

TOWN OF PLYMOUTH TOWN MEETING HANDBOOK



Unanimously approved by COPC Members on September 29, 2025

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Introduction

Welcome to the Town of Plymouth's Town Meeting Handbook.

This handbook has been compiled as a reference guide for current and prospective Representatives to Town Meeting. Here you will find definitions of relevant terms, information on how to become a Town Meeting Representative, the structure of Plymouth's government, the responsibilities of the legislative and executive branches, as well as resources for additional information. Being an active participant in local government is a great way to give back and help shape the community in which you live.

General Definitions

Article

An article is an item on the Warrant, a description of what is proposed to be voted upon at the Town Meeting. Articles may be placed on the warrant by action of the Select Board or by citizen petition.

Caucus

A caucus is a public meeting held in each precinct to review the subject matter of the upcoming Town Meeting or other matters. Caucus meetings may be held in conjunction with other precincts.

Citizens Petition

A citizen wishing to place an article on an Annual Town Meeting warrant [must present a petition](#) with at least ten (10) registered voters containing the wording as it is to appear on the warrant. One hundred (100) signatures are needed for a Special Town Meeting warrant. Once the citizen petition article is submitted to the Town Manager's office the article wording cannot be changed.

Special Town Meeting

Special Town Meetings are often for articles that need to go into effect immediately, or before the start of the new fiscal year, and may be held in tandem with the Spring Annual Town Meeting. Other Special Town Meetings must be called by the Select Board with fourteen-day notice or within forty-five days of a written request submitted with two hundred (200) signatures of registered voters.

Town Bylaws

Municipal bylaws are ongoing regulatory laws which apply in a certain area. A municipal bylaw is no different from any other law of the land, and can be enforced with penalties, challenged in court, and must comply with other laws of the land such as the country's constitution. Common bylaws include vehicle parking and stopping regulations, animal control, building and construction, licensing, noise, zoning and business regulation, and management of public recreation areas.

The Plymouth Town Bylaws are located at [Town Bylaws & Town Charter | Plymouth, MA \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

Town Charter

The document providing the framework of local government for the Town of Plymouth similar to a Constitution, which is created, amended, or repealed under the procedures of the Home Rule Procedures Act of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 43B., and the Constitution of the Commonwealth, Const. Amend. Art.89.

The Plymouth Town Charter is located on at [Town Bylaws & Town Charter | Plymouth, MA \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

Town Meeting

Representative Town Meeting is the legislative body of Plymouth's town government; all spending, changes in the town bylaws, and zoning bylaws must be approved by Plymouth Town Meeting Representatives through a vote at Town Meeting.

Town Meeting Time

The procedures which govern Town Meetings come from: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 39, Plymouth's By-Laws and Charter, and parliamentary procedure. While some communities rely on Roberts Rules of Order, Plymouth has adopted *Town Meeting Time* as the guide for parliamentary procedure. The Moderator also employs his discretion when needed. Most importantly, however, the Town Meeting is within the control of the town meeting representatives.

The Massachusetts Moderators Association publishes *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law*.
[Town Meeting Time | Massachusetts Moderators Association \(massmoderators.org\)](#)

Town Meeting Warrant

The Town Meeting Warrant is the agenda used for Town Meeting. The Select Board is responsible for setting the warrant. Articles voted in the Annual Town Meeting go into effect starting in the new fiscal year.

Financial Definitions

Appropriate

To set aside money for a particular purpose or use.

Articles

The separate items to be discussed and then voted upon.

Bonds

Municipal bonds are issued by a city or town for large capital expenditures such as schools or other buildings. The period within which the bonds must be retired varies according to the type of capital project being financed.

Budgets

In the case of the Town of Plymouth, the Municipal Budget refers to all the operations including Town, School, and Enterprise Funds (Airport, Solid Waste, Sewer, etc.). In Plymouth, the Town & School's operations are funded by general funds. Enterprise Fund operations are funded by revenue generated from fees and charges assessed for services provided by the enterprise fund departments.

Capital Budget

An appropriation or spending plan that uses borrowing or direct outlay for capital or fixed asset improvements. Among other information, a capital budget should identify the method of financing each recommended expenditure, i.e., tax levy or rates, and identify those items that were not recommended.

Capital Exclusion

A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specific expenditure.

Capital Improvements Program

A blueprint for planning a community's capital expenditure that comprises an annual capital budget and a five-year capital program. It coordinates community planning, fiscal capacity, and physical development. While the community's needs should be identified in the program, there is a set of criteria that prioritizes the expenditure.

Capital Outlay

Capital projects and improvements involving major nonrecurring tangible assets and projects. The capital improvement budget shall be presented in a single article separately listing the projects to be undertaken.

Capital Outlay and Expenditure

This is the exchange of one asset (cash) for another (capital asset), with no ultimate effect on net assets. Also known as "pay as you go", it is the appropriation and use of available cash to fund a capital improvement, as opposed to incurring debt to cover the cost.

Chapter 90

The cost of construction and maintenance on public roads that are approved by the Commonwealth is eligible for “Chapter 90” reimbursement.

Cherry Sheet

Named for the color of the paper traditionally printed on, details the state aid to be received by the Town.

Debt Exclusion

A referendum procedure in which the Town can vote to collect property taxes in excess of its levy limit to pay for a specified period.

Enterprise Fund

A separate, self-sufficient accounting fund that addresses the direct and indirect costs of services provided by water, sewer, solid waste and airport.

Fiscal Year

The town fiscal year for the proposed budget begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

Free Cash

The amount of surplus revenue not spent from the previous fiscal year over and above uncollected taxes that is certified by the State. It is available for appropriation by Town Meeting.

Government Budget Preparation and Review Process

Upon the preparation of estimated revenues and non-budgetary expenses for the upcoming fiscal year, specific General Government operating budgets are prepared by department heads, boards, and commissions during the period mid-October to mid-November. The Town Manager issues budget preparation guidelines to all departments consistent with revenue projections and policies of the Select Board.

Upon receipt of all proposed budgets, the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager, with the assistance of the Director of Finance review said budgets in detail. Budget review sessions are scheduled with department heads. It is then the responsibility of the Town Manager to prepare the Budget Message for distribution to the Select Board, Advisory & Finance Committee, and other interested parties. The budget message sets forth a summary of all revenue and non-budgetary projections, describes the allocation formula, sets forth the budget maximums and provides the total recommended budget for General Government.

The Select Board then reviews the General Government Budget. Town Meeting Representatives and the public are encouraged to be present at these sessions and to participate in the review process. The final budget as recommended by the Select Board is then submitted to the Advisory & Finance Committee for its review and action. Final action on all budgets is of course the responsibility of the Town Meeting.

Individual Line Items

A line-item budget is a highly detailed budget. Plymouth uses this type of budget, which separates spending into categories, such as supplies, equipment, maintenance, or salaries as opposed to a program budget.

Levy Limit

Under Proposition 2 ½ the maximum amount that the town can raise in property taxes is 2-½% more than the maximum it was allowed to raise for the prior fiscal year plus adjustment for growth.

Overlay

The amount of money held in reserve for the payment of tax abatements.

Raise

To impose a tax.

Raise and Appropriate

The authority to both tax and spend.

Reduction and Addition

Town Meeting Representatives may vote to change the line items in the proposed budget.

Reserve Fund

The fund established by the Town Meeting for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures.

Retained Earnings

An equity account reflecting the accumulated earnings of an enterprise fund, which may be used to fund capital improvements, reimburse the general fund for prior-year subsidies, reduce user charges, or provide for enterprise revenue deficits.

Revolving Fund

An expenditure account to which receipts are credited and from which expenses are paid in a cyclic, self-sustaining manner, primarily through service fees. For departmental Revolving Funds, each fund must be authorized by the Town Meeting each year.

Surplus Revenue

The result of unexpended balances in appropriations and articles, and revenue collected in excess of revenue budgeted. Surplus revenue from one year helps to generate 'free cash' in the following year. Also called 'unreserved fund balance'.

Tax Levy

The amount of money to be raised through real and personal property taxes.

Unpaid Bills

Requests for payment from a vendor that arrive after the close of the fiscal year, in which goods or services were received. The appropriation was in the budget for the prior year but was not carried forward and the appropriation balance was closed out.

Procedural Definitions

Amend

A motion to amend may be to add, delete or substitute words in the Motion to be amended. "I move that the motion be amended...."

Change order of Articles

The order of consideration of articles on the Warrant may be changed by a two-thirds vote. "I move that the order of consideration of the articles be changed as follows..."

Declared Vote

The Moderator may decide the sense of Town Meeting by a voice vote. If seven or more representatives question the vote immediately, the Moderator will ask for a standing vote and declare the vote as final. Currently, Plymouth Town Meeting is conducted in a hybrid format in which all votes are tabulated via role call vote.

Majority Vote

A vote of one half plus one of the Town Meeting Representatives present to pass an article.

Method of Voting

A motion to fix the method of voting requires a majority vote, except secret ballots, which require a two-thirds vote. "I move that we vote on the pending motion by (standing, rollcall or secret vote)."

Motion

A motion is the specific action to be taken under an article on which the Town Meeting is voting. A main motion may not exceed the scope of an article. A motion may be brought forth by anyone with privileges at Town Meeting and/or the Advisory and Finance Committee, Select Board or Town Meeting Representative.

Motion to Postpone

This may take the form of a Motion to Postpone to a specific date and time. “I move that consideration of this matter be postponed until...”

Motion to Close Debate

A motion to vote to end debate on a pending motion. When one has heard sufficient debate on a pending motion and there is a desire to vote immediately, this motion will end debate with a two-thirds vote (the motion itself is not debatable). “I motion to close debate.”

Point of Order

A question directed to the Moderator concerning a procedure of the meeting.

Question the Vote

If a vote is immediately questioned by seven or more town meeting representatives, the Moderator must verify the vote by polling the Town Meeting Representatives. “I question the vote.”

Question of Quorum

The quorum necessary for the conduct of representative town meeting business shall be two- thirds (2/3) of the total number of elected Town Meeting Representatives. A representative has the right to question the presence of a quorum at any time “I question the quorum”

Reconsideration

Reconsideration is a vote to give more deliberation to the action to be reconsidered. It can only be moved by a town meeting representative who voted on the side that prevailed on the first vote, although enforcement of such a rule will be limited to roll-call votes, and a majority vote is required in the first instance. “I move to reconsider the vote.”

Suspension of the Rules

Rules relating to the conduct of the meeting may be suspended by a two-thirds vote (Example; allowing a non-resident to speak). “I move that we suspend the rules to permit...”

Table

The Motion to Table is available to delay action on an article to enable the Town Meeting to take up more urgent business, and a two-thirds vote is required. “I move that the motion be laid on the table.”

Town Meeting Representatives

How to Become a Town Meeting Representative

Town Meeting Representatives are elected for three-year terms. If a spot has been vacated, a registered voter may run to fill the remainder of that term.

To become a Town Meeting Representative, you must:

1. Be a Registered Voter in your Plymouth Precinct.
2. Obtain nomination papers from the Town Clerk's office.
3. Collect ten signatures from Plymouth voters registered within your precinct.
4. Submit the completed nomination papers to the Town Clerk prior to the established deadline.

Note that candidates for re-election for the office of Town Meeting Representative need only sign a declaration for re-election provided by the Town Clerk's office to appear on the annual spring town election ballot.

A candidate may also be written in on the ballot when voting. This is a viable option when there are less nominations than vacancies within a precinct. The write-in name must be that of a registered Plymouth voter from that specific precinct. The name must be legible and be listed with their residential address.

Once You Are Elected – Being Sworn In

Before a Town Meeting Representative is eligible to participate in a vote, the elected individual must first be sworn in by the Town Clerk or other person with the right to take such votes and must do so within 21 days of the election.

Precinct Officers

Each precinct shall elect a chairperson, vice-chair, and clerk. Each precinct chairperson shall arrange for the posting of notices of caucus meetings with the Town Clerk at Town Hall. Each such caucus meeting shall be conducted in accordance with G.L. c.30A, § 18-25 et seq., the Open Meeting Law.

Precinct Caucuses

The Town Meeting Representatives from each precinct shall, within twenty (20) days following each town election, meet and elect from among their own precinct's representatives, a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and clerk, to serve for a term of one (1) year, and shall file a notice of such organization with the Town Clerk.

If the Town Clerk fails to receive a notice of organization within twenty-one (21) days following a town election, the Town Clerk shall immediately call a meeting of the representatives from such precincts that have failed to organize, for the purposes of organizing.

Each precinct shall hold a caucus meeting to review the subject matter of the upcoming Town Meeting. Caucus meetings may be held in tandem with other precinct delegations.

Each chairperson shall arrange for the posting of notices on the Town's website of caucus meetings via the Town Clerk's Office. Each meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

If You Move

A Town Meeting Representative who ceases to reside in the precinct they were elected in during their term of office shall notify the Town Clerk. A Town Meeting Representative who relocates to an address within their elected precinct may continue to serve that precinct but must still update their mailing address with the Town Clerk's Office.

If You Resign

A Town Meeting Representative who decides to resign must notify the Town Clerk in writing.

Replacing a Town Meeting Representative During a Term

The person who received the highest number of votes among the unsuccessful Town Meeting Representative candidates at the most recent election in the precinct shall fill the vacancy until the next regular election. If such person declines, or is unable to fill the vacancy, the person who received the next highest number of votes among the unsuccessful representative candidates at the most recent election shall fill the vacancy. If the vacancy cannot be filled in this manner, the precinct caucus delegation shall vote to fill the vacancy. If necessary, the Town Clerk shall call representatives of the precinct caucus delegation together by written notice and shall conduct the election. This person fills the vacancy until the next Town election. In order to run for a full-term position, they will need to obtain nomination papers and signatures as if they are new.

Committee of Precinct Chairs

The precinct chairpersons shall convene within forty-five (45) days following each town election, and shall organize as a Committee of Precinct Chairs, electing a chairperson, a vice chairperson and a clerk.

The Committee of Precinct Chairs may from time to time appoint subcommittees of itself or committees of Town Meeting Representatives to review town bylaws, town meeting rules, and for such other purposes as they shall deem appropriate and shall make recommendations to the Representative Town Meeting and/or the Moderator at least annually. The committee may also perform other duties designated to facilitate the business of town meetings. In addition to any other powers conferred upon it by the representative town meeting, the Committee of Precinct Chairs shall periodically review the rules of procedure that govern the

conduct of the representative town meeting and report its findings to the representative town meeting at least annually.

Voting Locations for Precincts

Precinct	Location	Address
1	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
2	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
3	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
4	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
5	West Elementary School	170 Plympton Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
6	Manomet Elementary School	70 Manomet Point Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
7	Indian Brook School	1181 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
8	Indian Brook School	1181 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
9	South Elementary School	178 Bourne Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
10	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
11	West Elementary School	170 Plympton Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
12	South Middle School	488 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
13	West Elementary School	170 Plympton Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
14	Indian Brook School	1181 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
15	South Middle School	488 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
16	South Middle School	488 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
17	South Elementary School	178 Bourne Road, Plymouth, MA 02360
18	Plymouth Community Intermediate School	117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360

The U.S. Census and Re-Districting

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census of the population.

When the results are furnished to the Town of Plymouth, it may become necessary to shift the boundaries of the precincts, add precincts, or eliminate precincts, based on population increases, decreases, or shifts within the town in order to meet with state requirements.

In the event of a change to precinct lines, every seat in affected precincts will be considered open, and every Town Meeting Member will need to seek nomination to be placed on the ballot and be duly elected at the spring election.

Some Town Meeting Members may find that they are part of a different or new precinct as a result of the redistricting.

Because every Town Meeting seat is open in the event of redistricting, no member is considered an incumbent in office. Therefore, it is essential that every member be sworn in by the Town Clerk before conducting any caucus, meeting, or reorganization following the Town election.

Town of Plymouth



Map Prepared for the Town of Plymouth, Census Liaison
Courtesy of William F. Galvin, Census Liaison
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Cape Cod Bay

2020 Population - 61,217

Minimum 5%	Target Population	Maximum 5%
3,231	3,401	3,571

Precinct Boundaries

Precinct	Plymouth	Variance
1	3,255	4.22
2	3,312	2.91
3	3,292	4.20
4	3,538	3.53
5	3,535	3.91
6	3,422	2.79
7	3,418	4.43
8	3,466	1.91
9	3,275	3.81
10	3,524	3.02
11	3,527	3.75
12	3,207	3.70
13	3,459	4.26
14	3,522	4.23
15	3,395	4.27
16	3,284	4.31
17	3,234	3.23
18	3,234	4.21

Boundaries effective December 31, 2021

MIDDLEBOROUGH

ROCHESTER

WAREHAM

BOURNE

SANDWICH

PLYMPTON

KINGSTON

DUXBURY

Legend

- Barbers Point
- Geographic Feature
- Island
- Isle Point
- Islet
- Long Marsh
- Shoreline, 2021
- Crease 2021, Shaded, Tinted, Map Roads

15 0.75 3 1.5
Miles

Structure of Plymouth Town Government

The Legislative Branch - Town Meeting Representatives

Town Meeting is Plymouth's legislative branch of government. It consists of 162 elected Town Meeting Representatives. In addition, the Town Moderator, who presides over Town Meetings and does not vote except in instances of a tie. The 162 Representatives are elected by precinct, with nine representatives elected from each of the Town's 18 precincts. The Town Meeting Representatives are elected for staggered three-year terms so that three representatives are elected from each precinct annually each May Town Election. The legislature considers and acts upon all bylaw changes, all proposed capital and operating budgets, bond issues, and all other financial proposals, certain zoning issues as well as changes to the Town Charter, and any other business which may be deemed necessary by the Select Board.

Town Meeting Representative Scope of Duties

The Town Meeting Representatives attend Precinct Caucuses, Annual Spring and Fall Town Meetings, and Special Town Meetings. All spending, changes in the town bylaws, and zoning bylaws must be approved by the Plymouth Town Meeting Representatives at Town Meeting.

The Town Meeting is responsible for passing a balanced annual town budget and enacts all town bylaws. The Representative Town Meeting shall meet at least twice (2) in each calendar year.

- The first such meeting, the Spring Annual Representative Town Meeting, shall convene within the period of March through April, and unless otherwise specified with sufficient notice, the Town Meeting shall commence at 8:00 a.m. on the first Saturday in April. The Spring Annual Representative Town Meeting shall be concerned primarily with the determination of all matters that concern raising, appropriating, or transferring funds, including, but not limited to the adoption of an annual operating budget covering all town agencies.
- The second such meeting shall be held on the third Saturday in October, unless otherwise specified with sufficient notice, the Town Meeting shall commence at 8:00 a.m. during the last four calendar months, at a fixed time per bylaw.

Hybrid Town Meetings

Town Meeting Representatives have the option to participate in person, or remotely using telecast through Zoom Webinar videoconferencing platform for their deliberations and the use of V-Voter to take actions remotely. Please contact the Clerk's office if you plan to participate remotely for instructions.

Additional information

[Town of Plymouth | Selectboard Hybrid Meeting Policy \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

The Executive Branch - The Select Board

The Town of Plymouth Select Board consists of five members elected for three-year overlapping terms. The Select Board is the chief executive body of the Town. Among their general powers and duties are:

- Adopt policy directives and guidelines.
- Enact rules and regulations to implement its policies.
- Review the annual proposed operating and capital budgets submitted by the Town Manager.
- Act as the licensing authority.
- Approve all collective bargaining agreements.
- Responsible, through the Town Manager, for the efficient and orderly operation of all agencies of the town except those under the direction of another elected town agency.
- Investigate or authorize the Town Manager, or other town officer or agency, to investigate the conduct of any town department, office, or agency.
- Meet jointly with elected boards of the town for the purpose of sharing information.
- Appoint the Town Manager, town counsel, registrars of voters, election officers, constables, and members of all multiple-member boards, committees, and commissions except as otherwise provided in the Charter and/or the Town Bylaws.
- Oversees the Warrant presented at Town Meeting and determines what articles will be included in the warrant.

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk and department staff maintain the records for the Town of Plymouth. Records such as marriage, birth certificates and death certificates, Town Meeting warrants and minutes, meeting agendas and minutes, as well as other pertinent documents are maintained by the Town Clerk's office and made available for internal and external use. The Clerk's office also serves the public by directing them to appropriate offices within town government through the switchboard and mail services. The Clerk conducts elections and works closely with the Board of Voting Registrars to maintain lists of town residents and to conduct elections. The Town Clerk's office coordinates election ballots by accepting election paperwork and validating election petition signatures. The Town Clerk also officiates newly elected, re-elected, and appointed officials, and volunteer committee members so that they may participate in the votes of their boards or committees. A newly elected or appointed board/committee member must first be sworn in by the Town Clerk before participating in a recordable vote.

The Position of Town Clerk is appointed by the Town Manager.

Town Manager

Town Manager is responsible to the Select Board for The Town Manager is the chief administrative officer of the Town of the effective management of all town affairs placed in their charge by the Charter, the Board, by-

law, or vote of the representative Town Meeting. The Town Manager is responsible for the implementation of Town policies established by the Select Board.

Further explanation of the Town Manager's roles and responsibilities can be found in Chapter 3, Section 5, of the Town of Plymouth Charter: [Town Bylaws & Town Charter | Plymouth, MA \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

Town Moderator

A Moderator shall be elected for a term of three (3) years during the annual elections held on the third Saturday in May. The Moderator presides over all representative town meeting sessions and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to the office through bylaw or vote of the representative town meeting. The Moderator shall have no vote unless the Town Meeting Representatives present and voting are equally divided.

During a Town Meeting, the Moderator may limit the scope of a debate but not the length of debate for any given article.

Promptly following the Annual Town Election, the Moderator shall appoint an Assistant Moderator for a term commencing at the first annual or special representative town meeting following such annual election and ending on the date of the annual town election in the following year. Such appointment shall be subject to the approval of the next annual or special representative town meeting. The Assistant Moderator shall substitute for the Moderator in the event that the Moderator is absent from a representative town meeting session or at the discretion and request of the Moderator and shall carry out the duties of the Moderator excluding any exercise of appointing authority at such representative town meeting session. In the event that the Moderator cannot carry out the duties of their office by reason of death, disability or any other unforeseeable event, then the Assistant Moderator shall carry out all of the duties of the office of Moderator. The Assistant Moderator position shall be uncompensated.

Town Counsel

The Town of Plymouth has in-house Counsel and may contract with an outside law firm to provide guidance on all of its legal matters. Representatives of the law firm attend all Town Meetings and warrant articles presented to the Town Meeting body are reviewed beforehand to ensure that they are legally sound.

Town Departments:

Town services such as road maintenance, the issuance of tax bills and permits, and health inspections are handled by the staff of various town departments.

For a complete list of the Town's Departments, please visit the Town's website. [Departments | Plymouth, MA \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

Boards & Committees

Various Boards & Committees

The success of our town government relies heavily on the oversight efforts of volunteers who are appointed to focus groups such as the Open Space Committee, Historic District Commission, and Natural Resources & Beach Committee. Typically, committee members are appointed by the Selectboard, as well as the Planning Board, and serve a specific duration or term. Committee vacancies are advertised and those wishing to serve are asked to submit a letter of interest and their respective qualifications. In some cases, the town's boards and committees are empowered to make decisions concerning the matters before them. In other cases, some committees are advisory in nature and deliver report recommendations to other town entities.

Visit the Town's website for a complete list of the current Boards and Committees. [Boards & Committees | Plymouth, MA \(plymouth-ma.gov\)](#)

Advisory & Finance Committee

Formed under the statutory requirements of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 39, Section 16., The Advisory and Finance Committee is appointed by the Moderator and consists of fifteen (15) members. The Committee members serve three-year overlapping terms and are charged with making reports and recommendations to the Town on any and all municipal questions.

While its' primary responsibility revolves around the detailed review of the Town's annual budget, making recommendations for revision, and presenting the budget to Town Meeting for approval, the Town Charter and Town Bylaws require the committee to consider all matters proposed to be acted on at all Town Meetings. Interested parties who would like to be considered for an appointment to the Advisory and Finance Committee need to complete an online [Letter of Interest to the Town Moderator](#).

Planning Board

The Planning Board is a five-member elected body responsible for the long-range planning of the physical, environmental, community, and economic development of the town. The Board meets regularly to hear proposed development projects-both residential and commercial and provides recommendations on the projects before them to ensure each development opportunity meets the Town's master plan requirements. The Planning Board is responsible for the review of land division as well as review of specific development proposals. The Planning Board's duties are largely identified under [Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41](#), Section 81A, 81B, and subsequent sections, and by the [Town's Zoning By-law \(pdf\)](#).

School Committee

Plymouth's School Committee is comprised of seven members elected for three-year, overlapping terms at the Town Elections held each May. Their primary responsibilities are to:

- Oversee the annual school budget

- Develop school system policies
- Hire and review the performance of the Superintendent of Schools
- Advocate for the school system with citizens and Town Government

Community Preservation Committee

The Community Preservation Committee was established following the town's adoption of the Community Preservation Act in 2002. The committee is comprised of nine (9) appointed members who are responsible for studying the needs and opportunities of the town within the scope of affordable housing, historic resources, and open space/recreation. The committee must allocate or set aside a minimum of 10% of its annual budget for each of the three aforementioned categories and make recommendations to the Town Meeting regarding applications for the use of CPA funds.

Town Meeting Process

Attendance

Town Meeting Representatives shall attend all representative town meeting sessions. The Town Clerk shall take attendance prior to the commencement of the session and the Moderator shall take roll on at least one occasion after the commencement of the session. Town meetings shall only be allowed to do business when a quorum is present. A quorum shall consist of a two-thirds (2/3) of representatives being present in person or representatives who had previously registered to be participating virtually on-line for this meeting.

Quorum

A quorum for Town Meeting shall be two-thirds (2/3) of the total number of elected representatives to conduct business. A smaller number than the required quorum shall cause the meeting to be suspended until such a time when a quorum has been achieved, and any meeting forthwith shall be subject to a stated date, time, and place.

A quorum for a precinct caucus shall consist of two-thirds of the elected representatives present to do business.

Town Meeting Preview

The Town Moderator conducts a preview for the public prior to the Town Meeting to review the warrant. It is broadcast live on The Local Seen.

Motions Meeting

The Town Moderator will hold a Motions Meeting prior to the Town Meeting to review any written motions being made. Motions may also be made on the floor of the Town Meeting.

Speaking at Town Meeting

If a Representative wishes to speak at the Town Meeting, they should communicate in writing the desire to speak on an Article. When the Moderator acknowledges the speaker, the representative should state their name and precinct. Potential speakers are encouraged to contact the Moderator prior to Town Meeting.

- Speak about the topic being discussed: Do not comment on previous topic except in cases of a motion to rescind or reconsider.
- Direct comments to the Moderator, not to the Town Meeting or individual Town Meeting Representatives.
- Representatives may disagree with a previous speaker's argument, but please remain respectful and courteous.
- Representatives may not directly debate or ask questions of a previous speaker. Representatives may ask through the moderator for clarification of a question from a speaker, department head, Town Manager, Selectboard etc.
- Citizens who are not Town Meeting Representatives may be allowed to speak on an issue at hand only if there are no Representatives waiting to speak with the agreement of Town Meeting.

When Speaking on an Amendment:

When an amendment has been made, accepted, and seconded, any comment, question or debate should pertain directly to the amendment itself and not to the main motion until the amendment has been voted on. A question of how the amendment might affect the main motion in any way would however be an acceptable question or topic of debate.

Amended Rules and Time Limits for Speaking at Town Meeting

Before a motion to close debate on an article is voted upon, the Moderator shall ask that any Town Meeting representatives still wishing to be heard thereon to rise for the purposes of identification. Further, before such motion is voted upon, the Moderator shall ask that any Plymouth resident or taxpayer still wishing to be heard thereon to rise for purposes of identification.

The person, group, committee, or Town Board making the main presentation in support of an Article shall have 15 minutes for its presentation. All other speakers, including other Town Boards, shall each have 5 minutes to speak on the Motion or to propose or speak on an amendment to the Motion.

After the presentation by the proponent of an Article, and after hearing from any Town Board or Town Department Head or his or her designated representative wishing to be heard thereon, the Moderator shall recognize Town Meeting Representatives wishing to be heard thereon prior to recognizing other speakers.

All written materials within the Town Meeting hall proposed to be offered by any person in support of or in opposition to an Article shall first be presented to the Moderator no later than noon of the day of an evening Town Meeting session, or by 4:00 pm on the day before a morning or afternoon Town Meeting session, as the case may be, to be cleared by the Moderator as appropriate in substance and form, and then provided in sufficient quantity for all Town Meeting Representatives at least one-half hour prior to the commencement of the Town Meeting Session. No such materials shall be given to non-Town Meeting Representatives until a reasonable effort has been made to assure that all Town Meeting Representatives in attendance have received the same.

Before a Motion to Close Debate on an Article is voted upon, the Moderator shall ask that any Town Meeting Representatives still wishing to be heard thereon to rise for purposes of identification.

It is recognized that circumstances may exist in any particular instance that would make the application of a Rule in such instance unwise or impractical, and in that instance the Moderator shall use his reasonable judgment to determine to what extent the Rule shall be followed.

Following the presentations of the Advisory and Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, and School Committee, each Town Meeting Member shall be allowed to ask questions of the presenters without limit.

Debate is limited to Town Meeting Members, and questions from Town Meeting Members to Town Officials shall not come under the five-minute rule. Town officials shall include but not be limited to Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Boards, Commissions, or Committees, the Chairman of the Finance Committee, or the person or persons they designate.

How Voting is Set

Voice vote. Many Town Meeting votes are by voice. The Moderator asks that all in favor (everyone voting "yes") say, "Yes" or "Aye" (which is pronounced "eye"). Then the Moderator asks that all opposed (everyone voting "no") say, "No" or "Nay." The Moderator listens and decides which side prevailed.

Roll call. Voters are called by name and answer “Yes” or “No.” The town clerk keeps a tally of the roll call vote. The town Charter requires one roll call vote during each session.

Standing vote or rising vote. All in favor are asked to stand or rise. They are counted. Next, all voters who are opposed are asked to stand. They are counted. This form of vote is also known as dividing the meeting.

Secret ballots. When voters vote by secret ballot is determined by a town’s by-laws. In Plymouth a vote will be by secret ballot if two-thirds of the voters present and voting.

Electronic vote. Each Town Meeting Representative receives a handheld electronic vote devise when participating in person and log in if participate remotely. These methods are each coded specifically to the identity of each Town Meeting Representative. When the Moderator asks for a vote, each member enters their vote on their assigned devise. The results show on a screen as a roll call to confirm the vote was recorded correctly.

Process of In person Electronic Voting.

You will receive a hand-held voting device (clicker). Your device is registered to you. You may not share or trade your device for any reason. Your device must remain in your possession during the entirety of Town Meeting.

For each vote, the Moderator will indicate when voting is “open”. Once the GREEN voting light is on, you may cast your vote. You will have 30 seconds to cast your vote. Casting your vote before the green light is displayed will result in a miscast. Casting your vote after the green light is turned off will result in a miscast.

Once the vote is closed, it is your responsibility to watch the voting results (stage monitor) to be sure your vote was received correctly.

You must stand to be recognized immediately if you notice your vote was omitted or captured incorrectly.
*No changes to votes will be allowed once the Moderator moves on to the next article.

While in the auditorium, be sure you guard your clicker from mistakenly pushing buttons. If this happens, OTI will not have access to the next article poll and proceedings will stall.

Any time you leave the auditorium; be sure your clicker is powered back ON when you return to your seat.

If you require assistive technology (closed captioning), please choose your seating option accordingly. The assistive technology screen is located to the left of the stage.

If at any time during the Town Meeting you have an issue with your device, please stand to be recognized.

Process for Remote Participation.

To participate in the Town Meeting remotely, you must register with the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Moderator prior to the deadline. Once you have registered for remote participation and have received confirmation, you will no longer be eligible for in-person participation. This includes any adjourned meetings. Conversely, you may not switch from in-person participation to remote after the deadline. There are NO exceptions.

Prior to the Town Meeting, you will receive an email with your remote credentials. Remote credentials include your dedicated VVoter login in and direct Zoom link. These credentials are registered to you as a

Town Meeting member and will provide us with your identification during proceedings. DO NOT share these credentials with another Town Meeting member. In addition, you MAY NOT participate using another member's credentials. In either of these cases, your votes will be nullified.

For successful remote participation, you must use a computer or laptop and have a stable WiFi connection. iPhones, iPads and other tablets will NOT support remote participation.

You must engage in training prior to participating in the Town Meeting remotely. Training options include previewing the Remote Town Meeting Participation Training Video or joining one of the virtual training sessions.

Be prepared to join Town Meeting 30 minutes prior to its start. This allows for time to address any technology issues.

VVoter:

You will use the VVoter platform to cast your votes and take parliamentary action (make a motion, request to speak).

To access VVoter, simply click the link provided in the email and enter your login credentials. *Be sure there are no white space characters before or after your credentials.

It is sometimes helpful to refresh your VVoter browser following each vote.

Zoom

You will use the Zoom platform to VIEW Town Meeting (Do not view Town Meeting on your television, there is a generous delay that will cause your vote to be received late and unrecognized).

To access Zoom, simply click the link provided in the email.

Zoom is also used to communicate any technology issues to the Assistant Moderator. If you experience a persistent technology issue, call the Help Desk number (provided at the start of the Town Meeting).

The Hand Raise feature will NOT be recognized.

Absolutely NO parliamentary procedures will be recognized in Zoom.

Absolutely NO content discussion will be permitted in Zoom.

If Zoom buffers or your connection becomes unstable, try refreshing your browser and moving closer to your router.

Ethics Training

Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009, the recently enacted ethics reform law, imposes new mandatory education and training requirements on public employers and public employees. The law authorizes the Commission to establish procedures to implement and ensure compliance with these requirements, and these Implementation Procedures are issued pursuant to that authority. The new requirements can be summarized as follows: Every state, county, and municipal employee must be given a summary of the conflict-of-interest law prepared by the Ethics Commission and must complete an online training program prepared by the Commission. Every municipality must designate a liaison to the Commission. All records of compliance with these requirements must be retained for 6 years. These new requirements apply to all public employees, as defined by the conflict-of-interest law and described below, except that these procedures establish exemptions from the online training requirement for certain categories of employees.

Online training and the full compliance law can be found by visiting this site: Massachusetts State Ethics Commission

The town may from time to time offer seminars on the conflict-of-interest laws to Town Meeting Representatives and elected and appointed officials.

Recusing Yourself

If a Town Meeting Representative has a conflict of interest concerning an article presented at Town Meeting, such representative shall notify the Town Clerk, in writing, prior to the representative town meeting session or during such session at such time as such becomes so aware, as to any articles giving rise to such financial interest.

Town Conflict of Interest Bylaw

The following text is taken from the Town Charter under the Conflict-of-Interest section, current as of this printing:

1. *Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any representative town meeting member who also holds a position of employment by the town shall be prohibited from voting on any town meeting article in which such employee, or such employee's department, has a financial interest. Such representative town meeting member shall notify the Town Clerk, in writing, prior to the representative town meeting session or during such session at such time as such member becomes so aware, as to any articles giving rise to such financial interest. This section shall apply to the annual budget article, or any later amendment thereto, as follows: The representative town meeting member is prohibited from voting on the budget line item for his or her department or agency but shall not be prohibited from voting on any other line item, or from voting on the overall budget appropriation.*

2. *Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, no representative town meeting member shall vote on any town meeting article in which an immediate family member, or any business or organization in which the representative town meeting member serves as an officer, director, partner, or employee, or has a financial interest.*

For purposes of this section, "immediate family member" shall be defined as the representative town meeting member, his or her spouse and each of their parents, children, brothers, and sisters. Any such representative town meeting member shall notify the Town Clerk, in writing prior to the representative town meeting session, as to any articles giving rise to such financial interest.

3. *For the purposes of Section 10 of Chapter 2 of this Charter, the "financial interest" of a representative town meeting member shall be determined pursuant to the interpretation of the term "financial interest" by the State Ethics Commission and applicable reported appellate court decisions, which are hereby incorporated by reference. The "financial interest" of a department shall be defined as any particular warrant article and related motions or votes which specifically refer to said department.*

No person holding any position of town official shall represent in a court of law, or any other judicial or legal proceeding, a town employee or other town official in a case where the town of Plymouth is considered a defendant.

Open Meeting Law

Meetings by elected and appointed officials in Plymouth are conducted using the state's open meeting law. Effective July 1, 2010, responsibility for the state-wide enforcement of the Open Meeting Laws, relative to local, county, regional, and state public bodies has been centralized in the office of the Attorney General. The Open Meeting Law supports the principle that the democratic process depends on the public having knowledge about the considerations underlying governmental action. The Open Meeting Law requires that most meetings of governmental bodies be held in public. There are some exceptions, which are designed to ensure that, public officials are not "unduly hampered" by having every discussion among public officials open to the public. As a result, the Open Meeting Law provides for particular circumstances under which a meeting may be held in an executive, or closed, session. You may also contact the Division of Open Government, within the Office of the Attorney General, at (617) 963-2540 or openmeeting@state.ma.us.

More information on the state's Open Meeting Law can be found at this site: [The Open Meeting Law | Mass.gov](http://The%20Open%20Meeting%20Law%20Mass.gov)

Contact Information

Plymouth, MA | Official Website (plymouth-ma.gov)

Town Hall

26 Court Street

Plymouth, MA

02360

Hours of Operation

Monday, Wednesday, & Thursday – 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday – 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Friday – 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Town Clerk: (508) 747-1620 ext. 10223

clerk@plymouth-ma.gov

Town Manager & Board of Selectmen: (508) 747-1620 ext. 10106 selectmen@plymouth-ma.gov

Town Moderator: Please contact the Town Clerk clerk@plymouth-ma.gov

Finance: (508) 747-1620 ext. 10109 finance@plymouth-ma.gov

<u>Airport</u>	246 South Meadow Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-746-2020
<u>Fire</u>	114 Sandwich Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: (508) 830-4213
<u>Emergency Management</u>	2209 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-833-5801
<u>Health and Human Services</u>	44 Nook Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4230
<u>Animal Control</u>	2199 State Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-888-1186
<u>Center for Active Living</u>	44 Nook Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4230
<u>Public Library</u>	132 South Street Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4250
<u>Police</u>	20 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 General Business: 508-830-4218 Dispatch: Ext. 15100 Detectives: Ext. 15364 Records: Ext. 15253 Radar Requests: Ext. 15150 Prosecutors: Ext. 15209
<u>Harbormaster</u>	185 Water Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4182
<u>Public Works</u>	159 Camelot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-322-3394
<u>Cemetery & Crematory</u>	102 Samoset Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4078
<u>Highway</u>	159 Camelot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-322-3391
<u>Parks & Forestry</u>	169 Camelot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4162, ext. 12116
<u>Sewer</u>	131 Camelot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 774-283-6047
<u>Solid Waste & Recycling</u>	350 Beaver Dam Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-322-3390
<u>Water</u>	169 Camelot Drive, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-322-3406
<u>Plymouth Public Schools</u>	11 Lincoln Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-830-4300
Town Hall Directory	26 Court Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 Phone: 508-747-1620
<u>Finance</u>	Ext. 10178
<u>Assessors' Office</u>	Ext. 10296
<u>Procurement</u>	Ext. 10210
<u>Treasurer / Collector</u>	Ext. 10291
<u>Public Health</u>	Ext. 10118
<u>Recreation</u>	Ext. 10137
<u>Veteran Services</u>	Ext. 10172
<u>Human Resources</u>	Ext. 10197
<u>Information Technology</u>	Ext. 10300
<u>Inspectional Services</u>	Ext. 10297

<u>Energy and Environment</u>	Ext. 10127
<u>Planning & Development</u>	Ext. 10141
<u>Community Development</u>	Ext. 10148
<u>Conservation Commission</u>	Ext. 10139
<u>Economic Development & Tourism</u>	Ext. 10144
<u>Redevelopment Authority</u>	Ext. 10147
<u>Historic District Commission</u>	Ext. 10138
<u>Zoning Board of Appeals</u>	Ext. 10138
<u>Engineering</u>	Ext. 10120
<u>Town Clerk</u>	Ext. 10169
<u>Town Manager</u>	Ext. 10106
<u>Public Records & Archives</u>	Ext. 10213

For comments and suggestions please contact the finance department at finance@plymouth-ma.gov