

**Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 21, 2015**

Present: Susan Clark, Ron Krauth, Tim Murphy, Janette Shaffer, Dave Shepard, Greg Whitchurch

**1. Pledge of Allegiance at Town Meeting**

A discussion of the possibility of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at Town Meeting has been taking place on Front Porch Forum. The Town Meeting Solutions Committee's (TMSC) main concern would be the impact, if any, of including the pledge on attendance at Town Meeting. Various options were considered, including having the pledge done before the start of the official meeting but it was agreed that this would be awkward and potentially disrespectful. The TMSC agreed that if there is interest in having a community discussion about including the pledge as part of Town Meeting the TMSC could help to facilitate it. Susan will discuss this with the Select Board at an upcoming meeting.

**2. Remote Town Meeting Participation**

The League of Cities and Towns has developed a number of questions regarding attending Town Meeting remotely that interested towns can use to develop a protocol. The TMSC reviewed a draft protocol for Middlesex and comments were offered on the following questions as follows (a version incorporating comments from the meeting is attached):

- *Question #1: Who would be allowed to participate by electronic means?*  
Include the concept that priority will be given to Middlesex voters for attending by electronic means.
- *Question #2: How will we determine whether a person participating electronically at town meeting is a legal voter?*

It was suggested that the proposal that a remote participant could be requested to obtain a letter from the Town Clerk confirming their status as a Middlesex voter might be a more stringent requirement than for participants attending in person. After discussion it was agreed that the wording that such a letter "may" be requested is sufficiently flexible.

Janette has been in contact with Rumney School and Lauri Scharf about technical issues related to remote participation. The location where she sets up the equipment will likely be moved to a different location than last year to be more out of the way of the voting stations. She will set up a test of the equipment prior to Town Meeting. Individuals interested in remote participation will be requested to sign up by February 20<sup>th</sup>.

**3. Town Meeting Dinner**

Liz Scharf no longer works at Rumney School and is now on the Select Board but has agreed to make much of the food ahead of the meeting and will just need some others to put it together and serve it at Town Meeting.

**4. New Voter Letter**

Susan will check with Town Clerk Sarah Merriman about names of new voters for the letter that has typically been mailed to new voters prior to Town Meeting.

**5. Budget Charts**

Greg will check with John Riley about putting together the budget charts that he has been preparing for a number of years.

**6. Child Care During Town Meeting**

The Community Connections program is on board for providing child care during Town Meeting.

Next meeting: February 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard

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## Remote Town Meeting Participation Protocol WORKING DRAFT, 1-2015

The goal of Remote Town Meeting Participation is to allow town meeting participation for citizens who cannot attend the meeting while maintaining an efficient and vibrant town meeting for those in the meeting room.

### 1. Who would be allowed to participate by electronic means?

According to the Middlesex 2013 Town Plan (Chapter 9: Community Facilities and Services, pp. 45-46): "To the extent that volunteers are available, and that it does not compromise the experience of those attending Town Meeting in person, Middlesex should make an effort to offer technological methods to participate in Town Meeting. Given limited resources, priority should be given to [Middlesex voters] who cannot attend Town Meeting for health-related reasons, and for reasons of public service."

### 2. How will we determine whether a person participating electronically at town meeting is a legal voter?

*A person wishing to participate in town meeting from a remote location may be requested to obtain from the Town Clerk a letter affirming that said voter is on the Middlesex voter checklist.*

### 3. What kind of equipment and software will be necessary to allow electronic participation?

**Provider-side:** laptop and web conferencing platform, an additional large monitor, a webcam on a tripod, a good internet connection, several hundred feet of LAN and phone cables, a conference phone, a strong Remote Town Meeting Participation Coordinator and some helpers

**User-side:** Phone, internet connection, computer with camera, modern browser

### 4. Who will provide the equipment and software necessary for electronic participation?

If feasible, volunteers might provide the equipment.

### 5. Planning Ahead: What will we do if something goes wrong?

RTMP uses redundant systems (i.e. an internet connection plus simultaneous phone line connection) to prevent certain technical problems associated with VoIP.

If we lose the internet connection, we move to phone-only.

### 6. How will voters participating electronically be recognized by the moderator?

RTMP relies on a facilitator who will be in constant touch with remote participants. The facilitator will get the moderator's attention and indicate the identity of the participant, to let the moderator know that there is a request to participate.

### 7. How will paper ballots be submitted and tallied?

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*Pre-printed absentee ballots are available to all Middlesex voters for any articles being voted on by Australian ballot.*

*However, at the floor meeting, voters may decide to vote on a meeting article via a paper ballot (rather than a voice vote/show of hands). Remote town meeting participants should know that at this time, we do not have a system for them to vote in a paper-ballot vote.*

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