



# GUIDELINES FOR WARRANT ARTICLE SPONSORS

## Boards/Committees/Commissions and Citizen Petitions

### To Start

The process of preparing a Town Meeting (TM) Warrant Article is similar for both Town boards/committees/commissions as well as citizen petitions. This guide will help you prepare for and facilitate the greatest chance for success for your Warrant Article.

***Your Timeline begins*** once you have requested that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) place your Article on the next TM warrant (**timeline synopsis below**). Please immediately contact the head of the Warrant Committee (WC) to ascertain what will be needed to start reviewing your Article. A WC representative will be assigned to your Article and will work with you throughout the process. Depending on the nature of your Article, your WC representative will help you determine if other Town boards/committees/commissions should be involved. The Town Clerk can support your efforts for outreach by posting announcements on the Dover website's homepage for any hearings or events you might hold to inform voters.

**It is *your responsibility*** to provide any financial, engineering, legal and/or other relevant information to the WC in a timely manner. This information is needed for the WC to properly review your Article. In addition, you will present this material at the WC's Open Hearing noted below. The WC will subsequently make a recommendation on your Article in the Blue Book.

**All requested information** for your Article should be provided to the WC and (if appropriate) the Capital Budget Committee (CBC) no later than **ten weeks before** the TM or sooner based on the nature of the Article. There may be follow up information requests with due dates set by the WC and/or other relevant boards.

**We strongly recommend** that sponsors conduct outreach and meetings with citizens to educate them about your Article. The more you educate in advance, the greater the

likelihood of success. When neighbors are going to be affected, holding outreach sessions seeking their understanding, input and support is essential. TM should not be the first time voters are presented with your Article! Presenting at outreach sessions will also help you refine your message, learn of any concerns, and help you practice your presentation.

**Six weeks before TM** there will be an **Open Hearing** hosted by the WC. This meeting should be attended by *all* who intend to speak at TM. Having a back-up speaker present is always a good idea. In essence, this is your dry run for TM. As such, your presentation needs to be in “final form.” Open Hearing is an opportunity for citizens and committee members to ask questions about your Article. It is also an opportunity for sponsors to learn of any objections/concerns and allows you to address them before TM. Presentations that are too long can be refined, and made more concise, to make sure you give your best presentation at the TM.

**Four weeks before TM**, every Warrant Article and motion needs to be reviewed by the Town’s legal counsel. Your Article, motion and “final” revised presentations should be submitted to the Town Administrator to be forwarded to Town Counsel for review. This allows time for any necessary legal revisions before the TM.

**Ten days before TM** there will be a **Moderator’s Meeting**. All who plan to speak at TM should attend, including back-up presenters along with any non-citizen topical experts who would like to speak. At the Moderator’s Meeting, speakers, speaking times and speaking orders will be determined. Presenters and organized opponents of an Article are typically given 8 minutes to present. Follow on speakers are typically given 2 minutes. If you would like extra time, this is when you should ask for it, and reasonable requests will be considered by the Moderator. If handouts are planned, those should be discussed at the Moderator’s Meeting, as well.

**Five days before TM** your final PowerPoint or other presentation needs to be submitted to the Town Clerk for inclusion in the TM slide deck. Failure to do so risks your presentation not being included in the TM slide deck.

### **Please Be Considerate**

In addition to the Town employees and Town Counsel, Dover relies on citizens who volunteer their time and efforts to ensure a successful TM. It is unfair to ask them to rush, spend additional time or waste their time because sponsors are unprepared or delinquent with requisite information.

Please read and follow these guidelines carefully. Failure to do so risks the WC and/or CBC voting not to recommend your Article. Furthermore, the Board of Selectmen could move that your Article be dismissed at TM if you have not prepared properly or failed to meet the timelines noted herein. The meeting times noted are approximate and will vary based on the calendar. **Exact dates and times** will be published on the Town's website for each TM.

The Selectmen, Moderator, Town Clerk, WC and CBC believe that well-informed residents will lead to a more effective Town Meeting. Please give yourself the time you will need to communicate as frequently as necessary with the WC and any other relevant boards. Please respect the time of your fellow citizens. If circumstances lead to a delay (to a future TM) or dismissal of your Article, please let the Town Administrator and WC chair know immediately. Thank you for your efforts in trying to improve our Town. We wish you a successful outcome!

Board of Selectmen, on behalf of all those mentioned herein.

### **Timeline Synopsis:**

- 1) **Immediately** after submitting your Warrant Article to the BOS/Town Administrator, contact the Chair of the Warrant Committee to start the process.
- 2) **Immediately** begin appropriate outreach and education with neighbors and citizens.
- 3) Contact the Town Clerk to post any hearings or public meetings.
- 4) **Ten weeks** before TM, provide all requested information to the WC and relevant boards. There may be follow up requests for more complex articles.
- 5) **Six weeks** before TM is the WC Open Hearing.
- 6) **Four weeks** before TM all Articles and motions need to be given to the Town Administrator for legal review.
- 7) **Ten days** before TM all speakers and back-ups should attend the Moderator's Meeting.
- 8) **Five days** before TM, final slides/presentations must be submitted to the Town Clerk for inclusion in the TM slide deck.