

Town Meeting Review Committee  
Committee Report and Recommendations

Draft #1, April 2024

**Charge and Members**

The Town Meeting Review Committee (TMRC) is pleased to submit this report and recommendations to the Selectboard of the Town of South Hadley. The charge of the committee is defined by Town Bylaw 7-19:

“A Town Meeting Review Committee shall be appointed every five years beginning in 2015. Said committee shall include the Town Moderator, one representative each from the Selectboard, School Committee, Appropriations Committee, Planning Board, three Town Meeting members and up to four registered voters who are not Town Meeting members to be appointed by the Selectboard. Said committee shall report its findings and recommendations regarding ways and means to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of Town Meeting to the Selectboard within six months of its appointment or such further time as the Selectboard may grant.”

The most recent previous report of the TMRC was submitted to the Selectboard in 2016.

Members of the TMRC:

- John Hine, Town Moderator (chair)
- Jim Everett, Appropriations Representative
- Michael T. Davis, Planning Board Representative
- Larry Dixon, School Committee Representative
- Nicole Casolari, Selectboard Representative
- Ira Brezinsky, Town Meeting Member
- Carlene Hamlin, Town Meeting Member (vice-chair)
- Rudy Ternbach, Town Meeting Member
- David Solender, Non-Town Meeting Member Registered Voter
- Meghan Bristol, Non-Town Meeting Member Registered Voter
- Denise Presley, Non-Town Meeting Member Registered Voter (resigned 10/2023)

## **Schedule and Process**

The TMRC has met nineteen times, beginning in July 2023 with a concluding meeting on May 2, 2024. The extended life of the committee reflects a concerted effort to gather information as the basis for this report from Town Meeting Members regarding their understanding of Town Meeting, their perception of the effectiveness of its processes, and their awareness of their roles and responsibilities as representatives of their precinct constituents. We composed a twenty-four-question survey, distributed to the 120 Town Meeting Members in October 2023: the responses are attached to this report as Appendix A. While less than half of Town Meeting Members returned the survey (56 responses or 46%), their answers have been important in this committee's formulation of the recommendations below. In general, satisfaction with the size, format, effectiveness, efficiency, and information about Town Meeting was strong at around 70-75%. Our recommendations reflect ideas and incorporate comments regarding communication with Town Meeting Members, the frequency of Town Meeting, its location, and the budget approval process.

To supplement the Town Meeting Member survey, the TMRC formulated a two-question survey to take the pulse of the citizens of South Hadley regarding whether they feel informed about Town Meeting and their opinion about the effectiveness and efficiency of the current form of Town Meeting. To reach as broad a section of the population as possible, members of the TMRC participated in a Know Your Town meeting in February 2024, surveyed the public at multiple venues and events, and offered the questionnaire at the polls on election day in March 2024. A total of 847 responses were collected: the survey and data are attached to this report as Appendix B. It indicated that a significant percentage of the public felt poorly or only somewhat informed about Town Meeting and that many respondents did not know whether Town Meeting was functioning effectively and efficiently. We see this as, in part, a problem of clear and timely communication and easy access to information regarding Town government, the work of its boards and committees, and visibility of projects and priorities. Our recommendations aim to strengthen the means of communication between government and the public.

## **Recommendations**

The Town Meeting Review Committee's recommendations are grouped under four headings:

1. Town Meeting Members: Information
2. Town Meeting Members: Accountability

3. Town Meeting
4. Bylaws

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Town Meeting Members: Information and Communication**

- a. The TMRC recommends that Town Meeting Members be provided with comprehensive and concrete information that will enhance the onboarding process for newly elected Members and ensure that continuing Members are conversant with a consistent set of procedures and regulations.
- b. We recommend two vehicles to facilitate this goal: first the creation of a Handbook for Town Meeting Members; second, the inclusion of a visible and well-organized site on the Town of South Hadley website that offers the information of the Handbook in electronic form as well as material relevant to the Town Meeting agenda.

The Handbook and website should include: the roles and responsibilities of Town Meeting Members; the conduct of a Town Meeting; a description of the process by which Warrants are created for and presented at Town Meeting; the process by which Town Meeting Members as well as members of the public can petition to add an article to the Warrant; the roles and purview of committees that participate in Town Meeting; publication of the specific act(s) of the legislature that pertain to South Hadley Town Meeting as well as bylaws relevant to Town Meeting.

To this end, the TMRC recommends the formation of an advisory committee(s) that will assist in the organization and maintenance of a page on the Town's website that will include the Handbook as well as the relevant complementary information that pertains to Town Meeting.

- c. To provide information to Town Meeting Members and the public in a timely fashion, the TMRC recommends the creation of a comprehensive calendar outlining key dates related to Town Meeting. The calendar should be published at regular intervals throughout the year.
- d. We encourage more communication, for example, through email "pushes", regarding committee meetings and items that would explain Town Meeting Warrants to Town Meeting Members (and the public). Participation of department heads in Appropriations

Committee budget meetings would strengthen contact with Town Meeting Members surrounding the annual budget.

## **2. Town Meeting Members: Accountability**

- a. To strengthen the connections between Town Meeting Members and their constituents, the TMRC recommends that Town Meeting Members voluntarily publish their email addresses on the Town Meeting website and use other media to make their contact information available to their constituents. Town Meeting Members might consider forming a precinct group to serve as a forum for discussion with precinct residents and explanation of Town Meeting Warrants.
- b. The TMRC recommends that attendance records of Town Meeting Members at Town Meeting be made public and posted on the Town Meeting page of the website. As seen in Appendix C, attendance at Special Town Meetings typically ranges from 2/3 to 3/4 of Town Meeting Members and is consistently lower than attendance at the annual Town Meeting.
- c. We recommend that incumbent Town Meeting Members be required to gather a minimum of ten signatures when seeking re-election. Sending back a postcard is not sufficient.

## **3. Town Meeting**

- a. The TMRC recommends that an earnest exploration of alternative locations to the auditorium of SHHS be undertaken for Town Meeting(s). The physical arrangement of the meeting space should also be considered to enable meaningful discussion and a face-to-face interactive exchange of information and opinions.
- b. A pre-selected date for a fall (Special) Town Meeting should be included as part of the annual scheduling process. This recommendation (for example, the second Wednesday in November) does not mandate a meeting but encourages a date be reserved in order to minimize conflicts that impact Town Meeting Member attendance. In the Member survey, approximately 70% of Town Meeting Members recommended that Town Meeting be held more than once a year.
- c. The TMRC recommends that serious consideration be given to changing the presentation of the budget to Town Meeting. Currently, the budget is presented on the warrant as a single unwieldy article. Alternatives should be explored that separate the budget into multiple articles, for example, groups of related departments.

#### 4. Bylaws

- a. The Town Meeting Review Committee recommends that a study be undertaken for a charter that details the roles and responsibilities of Town Meeting Members, the policies and procedure of Town Meeting, and clarifies the relationship between the Town's executive and legislative branches.
- b. The Town Meeting Review Committee bylaw (7-19) should be amended to require that that the reports of this committee are sent to both the Selectboard and Town Meeting.
- c. The Town Meeting Review Committee recommends that a committee be formed with the charge of reviewing Town Bylaws to ensure that there are no conflicts among Town Bylaws and/or between Town Bylaws and Mass General Laws or other state regulations.
- d. The Selectboard should report annually to Town Meeting about progress on the implementation of TMRC recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

John Hine, chair  
Carlene Hamlin, vice-chair  
Ira Brezinsky  
Meghan Bristol  
Nicole Casolari  
Michael T. Davis  
Larry Dixon  
Jim Everett  
David Solender  
Rudy Ternbach

Appendixes.

A: Town Meeting Member survey (10/2023)  
B: TMRC Public survey results (3/2024)  
C: Town Meeting attendance 2013-2023

## **Town Meeting Review Committee Initial Survey Results (As of 10/22/2023)**

56 Responses from:

Jeff Cyr  
Chelsea Beaudry  
Natasha Matos  
Rudy Ternbach  
Eric Friesner  
Thomas Lake  
Sarah Furtak  
Anthony Pluta  
Robin Wagner  
Mitchell Resnick  
Robert Judge  
Paul Dobosh  
Andrea Miles  
Leonard Finkowski  
Bill DeLuca  
Michael Davis  
Marie Rohan  
Chevy (M P Chevrette)  
Lucia Foley

Vohl Hamilton, Joan  
Daniel Faille  
Michelle Theroux  
Renee Sweeney  
Ken Picotte  
Bob Berwick  
Lori Souder  
Jacqueline Dupre  
Nate Therien  
Carlene Hamlin  
Susan Newton  
Steve Hamlin  
Cynthia Pyle  
Margaret Jodoin  
Martha Terry  
Linda Young  
Thomas Terry  
Deborah Boehner  
Joanna Brown

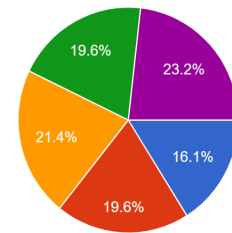
Nicole Casolari  
Marilyn Ishler  
Michael Wozniak  
Susan Kelsey  
Charles Miles  
David King  
Richard Constant  
Neva Tolopko  
Carol Constant  
Hector Lomelin  
Gena Lomelin  
Regina Hall  
Julie Gentile  
Jon Camp  
Kathleen Davis  
Mark Adams  
Kevin Taugher  
Preston Smith  
Amy Foley

How many years have you served as a Town Meeting member?

10
4
6 (I think)
10 1/2
5
4
1
15
5
30+
20
4
6
About 10
3
0
6 year
7
7
This is my first.
10
2
6 (I think)
1 town meeting
14
1 year
10 years
5
30 years
5.5
not sure but at least 10+ years
10 or 11 years
almost 30 years
approximately 10; not sure
I think 53 or 54 years. Not sure which year I started.
30
6 years
Four
6

What precinct do you currently serve?

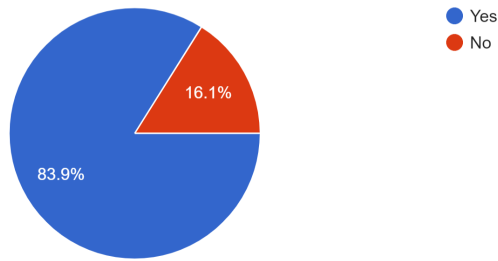
56 responses



- A
- B
- C
- D
- E

In your opinion is Town Meeting the right size?

56 responses



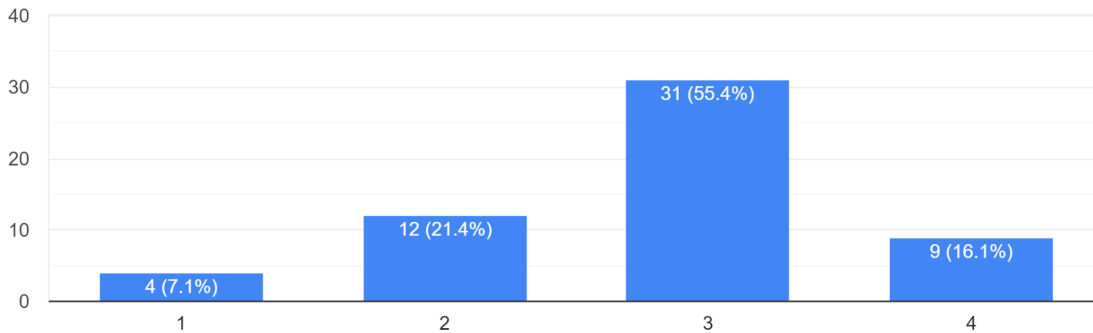
Answer	Reasoning
No	I would hope more people would be involved
No	Town Meeting is cumbersome, undisciplined, and disorganized in significant part because of its large size.
No	It seems too large.
No	Answered no-not sure if all parts of town have equal representation and that all populations in town have equal voice, or that members are well prepared for decision making
No	I think it is too large.
No	It would be beneficial to get a broader perspective. Right now I think most people who are members have been deeply entrenched in town government for a long, long time.
No	Because some precincts continue to have vacant seats on the ballot at every annual election.
No	Currently it's a small amount of people representing a large community; many don't show up for meetings unless they have a personal agenda item.
No	I think it could be reduced in size. I believe fewer members are attending the meetings.
No	There always seems to be vacancies for certain precincts, poor attendance, and non-campaigned write-ins. I would be curious to see how many of our current TMM were write in candidates and with how many votes they won.
Yes	Appropriate for 17000 residents
Yes	There are enough members in each precinct to be able to reach folks in different neighborhoods and different communities within the precinct. With too many more, I am not sure everyone who wants to would have ample time to speak.
Yes	It is a representative number for the five precincts.
Yes	I don't have a solid reason. It would be nice to know the size of other TM sizes.
Yes	Large enough to be representative but not so large as to be unwieldy.
Yes	So far so good from the 2 meetings I've participated in as a Member
Yes	usually, out of 100 members you get a quorum every time.
Yes	I don't think SH has the population to justify more members. Looking at census data and comparing to 2 other sample towns: Auburn, MA has just a little less population than SH with the same number of precincts and members. Natick, on the other hand, has almost exactly double the population of SH and has 10 precincts, but only 180 members. I don't think we should reduce the size of town meeting, either, as that would feel like taking away citizen representation and participation. The population of SH hasn't increased in any significant way over the years. Were the population to explode, this certainly should be

	revisited.
Yes	The number of members allows wide views to be heard and discourages an organized minority to unduly affect town policies.
Yes	It's big enough to be representative but not unwieldy
Yes	I believe the number, along with the precinct divisions, allows the opportunity for robust representation.
Yes	Good representation for each precinct
Yes	Seems like reasonable discussion is able to occur while not being too exclusive to people who would like to participate.
Yes	Local tradition.
Yes	Large enough to be representative without being unwieldy
Yes	There are a variety of opinions represented within the constituents of each district. A large, representative group of town meeting members, voted in by precinct members, allows all constituents to be represented.
Yes	Large enough to have a representative body, small enough that conversation is timely
Yes	I don't believe the number or percentage of representation is an issue.
Yes	If it gets much larger, I think it'd be difficult to conduct the business (with time for discussion) in a timely fashion.
Yes	There is adequate representation and sharing of viewpoints
Yes	It allows for different views to be heard...if smaller, then it may limit voices
Yes	Large enough to be representative, small enough for deliberation.
Yes	25 members per precinct, with the possibility (although improbable) of 8 new members per precinct per year, likely offers good representation for our town. Of course, I'm uncertain about the size of each precinct, so some precincts may be over-represented or under-represented among the 120 members, but trying to elect members proportional to precinct size would likely be unwieldy (plus, the precincts are oddly-enough drawn that there's unlikely to be lots of homogeneity with each precinct). 120 Town Meeting members provides enough diversity to ensure informed debate but not so many members that the logistics of Town Meeting are doable.
Yes	Members show up for meetings and quorums are met. Discussions seem to reflect both sides of various issues so there is representation. If the town's population grows significantly, there might be an argument for increasing the size of TM to reflect that.
Yes	Anything larger would be too cumbersome.
Yes	The 120 means a good cross representation of our five precincts and with many more younger people filling the ranks, South Hadley is being well served. A fewer number would risk that.
Yes	Not too large, but large enough to permit a diverse set of members
Yes	I have felt comfortable with the size of meeting, but I have not thought about the pros and cons of the membership's size. I'd be interested in hearing the # of meeting members being discussed.
Yes	TM is large enough to provide 8 members per precinct. This is a good representative ratio.
Yes	Enough for precinct representation and not too many that there is apathy re: attendance
Yes	It provides for a good representation of the town
Yes	I think there is enough representation in each district for the general public's voices to be heard.
Yes	If town meeting were much larger meetings would become unmanageable
Yes	Perhaps too large.
Yes	We have the right size to insure a quorum

Yes	Seems to pick up multiple view points and is capable of making decisions.
Yes	It's the right size if we have no difficulty getting a quorum and if it is not too difficult to get elected.
Yes	Seems to be functioning well with the issues being how TM votes don't have significant influence over what is put before them
Yes	Adequate amount of members from each Precinct to provide representation.
Yes	Adequate number of members to provide input
Yes	As long as precincts are represented equally, it is the right size
Yes	It is just right, not too large or too small
Yes	We seem able to get the job done with little difficulty,
Yes	As our population continues to grow and economic needs and priorities of the town diversify, there will be a need to ensure that there remains a pathway for their interests and issues to be aired.
Yes	Representative town meeting is appropriate for our town. The current number of members per precinct seems to be sustainable.
Yes	It still small enough for people to deliberate during the meetings.
Yes	To be honest, I struggled with this answer. I feel I am more in the middle; it is frustrating at times when positions are open in precincts which makes me feel as though maybe there are too many positions.

How effective do you think our current form of Town Meeting is?

56 responses



Rating	Please provide the reason(s) why you have answered the above in the manner you did.
<b>2.789 AVERAGE RATING</b>	
1	The debate is sometimes chaotic and dominated by a few people.
1	Since the Acts of 2012 were approved, I feel town meeting has lost its legislative power. The process in my opinion is very autocratic and siloed and everything is controlled by the executive branch with no input or say from the town meeting body.
1	Attendance is always short, at times we barely have a quorum, years ago we gave too much power to the Town Administrator, we have had selectboard members who are not qualified and often have personal agendas.
1	By the time we reach Town Meeting, it often feels that most of the decisions have already been made and that the vote on the floor is a "rubber stamp". It seems that TM lacks much, if any, power under our current form of government.
2	Not enough research by town meeting members prior to town meeting. A lot of questions that could have been addressed during the budget process
2	Nothing changes
2	Town Meeting is constrained by having only one meeting a year and much of its authority has been taken over by the Executive branch.
2	Individual budget lines need more specific attention
2	lack of communication with other town meeting members and with the district i represent
2	There is not a consistent application of the rules to all speakers. Time management and process are key issues that need to be addressed.
2	There is little opportunity for Town Meeting members to influence the direction the town is taking. For all intents and purposes, decisions have been made prior to Town Meeting each year.
2	TM has become a rubber stamp. A lot come to meetings not fully understanding the issue or what is at stake. The TA and the PB push their own adgendas, sometimes not giving a realistic or truthful analysis of what they want us to vote in favor of.
2	Town Meeting members are not sufficiently well read and educated on the articles on the Town Meeting Warrant. Town Meeting Members are able to speak at the microphone with unsubstantiated claims, misinformation, and disinformation about issues. At Town Meeting this past May, certain Town Meeting Members repeated, what in my opinion are, out and out lies at the microphone. And, in my opinion, the

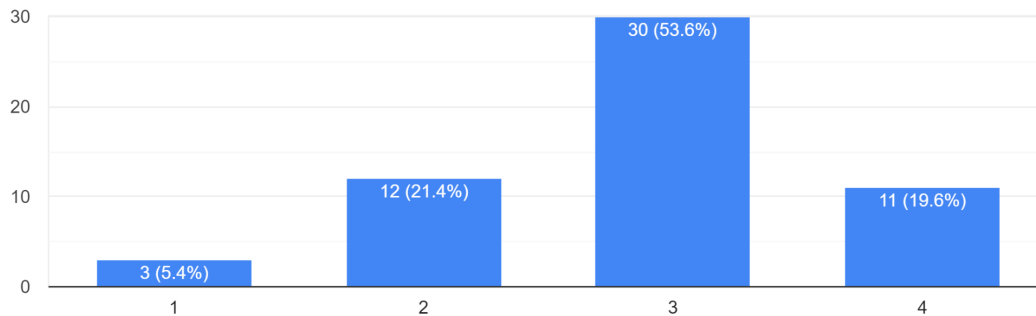
	Moderator disallowed adequate time for debate and rebuttal of these claims.
2	There is no time for individual town departments to present their strengths and weaknesses to the town meeting and to solicit input from town meeting members. The town meetings are extraordinarily streamlined and there is little discussion.
2	The public/TM can attend other meetings and provide comment, but does not have real influence over decisions being made except to say yes or no.
2	While I have only been there a year, I have seen and heard past instances where there have been issues of underrepresentation at Town Meeting sessions. But, when the group is engaged and well represented, then it does provide for a diverse array of dialogue which is when it's structure works.
2	Mostly, we vote for things like the budget up or down without and opportunity to influence what does into the budget
3	I very much appreciate the opportunities to learn more about each article before the meetings. I think the same people tend to talk at the mic multiple times. Sometimes there are people with experiences that would be helpful for town meeting members to learn from that are given very limited time at the mic. I think when possible, those with experiences related to the article should be allowed to speak even if they are not town meeting members, because they may be very passionate and learned about a particular subject, but not an elected town meeting member.
3	I think there are opportunities for us all to be informed and knowledgeable about warrant articles, but there are plenty of us that aren't. The more informed we are, the more effective we have the opportunity to be.
3	There are always divergent views, which is a good thing. But when some passionately hold divergent views, they sometimes have a hard time accepting when the majority view things differently.
3	there IS A GOOD BALLANCE AND REPRESENTATION OF THE TOWN.
3	Right now I don't see specific issues. The town meeting itself has a clear, written agenda that is posted and disseminated well ahead of time, and there are plenty of opportunities for discussion or debate. There are rules laid out for proposed amendments that are also open for discussion or debate. Even before warrants are written, there are plenty of public hearings leading up to that point. Poor civic engagement is a fact nation-wide, and SH is not unique there. Perhaps this is a lack of imagination, but I'm not sure how, bureaucratically, the Town Meeting could be more effective in how policy is written and debated. I left room for improvement in my score, as I am open to ideas.
3	TM has little influence on the budget unless members make the effort to attend public hearings and are aware of the issues. Having said that I don't want to go back to the days of 100+ citizens micromanaging the budget. Department heads, town administrator, and treasurer have a better understanding of needs and resources.
3	See above
3	I'd like to see the yellow button on the clicker activated for abstentions.
3	Effectiveness depends on large part on having well organized and informative background info.
3	During the last meeting, it seemed to me that some town meeting members go to the mic to simply say something, even though their comments had already been addressed. Their comments were redundant. We were held hostage at the last meeting, several times, in this way. In addition, some people stated inaccurate or misleading information, which further prolongs the meeting, because others must then rebut the inaccurate points. Finally, based on the public comments, it was clear that some town meeting members hadn't done their homework; they hadn't read and discussed the warrant issues with their constituents. They used the meeting for learning about the issues, instead of preparing beforehand. The solution? Maybe this is just the way of town meetings, and maybe it has value...but it greatly prolongs the meeting.
3	Town meeting conducts the business of the town. It is both necessary and a reliable form of government, seemingly free from unnecessary oversight

3	We get the warrant done, but things could improve in terms of getting folks to care about and vote in elections, and reflect on whether their town meeting members are representing them well. I think publishing the votes by member is a tremendous step forward in that regard.
3	I wouldn't call it perfect but it was effective
3	I've been impressed by the Town Manager and those who truly commit to understand the topics that are addressed
3	Well run, in general. But many members seem less informed than they should be. And too few people run. On the other hand, I have noticed membership is more diverse than when I first joined, particularly re: age of members.
3	It is more streamlined than it was when I began. The Warrant gets passed fairly quickly. I miss not hearing from the various department heads about their experiences in the past year and plans for the future, especially the Superintendent of Schools.
3	I believe that the Select Board and Town government has a good working representation of community members. I'm not sure that Town Meeting adds much to the government workings.
3	First, our Town Administrator does an admirable job pulling all of the information together and getting it out to us. Our Town Accountant does a fantastic job sorting through all of the info that comes from the State, sifting through the material that is pertinent to Town Meeting, and pulling it together in a form that the average TMM can understand. In addition, we have several good committees that do a lot of hard work prior to Town Meeting to get material to us to review and question. It can do better.
3	I have more positive feelings about our last meeting than negative.
3	In general, TM allows for commentary from the members as well as voting. I wish that there was a more balanced system of making sure that speakers for and against are held to the same time limits and speakers of both views are alternated (two mics with one for and one against, and speakers are chosen alternately from each aisle)
3	It's not perfect but it fits our New England community
3	I didn't say 4 because Sometimes we end up debating relatively meaningless things for a very long time, then fly right through major changes.
3	Would be more effective if TM members were aware of the TM topics prior to the meeting. The Admin provides the information in a great way.
3	It is important for the community to participate in the decisions of their community
3	Works, but every process can see improvements.
3	Folks who are interested and engaged can run for TM and have a chance to learn more and ultimately vote on important issues of the town.
3	The pre meetings with recent increased transparency and historical data have been helpful, particularly for the last Town Meeting. More improvement is still needed with getting information out ahead with more questions and engagement allowed ahead of time.
3	Representation from all parts of town with a variety of citizens expressing their ideas and concerns and then having a vote.

	<p>I'd really vote 2.5</p> <p>The meeting itself seems to work well. Folks who wish to share on an issue have a chance to do so. If they want to amend an article, they can make efforts to do that. The biggest difficulty, is knowing when and where the process for the development of an article begins. After working on issues in town for 8 years, I have a better sense of this now. However, for the average citizen, this process is very vague. Few folks know that the process begins many months before town meeting in committee meetings that they know little about. Where to take your issue???</p> <p>The town website is extremely difficult to find information even when you know where you should find the info you are seeking. For example, it seems like we're having a special town meeting on November 15. I have received no email to that effect and there is no mention of that on the website, nor of the informational meetings that are usually provided for town meeting members to understand articles to be presented.</p> <p>I really don't like how various budget items are grouped together in warrant articles. Items listed range from a few hundred dollars to thousands. Then you are expected to vote for all or nothing unless you make a motion to delete a particular item from the article. Items of large cost should be listed individually.</p>
3	The moderator has to do more to curtail those individuals who don't stay on topic for the article.
3	
4	The meeting finishes its business in the allotted time
4	I have seen a number of issues come through the town meeting and have been impressed by the response of the meeting
4	There is often rich discussion and experience brought to the floor, along with new ideas.
4	Those who attended the meeting help the town by passing the budget and new laws
4	<p>Governing through Town Meeting is messy and time-consuming, but Town Meeting—even the kind of representational Town Meeting we have in South Hadley—is more democratic, from my perspective. I think it's a significantly better way to structure executive and legislative decision-making than, say, a mayoral form of government or even a city council form. I've resided in towns with those forms of governance and I wasn't a fan.</p> <p>While not a native New Englander, I cherish the tradition of Town Meeting.</p>
4	Current set up seems to work fine
4	All town meeting members have the ability to express themselves on any given issue.
4	We can attend meetings & learn about articles before voting on them
4	Good informed people have the ability to express themselves, where in other forms of govt govt is just too big and turn people off

How efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is?

56 responses



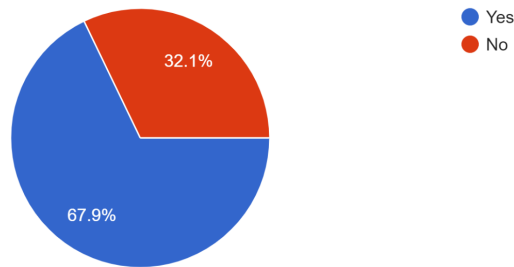
Rating	Please provide the reason(s) why you have answered the above in the manner you did.
<b>2.859</b>	<b>AVERAGE RATING</b>
1	There is not clear connection between TM actions and results. People often say, "What did we agreed to at Town Meeting?" It is often not clear what was agreed to.
1	Since the Acts of 2012 were approved, I feel town meeting has lost its legislative power. The process in my opinion is very autocratic and siloed and everything is controlled by the executive branch with no input or say from the town meeting body.
1	We now have a Town Moderator that doesn't have the experience and doesn't understand his role, he often lets the meetings get out of hand by letting town meeting members (often the same ones) continue to go on and on, often repeating themselves, he needs know when to call for a vote. He should defer to Town Counsel as it is obvious, he doesn't have the knowledge necessary to hold that role. He has been part of the political landscape for too long and has a personal agenda; just getting the position seemed politically motivated. The select board doesn't offer any guidance and always defers to the Town Administrator, which is understandable to some extent as she manages the day-to-day business, however, most don't know anything about how the town works and are there for their personal agenda, not for the good of the town.
2	It's the same people getting the same results
2	Too many speakers who seem to represent personal views rather than those of constituents.
2	Effectiveness and efficiencies are linked. We can be more efficient with greater use of technology and applying the time management rules across the board.
2	Some folks *really* like to hear themselves talk, and they reiterate points that have already been made, but it's only a couple times a year, and at least someone *wants* to participate?
2	The current role for Town Meeting is to rubber stamp what is brought before it. It is not a deliberative body, as it should be.
2	It's difficult to be efficient when you cram a year's worth of budgeting and planning proposals into one, sometimes two meetings/year.
2	I am unhappy with the way that the current moderator does not enforce time limits. He sets a time limit for Town Meetings members to speak at the microphone, but this should be published ahead of time so that members can prepare their statements to fit into the time frame. Also, the Town Moderator does not enforce time limits uniformly. He seems to permit certain people to exceed time limits and then seems to cut other

	people off. To me, this is a sign of favoritism by the Moderator. The Moderator does not allow adequate debate and back and forth discussion on certain subjects such as proposed zoning by laws.
2	Technology is not that new to South Hadley and while I think we are getting better each TM. progress in that regards seems to be a little slow. I suspect it has more to do with the infrastructure of our buildings than personnel.
2	Efficiency could be improved by having set speaking times and a digital timer system that gives a warning system and then cuts off the speaker microphone at the ending time.
2	See above. Also, efficient should not always mean "quick" and I am frustrated by how often our elected officials strive for quick meetings even when it is clear more debate and conversation is necessary.
2	see my comments above
2	The infrequencies of meetings slow things down.
2	It is efficient because the voting is streamlined, but it doesn't allow for the influence of the body.
3	Well organized
3	I think the "clickers" are quick and seem to be working well now. I also think this forces people to be transparent with how they vote, instead of going along with yaya or nays, whichever is louder.
3	Efficient b/c it gets a lot done in short time.
3	This also feels like a guess on my part. My hope would be that the review committee would explore other forms of Town Meeting to present alternatives. I can't really answer this without being presented with alternatives.
3	A town wide town meeting would be unwieldy. But a smaller elected council might be too political. As frustrating as town meetings can be, still might be the best choice for towns our size.
3	The last town meeting was long. The final business matter was a bit ridiculous and seemed inappropriate for the Town Meeting agenda.
3	see the explanation in the previous question.
3	Too many TM members advocate for an ideology rather than the best interests of our 21st century town. And yet the last town meeting proved to be quite efficient.
3	One or two meetings a year seems pretty good. The material has been presented well before the meetings and most warrants can be dealt with swiftly
3	I think the e voting works well and still allows for discussion.
3	I don't think a lot is asked of town meeting members. for example there is no expectation that town meeting members attend board meetings on critical issues and/or talk with their consistuants re issues that will impact on resources. For a small town South Hadley has a very burdensome form of government. an administrator, a select board, town meeting, and 2 prudential boards and all of these board have their won internal committees.
3	Time limit of three minutes per speaker unless s/he has special and recognized knowledge about the subject of debate.
3	Without knowledgeable and effective staff members it would be difficult for the body to operate.
3	My comments above apply here, too.
3	TM operation is fairly well understood. It has been proven over time to achieve its task.
3	I appreciate the updates of all the members emails-another way to enhance communication. Lisa Wong is transparent, is a visionary, and highly efficient
3	Under the new TA, members have better access to materials voted on. Also, electronic voting is more effective and transparent. Moderator is fair and clear.

3	Again, decision-making through a Town Meeting form of governance can sometimes feel like a slog, so to say it's "Very Efficient" would be a little daft. But that's no reason to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Much better to think of strategies for improving its efficiency—say, holding awards ceremonies outside of Town Meeting, or at the very least, finding a way to acknowledge awardees briefly during annual meetings while projecting their accomplishments on screens (at our last Town Meeting, the presentations probably took close to an hour—it's important to call out stellar service by our citizens, but...). Also, offering additional prep opportunities for Town Meeting, such as by precinct, could aid efficiency. And I'm sure the Town Meeting Review Committee will be able to provide a number of recommendations for improving efficiency.
3	As far s how the current form of TM is it probably runs as efficiently as it can.
3	I'm not sure our meetings are more or less efficient than other towns, but I know they are much more democratic than the last town I lived in 30 years ago.
3	It's not perfect
3	Could be more efficient if discussions were limited. Some town meeting members tend to ramble on.
3	Some TM members just keep talking about the same thing. Wish there was a way to streamline the input.
3	We have been fortunate to have executive leadership and commuted town meeting memembers with the interests of the community
3	Repeat question. See above
3	The TM warrants are debated and voted on. It's a fascinating participatory process. One never really knows how the debate and vote will go.
3	There are often too many articles to vote on at one meeting in addition to the budget. Split meetings, 1 for just the budget and 1 for the other articles, would be better.
3	Many articles voted on in a period of several hours is efficient
3	Must people read the information sent to them, others do not
3	Representative town meeting has inefficiencies we have to live with.
4	Warrants are setup to be previewed so most members have their minds made up before attend the meeting.
4	Materials are provided in advance-people know what they're voting on
4	The agenda is well prepared and presented by the Town Manager and Select Board
4	We were able to get through the agenda. At times too much debate citing similar points
4	See answer above.
4	Plenty of opportunities to receive information in advance
4	Over the last six years, the process for learning about legislation has been extraordinarily streamlined.
4	See above answer
4	With the adoption of technology it seems TM moves much more quickly and with a level of accountability for votes
4	Auditorium voting has been very effective
4	I think the move to the electronic voting system has improved efficiency.

Are you satisfied with the roles and responsibilities of our Executive Branch (commonly known as the Selectboard and Town Administrator) and the Laws of 2012 that govern the Town of South Hadley?

56 responses



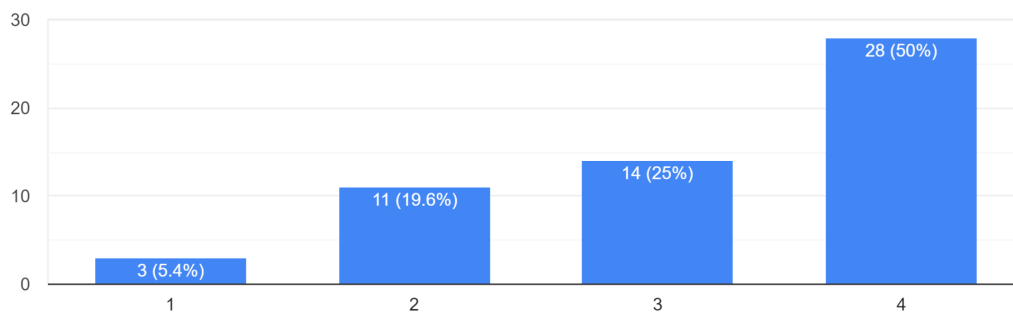
Answer	Please provide the reason(s) why you have answered the above in the manner you did.
No	Same answer as above
No	Exec. branch is defined in the Acts but it's relationship to Town Meeting is not specified in the Acts.
No	The legislative branch is Town Meeting, so see my comments above. The Selectboard is hampered from effective decision making by the infrequent town meeting schedule.
No	i am not sure most things are ironed out before they come to town meeting,
No	If Town Meeting members are not going to say anything about some Articles, we might as well have a mayoral system in South Hadley.
No	The Town Administrator is an unelected position and the TA has no direct accountability to the people. The position is accountable to the Selectboard, but it is too distant from the people for the electorate to have any influence over policy or financial decisions.
No	I would like to see TM have more involvement in the Legislative Branch.
No	TA and SB have time and focus to administer business; and TM, thanks to improved communication, has basis for approving/rejecting decisions. But TM is not set up to initiate change, in the way legislative bodies do. At the very least TM members need to be better informed re how to add items to the Warrant.
No	While the Acts of 2012 clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Branch as shown in the drop down link I don't see the same delineation of what the roles and responsibilities are for the Legislative Branch. I feel strongly that we should adopt a town charter that clearly outlines these two legislative bodies.
No	I have already mentioned some reasons. We need checks and balances, the current model is broken, too much power given to the Town Administrator, who is paid way too much money for her role in managing town hall only, the mayor of Boston doesn't make the salary she does; the Select Board has nobody qualified to negotiate her salary. We have had many people leave the employment of the town, something isn't right there and where is our Select Board challenging her as to why? Our form of government is archaic and with Town Meeting, we have too few people representing our taxpayers. It would be nice if the Town Administrator and the Select Board treated the taxpayer's money like it was their own and be a little more frugal and review all positions in town to see if they are necessary, perhaps our town employees need to work a little harder rather than add another position that is not necessary. By the way, where is the study on town employee positions and salaries measured against other towns of our size, the Town Administrator has been supposedly working on this for over a year now; I just saw the Select Board discussing her increase/contract, it would be nice to see that report rather than the Chair and Vice Chair offering their limited research.
No	The Selectboard has too much power. The Town Administrator has too much power. Certain committees in town such as the by law review committee have too much power. I feel that there are discussions, and then decisions are made by a small number of people "behind the scenes", outside of public meetings. I feel that certain members of the Selectboard have conflicts of interest,

	such as with realtors or developers and make decisions favorable to these special interests.
No	You have to remember that I have been at this a long while and the Acts of 2012 basically took away the ability of TMM to see into departments, what they do on a regularly basis, and to ask questions directly with department heads. While today's TMM may not know that they could have been doing this, I do and I think it has hindered my understanding of our Town government.
No	While there is a great deal of information regarding the Selectboard and TA's roles, there is very little with regard to the responsibilities of Town Meeting. This is where, I believe, TM had lost a great deal of its power, especially when we consider checks and balances of the the two branches.
No	The executive branch has very strong powers, and the power of town meeting has declined.
No	In practice it seems opposite, TM, like POTUS, ie executive branch, signs or vetos budgets and bills, while Select Board and committees put together and submit them. TM needs more influence over the board/committees and their direction before it gets to the final vote.
No	Input and feedback early on for the budget during the Select Board meetings still needs much improvement. The same response at every Town Meeting claiming "it is what it is and we worked so hard" should not be warranted if feedback was truly taken into account early on. As elected representatives for Town, Town meeting members must feel heard on such an important document and handling of taxpayers funds.
No	Many town meeting members are unprepared for decisions on voting.  The Selectboard needs to be more involved in actively supporting the warrant articles.
No	I like the direction the town administrator is taking the town, but I would like town meeting to have more say in the composition of what we are presented.
Yes	Presently both
Yes	I think the roles are defined well, and I think the burden of the work falls more on the executive branch. I know meeting members who do not even attend meeting.
Yes	Each branch seems to be doing its job.
Yes	It would be an inefficient disaster to have town meeting make all the day to day decisions. For efficiency alone need to have a strong executive branch.
Yes	Seems efficient
Yes	They have a good balance there as well. They have a fiscal responsibility.
Yes	see the explanation in the previous, previous question. Any other answer would just be a reworked version of that.
Yes	Each funding season, the executive branch should understand and manage the resources available for the current year and advocate for that budget. Executive branch should also anticipate needs and resources for future years. Town needs should be based on department heads' input and advocacy. In addition to needs, we must not forget to invest in our personnel and infrastructure. I am disappointed by the stagnant School Department budget and apparent lack of School Department advocacy for a prudent forward-thinking budget.
Yes	It seems to work better than many neighboring towns
Yes	I believe the roles help spread the centrality of power
Yes	All parties are interested in the success of the town
Yes	I don't see any reason to change the current format
Yes	The distribution of decision-making seems appropriately balanced.
Yes	See previous answers
Yes	I follow their work via the documents sent in advance by Kristin Maher, and via the Town Reminder. These folks who represent us are doing a fine job, and I appreciate this.

Yes	No issues come to mind
Yes	The structure and duties are clearly delineated. The question arises when the people in those positions do not follow the statutes.
Yes	I appreciate that meetings seem to be much more professional than say, certain independent districts we may be familiar with.
Yes	Only 1 town meeting but I was satisfied
Yes	Whenever I have written Carol Constant and Lisa Wong, they have responded almost immediately
Yes	Re: the executive branch, yes, I'm satisfied with both the definition of the roles and responsibility of the Selectboard and TA and with the enactment of those roles by our current TA and Selectboard. Re: the legislative branch, I was a little confused by the numbers listed there—42 per precinct—but I assume the number of precincts has changed since 1988.
Yes	I suppose so. I wouldn't want a different form of government.
Yes	I have a lot of confidence in our current Town Administrator.
Yes	Professionals should create budget and Town representatives approve or amend
Yes	I feel positively about both our town administrator and the selectboard. I am grateful the Selectboard members hung in there through the last 3 years. When I watch their meetings I appreciate the way members speak to and listen to each other. (Our last town mtg made me aware that a former board member has issues with at least 1 member of the selectboard.)
Yes	I am grateful that we have a Town Administrator (rather than a mayor), and a Town Meeting representative form of government.
Yes	An executive branch is needed for day to day issues whereas the legislative branch passes the budget, by laws and other non immediate issues
Yes	I believe they take the time to study a given issue and they come to meetings prepared.
Yes	It works. The TA and town staff are professional and there is only limited opportunity for the types of nonsense that happens when the Selectboard can intervene in personnel matters etc
Yes	Yes. Town Administrator is the best form of government for this size municipality.
Yes	Town administrator and Selectboard are doing an excellent job
Yes	Currently seems to work.
Yes	The Selectboard members are elected to represent the resident interests and give oversight of the TA and the professionally qualified TA oversees the day to day operation. The Acts of 2012 assure that a trained professional has the ability to administer and lead.
Yes	Town Administrator fulfills duties as outlined as do the Selectboard. The roles of each balance out each other.
Yes	It works
Yes	Just watch the selectboard meetings and read the read ahead and you would see people are well informed.
Yes	For the most part, there is opportunity to speak to issues of importance at the Selectboard meetings. Lisa Wong seems responsive to issues brought to her attention.
Yes	It provides a check and balance when it comes to acting on issues. It also allows for greater accessibility from the town's inhabitants. Again this is important given the stark compositions of the town's Precincts.
Yes	

How well do you feel you're provided with information prior to the Town Meeting and or given opportunities to discuss warrant articles with Appropriations Committee and or Department Heads?

56 responses



Rating	Please provide the reason(s) why you have answered the above in the manner you did.
<b>3.193</b>	<b>AVERAGE RATING</b>
1	Insufficient ongoing communication between Toen Meetings regarding warrant articles and development of by-laws.
1	<p>Limited communication from central office.                      No meetings with department heads.                      One virtual meeting with Appropriation Committee all other meetings were closed to questioned from town meeting members at the direction of the Town Administrator per the Acts of 2012.</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>1. Appropriation Committee through the establishment of Charter become a Finance Committee.</p> <p>A Finance Committee under the general laws would act as an advisory committee to the Town meeting and have powers and duties given to finance committees under the general laws, except as may otherwise be provided for in the creation of a Town charter. The Finance Committee also could also have jurisdiction over the reserve fund, conduct long range fiscal planning, advise on fiscal policy, make recommendations on the Town's budget and perform duties assigned by bylaw or voted by Town meeting; this provides for checks and balances that we currently don't have.</p> <p>2. Reestablish a Personnel Board                      The Personnel Board is established under M.G.L. c.41 s. 108 and C. The board provides guidance pursuant to the town's human resources systems in accordance with State Laws and hopefully a new Town Charter. The board could also advise Town Meetings when appropriate on new positions being proposed with in town government. Once again, this board would provide checks and balances which the current Acts of 2012 don't require.</p>
1	This may seem counterintuitive to what I've said previously BECAUSE you included department heads in this question. TMM doesn't get to talk with Department Heads even when both they and you sit in the same room at a Appropriations Committee meeting. Appropriations Committee usually defers to Town Administrator rather than expressing their own opinions.
2	the decision are worked out ahead of time.
2	Materials are sent with enough time for review. Issues have come up when questions submitted go unanswered prior to the town meeting.
2	Overwhelmed with info to review in short time. Did not know I could talk to dept heads or committee

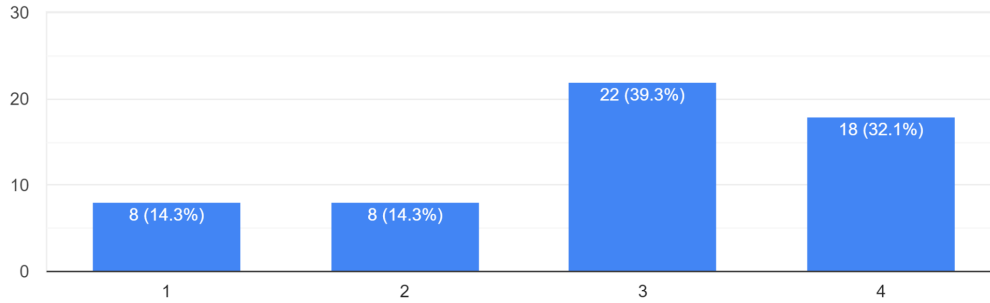
2	Yes to the first. A big no for the second.
2	The prior Town Administrator was awful, and nothing was communicated, the current one has done a little better, at least we did get to hear from department heads, which was nice, that hasn't happened in many years. The Town Website is not managed very well, and it is difficult to find information, let alone if it is up to date and accurate.
2	No opportunity was given to speak ahead of time with the By Law Review Committee, yet they render yes or no verdicts on all by laws, even zoning by laws, without having any standards or means to justify these important decisions.
2	While some of these meetings were added to hear about each department, the ability for questions to be asked of department heads was very limited and often times the TA was answering for the Dept. heads.
2	I'm not familiar with discussing warrant articles with Appropriations Committee of Department Heads.
2	Well considering that there supposedly is a Town Meeting on November 15, I know nothing of the list of articles to be presented. Also there should be several meetings for Town Meeting Members to hear a presentation of the planned articles and get a chance to ask questions. Not all folks are available for just one meeting with the above leaders.
2	Why aren't the department heads required to be present at town meeting?
2	Although I do appreciate the meetings the appropriations meeting has and the recording of those meetings, I think there is something lost without department heads being present at town meetings. In the past, department heads defended/explained their budget process/decisions at town meetings or at least were present at town meetings to answer questions. I have also found it difficult at times to find a copy of the budget containing each department's line items.
3	Emails are sufficient with information regarding the meetings coming up
3	There is room for improvement. Generally the town administrator does a good job of covering warrants prior to town meeting. But some feel left out of process of coming up with the specifics of the warrants. Admittedly it is hard to get the balance right.
3	The information is usually adequate. The problem is what is done with the information.
3	I'm pretty comfortable with the details supplied
3	I am furnished with necessary materials.
3	I can't attend many of previews of the Articles because of work. Perhaps a video of same could be made available? (Do they exist now?)
3	I think we get adequate information from the Appropriations Committee and Department heads.
3	The TA's revision of the budget making process, which now includes open meetings at which Departments present budgets, is a great improvement. And overtime, perhaps more people will participate. But incorporating TM members in a more formal way, and perhaps earlier, might be a good idea. This might be possible via precinct meetings. Or the creation of a subcommittee of TM members with the explicit responsibility of participating. I should say, too, I am pleased with the way TM has included the presence of Department heads to directly answer questions from the floor (notably the Planning Director, Building Inspector, Police Chief, School Superintendent). This owes much to the TA's commitment to transparency.
3	Since I've been a Town Member, I feel that Mike Sullivan and now Lisa Wong does a good job of providing written information and oral presentations about the warrant articles, as does Tom Terry's Appropriations Committee. I could always use more information, of course, and I think it might be especially useful sometimes to hear ahead of Town Meeting from particular department heads about their budget. For example, the police budget always produces a bit of debate. At the last Town Meeting, Chief Gunderson gave a great explanation (I thought) of necessary budget increases and how those are supporting better officer training, including around DEI issues. I would have appreciated the chance for that conversation prior to Town Meeting. Of course, at the same time, I appreciated hearing from Town Meeting members who were

	opposed to the increases in the police budget and would hate to miss those kinds of debates. Still, smaller meetings ahead of time, including with individual department heads, could be useful.
3	I'm aware of meetings focused on the warrant articles with the Town Administrator, Selectboard and with Appropriations. I do not know about discussions from department heads. I suppose there are ways to attend various meetings when budgets are being discussed. A written summary of those budgets might be helpful for TM members.
3	The sessions (TA and Appropriations, etc.) prior to TM are extremely important. This is how one can be informed as to what the details are.
3	I would appreciate having more discussions about the details of the budget. The budget summary and appropriation meeting does not provide enough detail.
3	Some votes have good backup and backgrounders others are skimmed over, but feel like members have the opportunity to attend session up front of meeting to dig deeper if the choose.
3	The Town Administrator has taken big strides to really improve providing information early on. More opportunities to discuss larger articles that impact Town should be provided.
3	Getting the information via email is fine and it's content and detail is fine too. However, getting it a little sooner would be more constructive. That is why I didn't give it a 4 ranking.
4	I serve on many committees
4	I love the meetings before that offer us chances to ask questions, and know that if I'm not able to attend, I can watch the recordings and reach out with questions. I also once asked to meet in person and had lots of questions answered.
4	I involve myself throughout the year, so I feel prepared. If I waited to be presented with information when it was sent out, I don't think I'd feel prepared. Town Meeting requires me to be involved throughout the year on my own proactively. Waiting to be served the info wouldn't give me the time needed to prepare.
4	Overall very well; however, as mentioned above, the last item of business in May was a waste of time and little context was provided ahead of the town meeting.
4	very well
4	My inbox is never not full of notifications about public hearings, warrants, and prep for town meeting.
4	I think TTMs are given ample notice of public budgetary hearings, but I think we should hear more from department heads in those meetings. I understand that it is impossible to attend every hearing, but I think Admin could do more to notify when minutes are posted and to encourage department heads to keep posting minutes on a timely basis, notably Appropriations and Capital Committees.
4	Ample info given, ample forums and sessions both from TA and SB, along with outside groups like KYT
4	Those committees spend many hours processing the budget requests and provide positive information to the Town Meeting members
4	Its clear the town goes above and beyond to get info to town meeting members if they are interested in it.
4	With the support of the SelectBoard, Lisa had done a great job in guiding a more open and informative process.
4	See previous comment.
4	The addition of Town Manager reviews before town meeting have been extremely helpful. Other than that, each TMM should expect to put the work in to come prepared.
4	There's usually a walkthrough with slides and explanation available beyond the warrant we're given. I do think maybe less tech-savvy folks may need some extra help getting themselves sorted out.
4	There is enough time to have conversations and to read the material on my own
4	Numerous meetings are held prior to the meeting

4	It is my responsibility to make sure I am ready to make informed votes at town mtg.
4	There has been a great change in the past 15 or so years where much information is available to make informed decisions
4	Town meeting members get information from the Town Administrator and the selectboard in a timely manner.
4	Members are always given a thorough schedule for Appropriations and other meetings before the regular town meeting.
4	Because the materials are sent out
4	Kristen always provides details. Good job.
4	Numerous opportunities for information and questions
4	It is great to hear from department heads about their work but think it is inappropriate for residents and TM members to grill department heads over their duties and budgets. Employees should answer to one (maybe two) supervisor. Imagine how difficult their job becomes if they suddenly have 17,000 bosses?!! Who would want that? How would we attract and retain good employees?
4	Committees are typically responsive
4	Warrants handed out early, Q& A with TA
4	The information sent out ahead of time and the briefings before the TM are very detailed
4	I think we given the right information in a timely fashion.

Should Town Meeting meet more than once annually?

56 responses



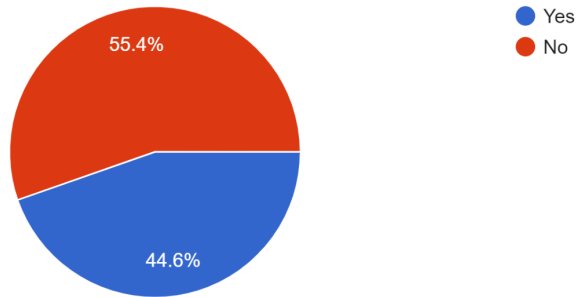
Rating	Please provide the reason(s) why you have answered the above in the manner you did.
<b>2.893 AVERAGE RATING</b>	
1	Town Meeting should meet as often as the needs of the Executive Branch dictate.
1	So far the system appears to work
1	I would like to see the need for more meetings come before the desire for more meetings
1	Once seems sufficient
1	Once is enough.
1	Once is enough
1	Most issues can be addressed annually. We can always have a special meeting if necessary.
1	There should be one town meeting, except for a special meeting in the fall to handle FINANCIAL warrant articles.
2	Depends on what issue arise
2	We usually meet twice annually, as a Special Town Meeting is more often than not something considered necessary in the Fall. That is enough, in my opinion.
2	Only if there are compelling reasons for that to happen and there is sufficient direct input prior to and and all Town Meetings.
2	Warrant articles could be split into two meetings one approves financial articles and the other approves zoning and planning articles.
2	I'm not sure, its dysfunctional to begin with and we seem to have a lot of special town meetings. I think part time town meeting members don't put in the time to understand how the town works and most are not qualified to vote on issues at hand, there are a small bunch of folks that seem to always be driving an agenda, there is no accountability.
2	I think the Selectboard, Town Administrator and Town Accountant can provide a better answer to that. It appears the current annual and specials are working but I don't see the day to day workings of Town government.
2	A special town meeting is normally held in the fall so we already meet twice, and additional meetings can be called if needed
2	We should have the number of town meetings in a year that are necessary to conduct the business of the town.
3	Maybe there are too many matters and some get shoved under the rug because the more pressing matters are all there is time for once a year.

3	It is so low commitment-I think a more regular meeting might encourage more participation.
3	In years when there are few issues to cover, perhaps one annual meeting would do. But when there a numerous contentious issues it would be better to have more than one town meeting.
3	Twice for budget. Once for zoning.
3	We often do, but an annual meeting is well precedents for most annual items. We've often had 1-2 special town meetings a year.
3	The meeting is usually long but very informative and worthwhile.
3	A second meeting could be useful if additional time is needed to resolve some of proposals
3	Better to have 2 reasonably long meetings than 1 extremely long meeting
3	maybe
3	Issues and items come up all the time. Fewer meetings mean forcing too many articles into the limited attention span and desire to go home to bed of many attendees; that's probably the reason for the limited debate on some issues.
3	The town needs to meet in November/December to decide if programs (or other expenses) can be funded after the state has certified the free cash amount to the town. The town needs to move ahead in a timely fashion and complete business that would otherwise have to be done at the spring annual town meeting. In addition, having those dates on the calendar far in advance helps to ensure attendance by town meeting members.
3	If meeting more often keeps the meetings from being marathon long then I'm in favor. No one makes good decisions in hour 3, hour 4, etc.
3	I think it could be more effective with 2 meetings
3	Town Meeting has always needed to give approval for expenses or conditions that come up at other times of the year, often unexpectedly . Members of Town Meeting ought to be made aware of this possibility. I don't know if you're asking if there should be a second meeting as part of the official schedule.
3	I think that might be a good way for being more informed.
3	I have mixed feelings on this and would like to hear it debated.
3	I believe that two regularly scheduled meetings would allow for more robust conversation that can be focused by topics. This would also create time to potentially split up the financial article by departments.
3	We usually end up needing more than one for issues or events which arise. I'm in favor of having a seperate meeting for by law issues
3	More meetings would give members a chance to hear from more town departments.
3	Depends on the topics
3	When necessary
3	As needed
3	Perhaps meet as committees in order to have more regular input.
4	Need more than a single meeting per year.
4	twice a year
4	Town Meeting should be replaced by a very much smaller Town Council, as in Amherst, that would meet regularly, for instance every two weeks.
4	Would facilitate more timely responses to town issues
4	There are almost always two meetings, so why not eliminate the uncertainty and make that the default, while leaving an option to not meet if it's unnecessary?

4	by default we have had bi-annual meetings in recent years. To be more effective and efficient, town meeting should meet more than once a year to move issues forward. A good example of this would be the approval of a by-law change. It makes no sense for something to sit for 10 months because it needs to go to town meeting before a change can be enacted.
4	Twice a year-we can help communicate to our precincts what the town is doing
4	One, maybe two meetings/per year is not enough do the business that needs to be addressed.
4	Too often, there is little time for discussion of important issues, given the statutory requirement for approvals. The Consent Agenda format is helpful. But recent meetings show the body is capable of engaging issues seriously. Two meetings per year seems the minimum necessary; a third meeting could make sense to allow deliberation of an important issue presented by a town committee (other than those already empowered, ie SB, PB).
4	Of course, Town Meeting generally DOES meet more than once annually given special town meetings called in most falls of the year. However, I think at least two scheduled meetings per year would be helpful. For one thing, this would help members plan ahead. I now always know not to book any travel or agree to other obligations on the second Wednesday of May, but last fall I had to miss the special town meeting because I'd already scheduled a trip. This year, I'm barely able to make the special town meeting now called for November 15. Additionally, at least two scheduled meetings would take some pressure off committees and town officials to get warrant articles ready, knowing that they'd always have a chance approximately a half year later AND with the opportunity of still calling a special town meeting in case of a real emergency. Finally, two town meetings could allow us to spread warrant articles out a bit, leading to shorter meetings. I sometimes worry that we wrap up meetings too quickly, with insufficient discussion of particular issues, because fatigue sets in for many of our members.
4	We ought to have two meetings a year, rather than always wondering if we would have a Special Town meeting and when it might be.
4	I believe they should meeting twice per year. There are always new issues that need to be resolved by town meeting.
4	Would keep meeting shorter and provide more discussion as needed for each item if over 2 meetings vs one.
4	To have more opportunity to guide bills, amendments, and planning to be voted on
4	One meeting should be specifically budget related. Another meeting to vote on any other Articles. The amount of time it takes to fully understand each item, ask questions, discuss, and make a sound vote to represent our Precincts on everything in one meeting is overwhelming. Especially with how little time the information is provided prior to Town Meeting. Separate meetings would also allow all Town Committees to fully provide input and opportunities to share important information on the budget AND the warrants with more time for all to prepare and understand the vote.
4	Twice a year..would keep us more current rather than meeting once a year.
4	Things change between the annual TM that need to be acted on
4	Once a year doesn't position the town to address issues in a more timely manner. Also, if it meant 2 times (3 would probably be asking too much for some), maybe the meetings wouldn't last as long either, which in and of itself is why there has been low participation in the past.

Would you like alternative locations for the Town Meeting to be explored?

56 responses



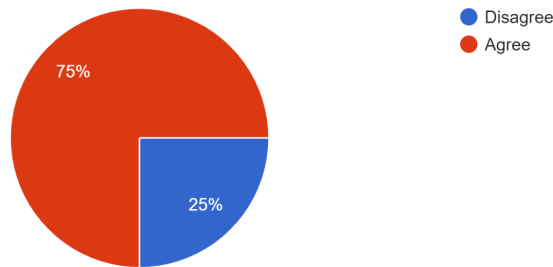
Answer	Options
No	
No	I've met at Town Hall, a church parking lot, and the high school. All have met my needs. On second thought, let's maybe drop the church lot from the list of preferred venues...s
No	
No	The High school works well.
No	I actually don't have an opinion about this one way or another.
No	
No	
No	
No	
No	
No	
No	High school was fine
No	Location is fine. We just need wider chairs with more legroom.
No	
No	There is a shortage of suitable space in Town. But Senior Center, High School can suffice.
No	
No	not SHHS
No	I think the high school is a good choice especially because of parking. There is limited parking at the town hall.
No	
No	
No	
No	
No	Town hall?
No	
No	

No	The High School is a great place to hold the meetings
No	The high school is ok, though not exceptionally comfortable. Key is to have it handicapped accessible. Town Hall was OK.
No	
No	
No	
No	
Yes	Senior center
Yes	No, but I liked when we faced each other in town hall more than looking at the stage. It was easier to see speakers.
Yes	Town Hall.
Yes	I like the high school auditorium better than the meeting room at Town Hall or the church parking lot.
Yes	No.
Yes	I am actually OK with the high school but do remember much more comfortable seats in Gamble Auditorium at the College, if they would let us use it.
Yes	Not at present but always good to keep options open
Yes	When the weather is nice, outside. Also, the Senior Center maybe
Yes	the large church in the falls, the high school gym,
Yes	We have many choices in town. Would love to meet once at the Amphitheater of Mount Holyoke College (summer).
Yes	I have no preference.
Yes	The town hall was always a good room to meet in. We can sit so that we can face one another. I do not like a forum where everyone is facing forward. It decreases meaningful dialog.
Yes	Senior Center
Yes	I actually feel that the high school auditorium has been a great location for our recent town meetings, providing lots of space and great technical support (the "clickers" are a wonderful innovation, by the way, as is using that technology to make public all members' votes). However, our community supported the construction of a new senior center partly because of its potential use by Town Meeting. It would be great to see if the community room there could also work. Finally, possible use of Mount Holyoke facilities (such as Chapin Auditorium) should be explored. I think it would be good for town-gown relations and also potentially provide a better window for MHC students on the inner workings of municipal government as they look ahead to their own responsibilities as active citizens.
Yes	I thought the high school auditorium was awful, fix whatever the problem is at Town Hall and move it back there. The size of the room and being able to set up the seating so it feels inclusive rather than as an audience watching a movie; I'll reserve my comment as to what type of movie.
Yes	I thought the Town Hall auditorium was a great place for the meeting. Members could see one another, the Selectboard, Appropriations and any department heads asked to speak without turning around in their seats or feeling they were too far away. The High School Auditorium is not well lit and does nothing to create an atmosphere of camaraderie among members.
Yes	The auditorium at the high school is a zoo. The acoustics are horrid. It is difficult for Town Meeting Members to exit a row and get to the microphone. At this past May's Town Meeting, people in the back of the auditorium who were not Town Meeting Members but who were there to support the recipient of the Joseph Taylor Award were rustling bouquets of flowers wrapped in plastic and talking among themselves. They

	could be heard very loudly and were very disruptive to town meeting proceedings.
Yes	Town Hall though the parking isn't as good, but the seating arrangements are much, much better than the high school auditorium. Is the multi purpose room at the Senior Center too small? Would we be too crowded?
Yes	No
Yes	I have concerns about air quality in the auditorium.
Yes	Chapin Auditorium, Mount Holyoke College.
Yes	Senior Center
Yes	Not sure what the options would be, but worth knowing if we have considered all possible venues that can provide parking and seating and good ventilation for a large group.
Yes	If it is felt the current location is inappropriate, any location considered should be wheelchair accessible and have ample parking.
Yes	Open to other locations.

As a town meeting member, I feel there has been adequate time devoted to discussing and reviewing the town meeting warrants?

56 responses



Response	Reasoning
Agree	Serve on many committees
Agree	Again, the emails and pre-meetings are very helpful!
Agree	I've always felt knowledgeable and prepared heading into the meeting.
Agree	Agree but barely. We could do better.
Agree	Overall town meetings seem efficient and effective
Agree	yes, there has
Agree	There are plenty of public hearings, meetings, chats, power point presentations, and email packets.
Agree	The current offering of hearings is the best in a long time. Hearings should continue to be recorded and available for streaming.
Agree	It is not the "discussing an reviewing" that is the problem. The problem is the action, or lack thereof, that results from that discussion and review.
Agree	I feel that going into town meeting I am pretty prepared for the meeting and further questions have been discussed in the meeting itself.
Agree	There are many meeting opportunities and forums
Agree	The agenda items are presented in an easy to understand format. There is time for questions
Agree	Again, I think the town goes above and beyond before the meeting to allow for input and learning if the town meeting member is interested.
Agree	if you watch meetings then yes
Agree	Yes, time enough - we only need to get some debate started.
Agree	Most discussion should happen as part of gaining consensus through an open community education and participation process. Providing members with informative background materials ahead of Town meeting helps everyone to be prepared. Having key people available at the meeting to clarify details and answer any questions is very useful, as well.
Agree	I read and asked questions (and received answers) regarding all the preparatory information beforehand, and it was reviewed at the Town Meeting by responsible committee members or the TA. I felt like I was well prepared to understand and vote upon the issues.
Agree	Town Manager review is critical. Early availability of warrant documents is also key.
Agree	We receive the information timely.
Agree	There's usually a walkthrough with slides and explanation available beyond the warrant we're given.

Agree	At Town Meeting, yes. Marginally OK prior to TM.
Agree	Offering hearings and then the Town Meeting allows for enough time
Agree	Sometimes too much time.
Agree	I think every year there has been more and more transparency about the warrant. Virtual meetings are great for people unable to attend in person. The Town Administrator has given members a lot of time to hear her review of the articles. Appropriations as well.
Agree	There are several sessions prior to Town Meeting. If a member affords him/herself the time to be present at these meetings then there is adequate time for discussion.
Agree	For me, I start attending meetings early and being able to listen to the Selectboard's agenda item on the budget each week helpful. The Appropriations Committee, Capital Planning, By-law Review Committee should have all have their meetings taped for Channel 15 review.
Agree	The budget is discussed at numerous Selectboard and Appropriation Committee meetings
Agree	I trust the members of the appropriation comm.
Agree	Presentation, questions and answers, and discussions are all very important aspects of preparation. We need more time for each part.
Agree	Budget information is normally available early April for May TM. There are budget hearings for those who feel the need for more specific info.
Agree	Yes they are publicized well in advance and there are review sessions to go over them prior to the town meeting.
Agree	The town administrators have provided a lengthy written and oral discussion of the warrants.
Agree	I don't have a discussion for this
Agree	Plenty of time to review prior to the meeting.
Agree	Ample opportunities but residents need to avail themselves
Agree	Mostly agree. As stated before some warrants could use more description. But in my experience, I have been able to ask questions of other town officials to get clarity.
Agree	The TA and appropriations give overviews and allow time for questions. The programs are televised and residents and TM members are able to reach out to the administration with further questions.
Agree	While there is time to review, there is still need for more engagement and more input ahead of time, ie another meeting and voting
Agree	We are provided with information to make an informed decision.
Agree	We have the opportunity to attend all public meetings prior to TM
Agree	The time is OK
Agree	
Disagree	Time runs out
Disagree	Not enough information about warrant articles is shared with TM members and there aren't enough opportunities for TM members to evaluate individual bylaws and budget issues before a vote is taken.
Disagree	individual budget items need more specific consideration
Disagree	Would have liked more detailed of a department summary presented at the meeting.
Disagree	We have improved, but I think we can do more, as suggested in earlier remarks. I will say, too, that an important limiting factor will always be the readiness of members to commit the time necessary.
Disagree	I'm unclear as to how anyone elected or appointed can understand a \$54M budget in a few weeks under the current budget schedule.

Disagree	I'd like to see budget info come to us sooner, if possible.
Disagree	Too many people vote on warrants they don't understand. The Town Administrator and Selectboard should be holding sessions to educate at times that work for the taxpayer.
Disagree	<p>The budget is passed as one motion though there are hearings ahead of time. A budget of this magnitude needs to be separated into smaller units at Town Meeting.</p> <p>Also, zoning by law amendments are not given adequate time for discussion. The Moderator at this past Town Meeting had set a capricious time limit and proceeded to cut off discussion arbitrarily. He did not allow adequate deliberations and debate.</p> <p>I feel that the previous Director of Planning had and the current Director of Planning has an agenda that does not reflect the will of the citizens of the town. I feel that the Director of Planning gives a very biased overview of proposed Zoning By Laws in an effort to sway Town Meeting Members to vote in a certain way that is very partial to developers or to commercial interests. I feel that most Planning Board Members who are also Town Meeting Members are also biased in favor of development, their own objectives, and commercial interests and do not reflect the views of the public whom they are supposed to represent.</p> <p>The ByLaw Review Committee says yes or no at the microphone to zoning by law amendments but gives no reasons whatsoever for their decisions. In my opinion, this is despicable and authoritarian-----a committee having a yes or no vote in these important decisions but giving no reasons or justification whatsoever for their decisions. They have no published standards or reasons for making their decisions. Therefore how can they justify their decisions as not being capricious or arbitrary?</p>
Disagree	There is a HUGE amount of information to digest within a few weeks by the time budgets have been finalized.
Disagree	Split meetings for the budget vs the warrants is needed.
Disagree	As I note above, usually there is one meeting with the Town Administrator and Appropriations committee. At least 2 of these should be provided to allow opportunities for all Town Meeting members to attend considering work and family responsibilities.
Disagree	As mentioned earlier, given the amount of issues to review in the warrant, the time crunch is real. Again, maybe meeting more often can help (move non budgetary topics to other meeting sessions), might help lessen the time crunch along with getting things out sooner.
Disagree	<p>There needs to be a narrative explaining the reasons behind each article.</p> <p>We have never seen the salary history of town employees. Why is the non-union employee salary pool capped at 1.5%? Why is there concern for the contract raise for the town administrator of 2.3% (?) not amounting to COLA when the town employees are capped at 1.5%?</p>
Disagree	There is enough time in the meeting, but perhaps other opportunities to discuss what goes into the budget before it is formed.

**What questions should we have asked you that we didn't ask you?**

Do you believe town meeting is the correct format of government

N/a

Whether we feel we had adequate knowledge about how town meeting worked before we ran for the position.

There was no question regarding effectiveness of current TM process.

I would have liked to have been presented with alternatives to the form and size of Town Meeting. Asking if I'm satisfied with those without any sort of reasoning didn't really prompt a confident answer from me.

I realize that the whole idea of representative town government is that elected town meeting members make the decisions for the town. But when the issues are contentious, can't help wondering if there may be some better way of getting town wide input. Perhaps in the form of non-binding ballot questions, where the pros and cons have been fairly worked out ahead of time.

None

Should the Town moderator take better control of the meetings?

How effective do you think the Town Meeting Moderator is?

There should be a time limit imposed by the Moderator on questions from TMMs that turn into ideological statements and become personal tirades and/or screes.

"Should South Hadley change its form of government?"

Can you suggest ways to encourage more candidates. But I am glad you didn't since I don't yet have an answer.

NA

Good questions

none

Could time (relatively brief) be set aside for open discussion of issues voiced by constituents?

how do you collect information from people you represent about issues that will come before town meeting.

Besides town meeting what other town government meetings have you attended.

is there sufficient orientation for prospective and new town meeting members

what is one advantage and one disadvantage of south hadley's form of government

how long do you think the term for a town meeting member should be. Town m

Are we satisfied with the new clicker system? No, because one cannot easily abstain. What was wrong with standing up and being counted? I'd like to see who is for and against an article. Pro - Con - Abstention

Meeting timing (best nights/start times, maximum meeting length)

None

None

How does SH educate the town regarding the role of town meeting and get voters interested in running? How do we engage new members better?

I'd like you to grapple with how to publicize to NON-members what Town Meeting is, and does, and the decisions that get made so that if they would like to get involved the timeline and methods are more visible.

What could be improved with technology at the town meeting?
Is it time to revisit the idea of a change in government?
none
Should we continue using the electronic vote tabulators?
What might encourage more —and different—people to run for TM? How might procedures or facilities at TM engaged more discussion (e.g rojection of documents, talking points, etc)?
My hope is this Committee solicits feedback from our residents since we represent the current form of government and as a town meeting member I'd like to know if they think this current form of government is effective and efficient.
One question might have to do with subcommittees that could support the greater effectiveness and/or efficiency of Town Meeting. Not only would subcommittees provide more “hands” for the work of Town Meeting, they might invest more Town Meeting members in that work because it would be more than a once-a-year obligation. I'd have to think more about the kinds of subcommittees that might be useful—I remember Rudy Ternbach suggesting some kind of executive committee, for example, although it's purpose would need to be more fully explored. I'd also have liked to be asked about what kind of non-financial or warrant article information might be useful. I'd appreciate receiving reports from some of the working committees in town—what kind of progress the SEC is making toward South Hadley becoming a Green Community, for example, or the results of the upcoming SH Showcase being sponsored by our Cultural Council (e.g. numbers of attendees, feedback that our town should consider for future years), or the work being done by the Historical Commission on projects such as the history of slavery in the area. These reports could be written and distributed at Town Meeting or links to the reports could be provided to Town Meeting members (it's not always easy to go through the minutes of each committee, and many of the committees don't seem to publish minutes).
Is it time to review our form of government and consider moving to having a mayor and town council.
Can't think of one right now.
I have no suggestions.
By Law Review Committee-----what authority should they have?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do TMM reach out to their precinct constituents? Are there specifics needs of each precinct that TMM should know about?</li> <li>2. School Committee budget is big. How do we get that broken down to an understandable format AND find out what their greatest needs are? How do we pay for this long-term?</li> <li>3. Why is there not publicity regarding the need for TMMs and how do we go about doing this?</li> <li>4. Early in the budget process, A time-line should be given to each TMM that includes the meeting dates of ALL (especially School Committee) public hearings on the budget.</li> </ol>
If you do not feel that sufficient information is provided or that there are not enough opportunities for input, do you attend Selectboard and Appropriation Committee meetings, and if not, why not?
Nothing comes to mind.
1. How can we improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Town Meeting? 2. What do you think happened at the last Town Meeting that was inappropriate or against the spirit of a democratic Town Meeting?
Should the town form a charter commission?
no
None

Should South Hadley be looking at a mayoral system of government with a town council?

How can town meeting better involve the rest of the community?

N/A

?

None that I can think of.

I miss walking to the Egg and I for lunch! How about having light supper catered for those who can come early and want to socialize?

How do you feel the process of voting items being presented is going? Should the recall of town meeting members or select board members be reviewed? How would you rate town meeting transparency?

NA

You asked excellent questions which should provide a lot of good feedback

?

No

I think that more should be done to clarifying how to find things on the Town website. An expenditure of funds to find expertise on web design to increase accessibility for the common citizen is critical. One needs a compass to find one's way. However, as it is, very close workings with town government is needed to find one's way to information that is sought.

At this juncture, nothing. Obviously, if there are considerations to restructuring the size of the town meeting body, frequency of meetings etc., then that would open up an array of other questions to be explored.

The results of the survey will likely generate more questions.

What is the best way to give input on the budget and other items before town meeting besides the public comment periods? I think town meeting member should have more regular contact on the budget and appropriations.

**Is there anything else you'd like us to know? (Answers of "No" and/or "Thanks" redacted)**

good survey

I am not suggesting an executive committee, but an opportunity for members to participate in the governing process in committees more than once a year.

I appreciate that you sent out this questionnaire. We should all be heard and issues should be respectfully discussed with open minds.

I appreciate you asking for our input!

I believe your questions have been adequate.

I feel at Town Meeting would be made more effective and efficient if there were. Town Meeting Subcommittee that met at least monthly (Sept.-June) to discuss TM business and work with the Executive Branch on legislation and TM related issues.

I plan to watch the archived TM Review Committee meetings to get a bit more clarity on what's been discussed so far. Thanks for your work on this, and looking forward to watching.

I sometimes wonder if anything is lost in the quick conduct of business in our TM. My daughter-in-law is a TM rep in Arlington and their meetings often take several weeks to finish the warrant. The two communities are not comparable of course, but it does seem we might want to consider if we could be missing something.

I would like town Meeting members to have more influence over contract negotiations so we don't just get told, "oh well, that's the budget because that's what we already agreed to in contract negotiations so voting it down would lead to a lawsuit..."

Interested in the survey results

Just to not underestimate the fact that the composition of our town Precincts. They truly have different perspectives. We need a structure that provides true access for all

KYT and Ed Ryan did a session for new Town Meeting Members. I think this should be brought back so that TMM know the reverence that should be applicable at TM. This is a respectful position we have been elected to and respect must be displayed even when you don't agree. Is it time for a TMM (and all involved with TM) protocol primer?

TMM need a chance to unwind and discuss what happened at TM. The Saturday luncheon helped with this. Are we really wed to a Wed. night? Is 6 p.m. too early for working people?

Thank you for asking!

Longmeadow, MA has a Town Meeting structure that has two microphones set up, one for "pro" speakers, one for "con" speakers. The Moderator allots a set time for every speaker, and a timer holds all speakers to the same standard. The Moderator calls upon a speaker from one mic, then the speaker from the other mic, so that Pro and Con view points are evenly presented.

All warrant articles should have designated speakers (decided in advance) to present the rationale for the warrant article. In the last TM, there was confusion about who should speak to present the rationale for some of the warrant articles.

South Hadley should replace its Town Meeting with a Town Council form of government, such as in Amherst. Thank you for your work in preparing this survey.

The answer to the above: The by law review committees in other towns almost always deal only with by laws not zoning by laws. Zoning by laws are the expertise of the Planning Board not people on the by law review committee. The by law review committee has no published standards or methods or even a matrix for making their decisions. Their presence is not required at Public Hearings on proposed Zoning By Laws . Why should this small committee have so much power They should have no say over Zoning By Laws.

Their power needs to be scaled back? To me, their decisions are capricious, whimsical, and arbitrary. I was shocked, disenfranchised, and disgusted at this past May's town meeting that a representative of the By Law Review Committee gave a recommendation for or against each proposed Zoning By Law but gave no reason whatsoever for these recommendations. The Moderator did not permit anyone to question this representative.

This was a useful survey. Many thanks to the TMRC for reaching out to TM reps.

TM was much more engaging when we could visibly see how members were voting. That was taken away by the use of electronic vote tabulators.

Town meeting is one way the town offers to meet people from a variety of streets in town.

We live in a Democracy and our educational system needs to redirect Civics classes in our schools before we loose our democratic system to the autocratic tendencies on a national level and eventually on a local level

We should be careful that the TM member job description does not become so onerous that it prevents participation.

What is the compensation history of the Electric Light Dept, for both union and management personnel? How do these salaries compare to town employees with revenues limited by proposition 2 1/2?

When voting on members of a board or committee, it was hard remembering who was who to fairly vote.

Yes, I believe there will be one article considered at the next meeting on which I MUST abstain according to the ethical guidelines. I will make a point of it in debate first.

Yes! I REALLY appreciated the way we vote! It's super-efficient, and I was able to confirm - each time - that my vote was counted accurately. Thanks! In addition, John Hine did his utmost to keep the meeting on track and moving along. He did a fine job.

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	3		
	3	3		
	3	1		
	4	1		Study government, stop raising taxes people can't afford it, no low income housing
	3	1		No sense of transparency from town meeting
	2	2		Property taxes are unbelievable high
	3	1		Not happy with green bags
	3	2		
	3	1		We need change in government
	2	1		
	1	1		
	3		1	
	4	3		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1	1		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	1		
	1		1	Engage with youth
	4	4		
	3	1		They don't listen to the people of this Community
	4	4		
	3	2		
	4	4		
	4	1		Want a mayor
	2	1		
	3	3		Trash bags are too thin
	2	1		
	3	3		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		more exposure for the public to know what's going on
	4	2		
	3	3		
	1	3		
	4	4		stop asking questions
	3	2		
	3	3		
	4	1		we need a mayor
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		
	3	1		time to merge districts and get rid of corruption
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1	1		
	1		1	
	2		1	
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	3		
	4	4		
	2	2		
	4	2		
	1		1	
	3	3		
	1	1		i want to know more
	4	2		no transparency
	1	1		
	3	2		same old talking heads
	2	1		we need a mayor, we need ppeople who know how to budget and run things
	3	2		
	4	2		time for change in government
	3	3		
	1	1		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	1		1	
	4	1		town meeting should be abolished
	4	2		time for change
	3	2		
	1	1		
	3	3		
	1	1		can't seem to find any information town hall not accessible
	3	2		
	2	1		town meeting outdated for this day and age.
	1		1	don't keep up with local government
	3	1		
	2	2		
	2		1	
	2	2		get rid of water districts
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4	3		
	1	1		
	3	2		
	1	3		
	2	2		
	1	1		
	2	1		fix our roads
	1		1	
	3	3		
	1		1	
	1		1	
	3	2		
	2	2		
	1	1		
	2	2		
	1			I have never been contacted by any of my town meeting members, also concerned there are often not enough willing to serve and those who do don't know enough.
	1	1		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	1		Doesn't meet the needs of the community
	2	1		
	3	1		taxes are high for services provided
	3	1		need a mayor someone who lives and works in our community
	4	2		
	2		1	i haven't bothered to educate myself about South Hadley government
	1		1	
	1	1		
	3	1		ineffective trash removal, eliminate green bags
	3	2		out of touch with voters
	1		1	
	2	2		same old voices
	4	2		
	4	4		
	3	3		
	4	1		town meeting antiquated and not working for the people
	1	1		always looking for people to run
	2	1		Prudential/fire District looks like it's part of the town on the website but it's not very misleading
	4	2		can't ask questions because no one is ever in thier offices
	3	2		
	2		1	
	2	2		
	2		1	
	1		1	Don't have an opinion
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	1		
	3	2		
	3	1		
	2	2		don't really follow but not happy with roads and services
	4	3		
	3	2		
	4	2		never hear or read about my members
	2	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2		1	
	2		2	
	4		3	
	4			I don't understand or know what they do but think we need a new govenrmet structure
	1		1	
	4		2	i like Amherst town gov't model much more efficient
	1		1	
	2		1	
	1		1	
	3		1	time for a charter commission
	2		1	
	2		2	Don't like that town hall is never open
	2		2	too political with same people
	1		1	
	2		2	
	3		2	
	2		2	
	3		2	
	2		2	
	3		3	
	3		1	
	2		2	
	3		1	
	2		2	
	3		3	
	1			1
	2		2	
	2		2	
	4		4	
	2			1
	3		3	
	2		1	
	2		1	residents have no say on issues
	3		2	

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	1		more about what happens and how it impacts
	3	3		
	2	2		
	4	2		very antiquated
	3	1		time for change
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	2		mayor
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	1		
	4	2		
	3	2		
	1		1	
	3	1		more money spent on school needs
	3	1		senior tax write off like Holyoke and Northampton
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	2		Not sure why we pay such high salaries when we have school budget issues
	3	2		I rarely attend town meeting but have close friends that do and they are concerned
	3	3		
	3	1		Meetings I watch questions are never answered well or not at all.
	3	1		Need to professionalize
	2	2		
	3	1		
	3	2		
	3	3		
	3	1		not enough info or debate
	4	2		not effective enough to address the community needs
	2	2		
	3	1		
	4	2		relative is a town meeting member and says ineffective

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	4	2		study other communities
	2	2		
	3	1		don't hear anything until I start getting my tax bills
	2	2		
	3	1		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		not happy
	4	1		town meeting is a thing of the past
	2	2		
	3	1		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	1		1	
	2		1	
	3	1		no accountability
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		used to be much better time for change
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	3	3		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	1		I was asked to vote for a rep and they couldn't tell me why they were running just that someone asked them too
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	3		
	4	4		
	3	2		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		too expensive to live here
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	3	1		
	4	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3	1		too expensive no services
	4	1		
	3	2		
	3	1		bad schools
	2	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	3		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	4	1		study government
	1	1		
	2	2		property taxes too high
	3	1		a lot of promises but no one does anything
	3	3		
	3	1		very ineffective
	2	2		i think we need a change like the other towns around us
	2	1		
	1	1		
	3		1	not sure what they do
	4	3		
	3	2		
	2	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		Just voted my ballot and not enough reps running!
	1	1		
	3	3		
	3	1		Watched last meeting I'm very concerned
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		out of touch
	3	3		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	4		



	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	4		bad trash system
	2		1	
	3	3		
	2	2		public doesn't have a clue nor do I think it's members do
	4	2		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	4		
	3	4		It is super helpful to add the upcoming meetings to the Community Facebook page and the ability to attend virtually
	4	3		
	1	2		
	2	1		I learn about Town Meeting thru individuals occasionally
	4	3		Why the membes don't meet ahead of time according to their district
	2	3		More info should be made to public
	2	2		
	3	2		No Clear communication
	4	4		
	4	4		
	1		1	The town org map is really confusing
	2		1	
	1		1	
	2		1	
	1		1	
	1		1	
	1		1	Not sure
	4	4		No
	2	3		More advertising articles
				Typically, don't know about it until it's passed
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	2		Not meeting needs of community
	4	4		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	3		
	3	3		
	4	2		We need a Mayor
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		
	1	1		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1	2		
	1		1	
	2		1	
	3	3		
	3	3		
	3	3		
	4	4		
	2	2		
	4	3		
	3	1		Not hearing needs of schools
	1		1	
	3	3		
	2	2		
	4	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	2	1		Need a Mayor
	3	2		
	4	3		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	3	2		
	1		1	
	4	1		Town Meeting should be abolished
	4	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	1		1	
	3	3		
	1		1	
	2	1		No information
	3	2		
	2	2		Outdated for this day and age
	1		1	
	3	2		
	3	2		
	2		1	
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4	3		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		Roads are a mess
	3	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	1		1	Would like more information
	3	3		
	3	2		
	1	1		
	2	2		
	2	2		never been contacted asking for opinion
	3	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	1		
	3		1	taxes are too high
	2	1		Need a Mayor
	4	2		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	3	1		Not happy
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2		1	
	4	2		
	4	3		
	3	3		
	4	1		Antiquated form of government
	3	1		Not sure members realize what they're voting on
	2	2		
	4	2		No opportunity for public opinion
	3	2		
	2		1	
				Don't follow but I'm not happy about my taxes
	2	2		
	4	3		
	3	2		
	4		1	
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4	3		
	4	2		
	1	1		
	1	1		
	2	2		
	2	1		
	3	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	2		
	2	3		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	3		
	2		1	
	3	2		
	2	2		Residents aren't aware until they get bills
	4	4		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1		1	
	3	2		
	2	2		If things continue I won't be able to live here
	3	2		
	3	2		Have friends who are town meeting members and they aren't happy
	2	2		I attended meetings and no one answers any concerns
	2	2		
	3	2		Hybrid meetings don't represent peoples voices
	3	3		As a new town meeting member I need more information, election process should be same for everyone, more communication and outreach.
	3	2		
	2	3		
	3	2		Very concerned if things continue no one will want to move here and I won't be able to sell my house
	3	2		
	3	1		More commercial and development needed to help sustain tax base
	2	2		
	2	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		very concerned about schools
	3	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	2		review current form this form isn't working for the community
	3	3		
	3	2		My kids aren't happy with school system
	2	2		
	2	3		
	3	3		
	3	2		Poor Management
	4	2		Used to be a town meeting, stopped because it's already determined before meeting begins
	2	2		
	3	2		My neighbors a town meeting and she's concerned so I'm concerned
	3	2		
	3	1		Moved here recently and it's too expensive. Neighboring town I lived in we payed less, better schools and government was more engaged.
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	1		1	No information available except town reminder and that's only feel good stories
	3	2		Very concerned that you don't listen to the community
	3	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4	3		
	3	2		No longer a good place to live
	3	2		
	3	3		Concerned they only seem to be worried about affordable housing

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		Meeting doesn't hear concerns of schools
	2	2		
	3	3		So much division
	2	2		
	1		1	Don't know much but my family isn't happy
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	1		Budget too big for this type of government
	3	2		
	2	2		
	4	4		Don't want to see a Mayor
	3	1		Not happy
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	1		1	
				Hard to get any information
	3	2		
	3	1		Concerned for our Seniors
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	2		School Committee is responsive
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	3		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	3		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	3	2		Not comfortable with this form of government
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	3	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	3		
	3	2		
	3	2		Don't know who represents me
	2	2		
	3	1		Need to change to Mayor
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	4	2		Never hear from anyone
	3	2		
	3	2		
	3	2		Not sure what's going on too hard to get information
	2	2		
	3	2		Concerned about the spending and can't follow because of lack of information
	2	2		
	3	2		All I know is my taxes keep going up, poor management
	2	2		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	2		
	4	4		
	3	1		Moved here 5 years ago and things just continue to get worse from roads to trash
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	2		
	3	3		
	3	1		Following Planning Board and so concerned and then meeting just endorses
	2	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	4	2		Not meeting needs of schools
	2	2		
	2		1	Need more info
	4	4		
	2	3		
	2	3		
	4	4		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3		1	
	1		1	
	3	2		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	4		
	4	4		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	1	1		
	4	2		
	4	2		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	2	2		
	1	1		Town is headed in wrong direction. Schools are too weak. Town is headed too liberal
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2		1	
	4	4		
	3	3		
	2	2		Better communication of times and locations
	3	3		
	1		1	
	3	2		Need more publicity
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3		1	Address the golf course
	2	1		TMM seem to bend the will of the other departments rather than challenge them
	3	3		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	3	2		
	1		1	
	4	4		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4	2		
	2	1		
	3	3		
	2	1		
	1	1		
	2	3		
	4	3		
	2	3		
	1	1		
	2	3		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	3		
	3	2		
	1	1		
	1		1	
	2	3		
	3		1	
	2	2		
	2	2		
	4		1	
	1		1	
	2	3		
	3	2		Don't know where to go to get info on what's being or been discussed
	1	2		
	1	2		Better advertising
	3	3		
	3	3		
	1		1	Have a good website
	3	2		
	1	1		Stop spending our tax money foolishly
	3	2		
	3	3		
	2		1	
	1	1		
	2		1	
	3	2		
	4	4		
	1	3		
	1	2		
	1	2		
	3	4		
	1	2		
	2	2		
	2	3		Notify of video recording then would watch
	1		1	Improve communication

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	1		1	
	3	2		
	1	3		
	3		1	
	3	3		
	3	3		
	2	2		
	1	3		
	1	4		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	4	3		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	2	3		
	1		1	
	1		1	When does it meet?
	4	2		
	2	2		
	2	2		
	3	4		
	2		1	
	4	3		
	2		1	
	2	2		
	3	2		
	2	2		
	3	3		
	3	2		
	4	3		
	1	1		Budget needs to be presented well in advance of Town Meeting
	2	1		
	3	3		

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	4	4		
	3	2		Nope
	1		1	
	1		1	
	4	3		more meetings or on weekends are better for more time
	2	3		
	1	3		
	1		1	
	4	3		N/A
	4	2		Already contributed Chevy
	4	4		This isn't a great survey
	3	3		More voting throughout budgeting process
	1		1	
	2	3		
	1	3		
	2		1	No
	1		1	Have information more accessible
	1		1	
	2	3		
	3		1	N/A
	3		1	
	3	3		
	1		1	
	1	1		
	3	3		
	3	3		
	4	4		
	3	3		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	1		1	
	3	1		
	4	4		
	1	1		1. School Budget should be voted on by all the voter and not by the selectman 2. Do not pay too much money for a translator

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	4	4		
	2		1	All I know about Town Meetings in New England I learned from Gilmore Girls :)
	2		1	
	1		1	More publicity about candidates' backgrounds & issues
	1		1	Would be great to have more info on ways to know about the Town Meetings sent to each address
	2		1	More visibility in how to see whats going on
	3	1		
	1		1	
	3	3		
	2		1	
	1		1	
	2		1	
	1	3		
	1		1	
	3	3		
	2		1	
	3	3		
	2			
	1		1	New to area. How do I get info
	2	2		
	1		1	
	1		1	More info / word of mouth
	4	2		
	2	3		
	2	4		
	1	1		All town meetings & <u>School Board</u> should be <u>in-person</u> *where we see & hear each other
	4	4		
	1	1		Get weed stores
	1	2		pint in on Town Newspaper
	1	2		Yes. Help newcomers understand how our town works! And why on earth don't we combine FIRE DISTRICTS?
	2		1	
	1		1	

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	3		
			1	
	1	1		Would be better if it was open - all residents being members
	3	3		
	1		1	no
	1		3	no
	2	1		Perhaps virtual OR [ion?]
	2		1	
	1	1		Check <u>IDs</u>
	3	3		N/A
	4		1	
	3	1		Would be cool if there was a bike path in town
	1		1	
	2		1	
	1	3		
	1		1	
	2	2		
	1	1		
	1		1	No.
	1		1	No.
	3	3		
	1	1		
	3	3		
	1		1	
	2	3		
	4	4		Wish I knew who are my reps
	4	3		
	2		1	
	3		1	
	1		1	Not all seniors have computers we need another way to communicate
				There needs to be an enrichment campaign for the citizens to learn about the position of Town Meeting Members to encourage participation. Also, citizens should be encouraged to know and be able to contact their representative, directly.
	3	3		
	1	2		Need more transparency

	<b>Do you feel that you are sufficiently informed about Town Meeting to know how it runs? (1-4)</b>	<b>How effective and efficient do you think our current form of Town Meeting is? (1-4)</b>	<b>If 2nd answer was "I don't know" insert 1 here and leave previous box blank</b>	<b>Additional Comments</b>
	3	2		
	1	3		Sources of information needed to be expanded outside of e-mail
	1	3		too much virtual
<b>Average Rating</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>131</b>	
<b>Mode</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Median</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>		
			<b>15.35%</b>	
<b>847 Total Responses</b>			<b>Total "I don't know" responses and % of total surveys completed</b>	

**South Hadley Town Meeting Attendance 2013-2023**

Date	Annual TM		Special TM		
	Attending	%	Attending	%	
11/15/2023		0.00%	89	73.55%	
5/10/2023	112	92.56%		0.00%	Precinct A & D 100% attendance
11/20/2022		0.00%	82	67.77%	
5/11/2022	93	76.86%		0.00%	
6/17/2020	103	85.12%		0.00%	
11/20/2019		0.00%	93	76.86%	
5/8/2019	104	85.95%		0.00%	
5/9/2018	102	84.30%		0.00%	
1/10/2018		0.00%	81	66.94%	
5/10/2017	90	74.38%		0.00%	
1/11/2017		0.00%	90	74.38%	
11/18/2015		0.00%	88	72.73%	
5/19/2015	92	76.03%		0.00%	
5/10/2014	92	76.03%		0.00%	
11/19/2013		0.00%	82	67.77%	
6/19/2013		0.00%	78	64.46%	
5/11/2013	96	79.34%		0.00%	
1/10/2013		0.00%	78	64.46%	
<b>Average</b>		<b>81.18%</b>		<b>69.88%</b>	

\* Percentages calculated assuming that all TM seats are filled