

## 2009 TOWN MEETING VOTER “HOW TO” GUIDE

Daniel B. Winslow, Town Moderator

### ☞ HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN DEBATE

- Line Up at “YES” Microphone or “NO” Microphone  
The microphones this year are labeled with red NO or a green YES. If you don't have a position and just want to ask a question, line up at the “???” microphone. When it's your turn at the microphone, the Moderator will recognize you to speak. It's OK to debate and urge your fellow voters to vote “yes” or “no” (make sure you're standing at the microphone that matches your position) The Moderator will alternate between speakers at the YES and NO microphones.
- Direct Your Remarks to the Moderator and Keep It Civil  
This requires some getting used to, but you speak to the crowd via the Moderator. Instead of “John, I disagree with you” it's “Mr. Moderator, I disagree with John.” **NEVER** engage in personal insult or attack. Remember, your opponent on this article may be your supporter five articles later.
- Be Brief and Confine Your Remarks to the Article Being Debated  
By town bylaw, we have time limits for speakers: 5 minutes the first time you speak on an Article, and 3 minutes thereafter. No one can speak more than twice on any motion, except to answer questions or raise a point of order. If you want to speak a second time, please go to the end of the line at the YES or NO microphone to give others a chance to speak for the first time. If the Moderator advises that your time is ending, please wrap up your remarks so others can speak.
- Town Meeting is Not Designed for One on One Conversations  
When you have the floor, you are the only person who can speak unless someone else is recognized by the Moderator. If you use your time to ask a question, the Moderator may not immediately call the person who can answer that question but will get to them eventually if they ask to be recognized. The dynamics of a mass meeting make back and forth conversation dialogue between two people difficult and it's not fair to others who wish to speak.
- Listen Carefully to Other Speakers  
If you're standing in line at the YES or NO microphone and a speaker makes the same point you were going to make, it's OK to leave the line and return to your seat. Please listen to others and give them the same courtesy you would want them to give to your remarks.

### ☞ HOW TO MAKE AN AMENDMENT TO A PENDING MOTION

- After Being Recognized by the Moderator, Move to Amend the Article  
Go to the “NO” microphone. When it's your turn at the microphone, state “Mr. Moderator, I move to amend Article \_\_\_ by adding/deleting the following language” and then describe your suggested changes. If someone seconds your motion (“I second the motion”) the motion to amend is before the voters for debate.

(See other side)

(Continued from other side)

- Give the Moderator a Written Copy of Your Motion to Amend  
Unless otherwise allowed by the Moderator, all motions to amend must be in writing. The Moderator has amendment forms at the podium for ease of use.
- Go to the front of the line at the YES Microphone to Explain Your Motion  
Once you have made a motion to amend, people may need to change to the YES or NO microphones, depending on their positions. The Moderator will immediately recognize you at the YES microphone to explain what your motion does and why people should vote for your motion.
- Minor Amendments Can Be Accepted as “Friendly” Amendments Without Debate  
In the Moderator’s discretion, minor changes, such as typos, can be accepted by the proposer of the original Article as “friendly” changes without debate.
- It’s OK to Amend an Amendment and Other Technical Considerations  
A pending amendment can be amended, but only one such motion to amend an amendment will be considered at the same time. Amendments cannot exceed the scope of the original Article.

#### ☞ HOW TO CUT OFF DEBATE

- Go to Either the YES or NO Microphone (Whichever Line is Shorter)  
When the Moderator recognizes you, DO NOT speak to the merits of the Article. Instead, simply say “Mr. Moderator, I move to cut off debate.” If you speak to the merits of the Article, the motion to cut off debate is out of order. Someone needs to second the motion.
- In the Moderator’s Discretion, the Moderator Will Call for a Vote  
It takes a 2/3 vote without debate to cut off debate. If the Moderator believes many people who haven’t spoken wish to speak, he may refuse to accept the motion. However, if there appears to be no significant disagreement with the decision on the Article, the Moderator may call for a vote even if people are standing in line at the YES or NO microphone to focus on Articles in dispute.
- At the Request of Seven Voters, the Moderator Will Order a Counted Vote
- If the Motion to Cut Off Debates Fails, Debate Will Continue  
Until either the Moderator calls for a vote on the Article or another voter again moves to cut off debate

#### ☞ WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK THE MODERATOR

- If you have a question on procedure, from your seat you can stand up and loudly say “Mr. Moderator, Point of Information” (or if you think the Moderator has made a procedural error or a bylaw has been violated, “Mr. Moderator, Point of Order”). There is no need to go to any microphone to make a Point of Information or a Point of Order. When the Moderator recognizes you, state your Point and the Moderator will make a ruling.

*“A civilized society is one that which tolerates eccentricity to the point of doubtful sanity.”*

Robert Frost