

**Town Moderator Update
Guidelines for
Annual Town Meeting
Saturday, August 15, 2020, 9 a.m.**

This year's Annual Town Meeting has been set by the Board of Selectmen for 9 a.m., on Saturday, August 15, 2020, under a tent in the field behind New Marlborough Central School.

As your Town Moderator, I look forward to seeing many of you there.

I know that some people are concerned about their safety during the pandemic but would still like to participate in governing our Town. To that end, I have worked closely with Town officials to devise guidelines intended to protect all of us as we exercise our right to gather, deliberate and vote. **All plans and operating procedures have been approved by the New Marlborough Board of Health and reviewed by Town staff and public safety officials.**

Responding to Covid-19

- Although some towns are holding their town meetings indoors, most towns have moved their meetings outdoors and the Board of Selectmen has determined that our meeting should be held outdoors as well, in this case, under an open sided tent with plenty of air circulation.
- We will continue to review and revise these Guidelines as necessary right up until the meeting starts to assure everyone's safety. Data related to Covid-19 in our town strongly suggests that community spread of Covid-19 has significantly slowed and the number of active cases in Berkshire County is diminishing. We are therefore comfortable that, by adhering to these Guidelines, attendees at our meeting will be reasonably protected while attending.
- If anything should change prior to the meeting and we are not comfortable proceeding, the Moderator has the statutory right to postpone the meeting and I will not hesitate to do so if necessary.
- You should consider not attending Town Meeting if the answer to any of these questions is yes:
 - Are you feeling sick?
 - Are you having possible symptoms of Covid-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell)?
 - Have you been exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected Covid-19?
- If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you are encouraged to remain at home.
- If you do attend the meeting and feel unwell afterwards with any symptoms of Covid-19, we ask that you please immediately contact the Board of Health in New Marlborough.
- The Town will have a record of attendees who check in for the meeting and this record can be accessed should there be a need for contact tracing.
- If possible, please consider bringing a food donation of canned or boxed staples for those of our neighbors experiencing food insecurity. Donation drop off boxes will be located at each check-in entrance point. All donations will be delivered to the People's Pantry.

Venue

- The meeting will be held outdoors under a very large tent in the field behind New Marlborough Central School in Mill River.
- The tent will have socially distanced seating.
- The tent will be open on all sides with excellent air flow. It does tend to be cooler under a tent so please dress accordingly.
- Parking will be on the field behind the tent. Drive past the school and then follow the signs and the police officer to be directed to the parking area. Someone will also be present in the field to show you where to park.

- Handicapped parking will be available on asphalt, adjacent to the tent. Enter the parking lot immediately before New Marlborough Central and you will be directed to the reserved parking area.

Pre-meeting and Check-in

- It will help our planning if you can let us know the number of people in your household who you expect to attend the Town Meeting. You can do this by sending an RSVP to our Town Clerk, at kchretien@newmarlboroughma.gov. This is by no means required but will be helpful.
- Check-in will begin at 8:15 a.m. Please arrive early.
- Voters and attendees should proceed from their cars to the clearly marked check in tent. Please remember to remain 6' apart at all times and to wear a mask when leaving your car (more on masks below).
- Family members and others sharing the same household may stand and sit together. The line to check-in will be managed by Town Emergency Management personnel in order to ensure sufficient physical distancing (markings will be placed on the ground).
- Signage detailing safety guidelines will be posted at the entrances.
- To minimize lines and bottlenecks, there will be two check in tables, widely spaced. Hand sanitizer will be available at each table.
- By Governor Baker's Covid-19 Order No. 31, all persons (including children five years of age or older) are required to wear a mask, unless exempted by medical or other reasons set forth in the Order. In addition, both the CDC and DPH have advised people to wear face coverings when they are out of the home and may be in close proximity to others. While these Guidelines are intended to maintain a six-foot distance between attendees, there will likely be instances when this may not occur for brief moments (for example, when walking past someone). Face coverings provide an important additional level of protection.
- Accordingly, masks or face coverings will be required upon exiting your automobile and must remain in place throughout check-in and during the meeting. If a resident cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, please advise one of our on-site volunteers and a separate seating area will be provided. The Town will provide a *limited* number of masks for those who do not have them or who forget them, so please try to bring your own. Voters may remove their mask when recognized by the Moderator to speak and should replace them afterwards. Masks should cover both the nose and mouth.
- Check in personnel will be masked and gloved.
- All voters will be provided a warrant, ballots, voter card, pencil and paper at check in. All of these materials will be placed into envelopes a minimum of 72 hours beforehand.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at various places outside and inside the tent.
- Assisted listening devices will be available at a table provided for that purpose. All will have been sanitized in advance of the meeting.

Seating

- All seats will be sanitized before the meeting.
- Seats will be set up in rows for single attendees, for two attendees in the same household, and, if more than two in a single household group attend, specially arranged. This allows for aisles 6 feet wide and 6 feet between each row of chairs.
- Please do not move the chairs without the consent of one of our on-site monitors and please follow their instructions to assure a safe seating process.
- Seating near the check-in area will be reserved for those unable to walk long distances on grass; some chairs with arms will be provided for those requiring them.
- Please remain in your seats at all times except to speak, utilize a rest room, or exit the venue.
- Thanks to the New Marlborough Emergency Rescue Department, bottled water will be provided to all attendees.
- As nice as it will be to see our friends and neighbors, please do not congregate at any time.
- Childcare will not be provided, and attendance of children is politely discouraged.

- If it is necessary to bring children and you wish to sit outside the tent, a separate family blanket area will be made available with each blanket to be located within a 10' x 10' area. Parents and guardians need to assure that physical distancing is observed. Families must bring their own blankets. Please try to remain where the Moderator can see you so that your vote can be counted.
- To the extent possible, all foot traffic will be one way. Traffic flow patterns will be indicated.
- Social distancing monitors will be on hand to politely remind attendees of their shared obligation for the safety of each of our neighbors in attendance.
- Only registered voters, second homeowners and family members will be allowed in the tent. Any other person with business at the meeting must be pre-cleared for attendance by the Moderator at least 72 hours before commencement of the meeting.

The Meeting

- The meeting will be conducted as close to our normal deliberative process as possible.
- Comments and questions will be limited to our traditional two-minute limit unless otherwise approved by the Moderator in advance. Please try to limit comments and questions to that which is necessary and non-repetitive so we can move the meeting along expeditiously.
- To expedite our business, we will use a consent agenda for routine and non-controversial articles, as we did last year, so that such articles can be taken up together.
- As in the past, all votes will be by use of hand held voter cards, first visually observed with a declaration of the Moderator, then with a standing self-count, if necessary.
- Considered debate and discussion is a hallmark of our Town Meeting and is encouraged. Microphones will be set up at the front of the seating area. Should you wish to speak, after you are recognized by the Moderator, please go to the closest microphone and stand in the spot marked on the floor. Do not approach any closer to the microphone. *Please do not touch the microphone.* We have retained a professional audio company to manage the sound system and they are using professional quality, condenser microphones which are quite sensitive and will pick up your voice even if the microphone is below or above your mouth. Only one person at a time is allowed in the speaker's area.
- Since the tent is large and the microphones must be located at the front of the seating area for safety reasons, please try to sit close to the front if you plan to speak often at the meeting. This will make it easier and faster for you to access the microphones. Of course, if you cannot sit close to the microphones, you are still more than welcome to speak when recognized.
- Face coverings may be removed when speaking at the microphone, but only while speaking. The face covering should be worn when walking both to and from the microphone. This is a universal standard for all, including officials and the Moderator.
- If you have a comment or question and do not wish to speak from the microphone, please write your name, address, comment or question down on the paper provided when you checked in and wave it. One of our monitors will take it from you and deliver it to the Moderator who will then read it and confirm with you its accuracy.
- Of course, no smoking is permitted in the tent or anywhere on school grounds.
- Please do not bring food with you into the tent.

Ending the Meeting and Other Matters

- When the meeting is dissolved, please stay in place. The Moderator will dismiss voters by section to ensure a safe and orderly exit.
- New Marlborough Emergency and Fire Department staff and an ambulance will be on scene.
- New Marlborough Police Department will assist with traffic and encourage gatherings to disperse.
- Since the meeting will take place under a tent, we expect that the meeting will convene even if it rains. However, in the event of a significant weather event that endangers voters' safety, the Moderator has the authority to postpone the meeting. In such event, an email to everyone on the Town's email list, a reverse 911 call and notice on the town web site will all be used.
- Bathrooms in New Marlborough Central School will not be open, but two accessible portable toilets will be on site.

- Hand sanitizing stations will be available throughout the venue.

Working with our Board of Selectmen, our dedicated town employees, Police, Emergency and Fire Departments, Board of Health, and Commission on Disabilities, I have endeavored to make the conduct of the meeting as safe as reasonably possible, all guided by state and local public health authorities. I am very grateful to all of our town personnel for their assistance with this meeting.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Town Meeting as we gather to make the important decisions which will guide the great Town of New Marlborough in the future.

Respectfully,

Barry R. Shapiro
Town Moderator
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