

Town of Burlington

Government Review Committee

Recommendations

Town Meeting Handbook

During our deliberations, we have learned the following about Town Meeting:

- While many elements of the structure of Town Meeting are defined within Special Acts and amendments, the procedures and rules of Town Meeting are defined in local by-laws and in the Town Meeting Handbook.
- The Town Meeting Handbook is an important document that serves to educate new Town Meeting members as to the history, purpose, and functioning of Town Meeting. Some of its key elements are:
 - It relates the procedures and rules of town meeting that are contained within the general bylaws into a more digestible and readable way.
 - It provides additional history and context for the body that is not contained in the bylaws.
 - It communicates additional rules, norms, and information that may not be contained in the bylaws.
- While initially inspired and created to educate new Town Meeting members, this document also serves as a valuable tool to educate any in the general public who wish to learn details of how Town Meeting operates.
- While there have been revisions to the document over the years, there appears to be no formal ownership or responsibility to maintaining the document to ensure that it reflects changes that Town Meeting has adopted.
- There exists a Rules Committee, appointed by the Moderator that currently has a mandate to “Review matters and make recommendations relating to the conduct of the Town Meeting”.

Therefore, the committee recommends the following:

- The responsibility of reviewing and updating the Town Meeting Handbook be assigned to the purview of the Rules Committee.

- The reviewing and updating of the Town Meeting Handbook to occur a minimum of once per year.
- The latest edition to the Town Meeting Handbook to be provided to members and the public at least 14 days prior to each regularly scheduled Town Meeting, so that those participating shall have a common understanding of the current procedures and rules of Town meeting.