format meeting for their town, and that Belmont also had a virtual TM but with different technology. Andy Friedlich mentioned he really missed the opening ceremony for TM and was wondering if there could be a video of a past opening ceremony or other way to recreate the experience virtually.
- II. Chair's Report—Ben informed the group that he will not be running again for Town Meeting, and so next month's TMMA Executive Committee meeting will be his last. For the Annual meeting and the information sessions, Marc Saint Louis should be able to take over as Vice Chair.
- III. Clerk's Report—Brielle Meade submitted the Draft Minutes for the December 9, 2020 meeting for approval. After corrections to one section, the minutes were unanimously approved.
- IV. Treasurer's Report—Vineeta Kumar reported that there was one new expense for TMMA website hosting and an additional \$190 TMMA dues collected. Sixty-four percent of TMMA members (121 out of 189 precinct members) paid dues this year. Andy Friedlich informed Vineeta that he has \$90 from his precinct to give to her to add to the total. The current balance is \$2,937.43. The Treasurer's Report (found on page 5 below) was moved, seconded, and unanimously accepted. Vinita Verma mentioned that some of her precinct members asked her why TMMA is collecting dues at all since there are reduced expenses due to virtual TM. Vicki Blier asked that Vineeta Kumar do an expense projection so we could entertain reducing dues to \$5 if expenses are to be low enough to allow that. Vineeta agreed and asked the group if there is a policy for how much money TMMA should keep in reserves. Bridger suggested we could use the extra funds to mobilize member engagement instead of reducing dues. Ben proposed we add discussion of a reserves policy and dues amount to next meeting's agenda.
- V. Webmaster Report—Bob Avallone stated that he added some links to TM candidate lists but that otherwise there is nothing to report for the website.

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- VI. Email List Moderator Report—Vicki Blier informed the group she is not going to propose a policy change for allowing candidate election season posting, but that we need to update the List policy bullet regarding campaign announcements to clarify the policy regarding local and municipal campaigns. After a group discussion, the group proposed to replace “Do not post campaign announcements or partisan messages regarding state and federal campaigns” with “Do not post local, state or federal campaign announcements or candidate advocacy statements.” Andy Friedlich made a motion to accept this change; the motion was seconded and approved unanimously. Vicki also mentioned that she will be adding the List policy change regarding posting privileges for originators of citizen’s articles to the AUP.
- VII. Annual Town Meeting 2021 Planning –
 - Andy Friedlich was in contact with Jennifer Hewitt regarding printing of the Brown Book, and the Town is going to email all TM members to determine who would like a printed copy. Andy and Brielle Meade will work together to update the TMMA list of paper versus electronic preferences for the remaining Town Meeting materials that are not printed by the Town.
 - Andy suggested he and Ben work together on a Google document ready to facilitate volunteer sign up for article write-ups for the TMMA Warrant Information Book.
- VIII. Other Business—Tom Shiple and Vicki Blier provided an update on their outreach to Precinct 9 regarding increasing communication with constituents. They sent out a survey asking what platform people would prefer, and more than half of the members responded indicating there is a lot of interest in their plans.
- IX. Meeting was adjourned at 9:24 PM. Next Meeting will be on February 10, 2021 at 7:30 PM conducted online via Zoom.

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TMMA			
Treasurer's report			
YTD 01/08/2021			
Cash Balance - beginning (9/30/2020)			\$2,895.18
Income			
TMMA Dues	\$1,165.00		
Total Income	\$1,355.00		
Expenses			
Annual Town Meeting			
Printing – Info book	\$857.00		
Printing – new TMM packet	\$121.00		
Special Town Meeting			
Printing – Info book STM-2 and STM-3	\$116.00		
TMMA Website hosting fee	\$218.75		
Total Expenses		\$1,312.75	
Income less expenses			\$42.25
Cash Balance - ending (01/08/2021)			\$2,937.43

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TMMA Dues			
As of 1/8/2021			
Precinct	Paid Member Count	Amount	Members pending payment
At Large Members	2	\$35	
Precinct 1	11	\$110	10
Precinct 2	9	\$100	12
Precinct 3	15	\$150	6
Precinct 4	14	\$160	7
Precinct 5	11	\$110	10
Precinct 6	13	\$190	8
Precinct 7	15	\$150	6
Precinct 8	17	\$190	4
Precinct 9	16	\$160	5
TOTAL (excluding At Large)	121	\$1,355	68
% of members who paid	64.02%		

Cash	\$150
Paypal	\$610
Check	\$595
TOTAL	\$1,355