Attachement 3
Town Meeting Survey Results
July 8, 2022

Summary:
A Press Release announcing the survey was shared on 5/19/22, and was posted to Hopkinton's HopNotices listserv, shared on social media, and also to the homepage news section of Hopkintonma.gov. Additionally, a number of local media partners picked up the story and helped to socialize the message.

Hopkinton announced the survey would remain open through June 3rd, though continued to receive and accept responses through June 13th, and did include these responses in our analysis and data shared below.

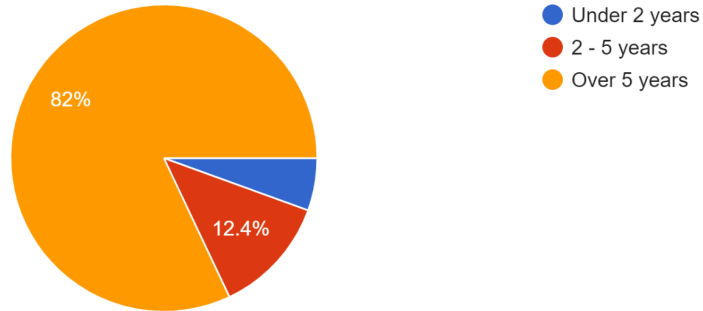Hopkinton received a total of 434 responses, with a number of graphs and summary info provided below.

Are you a registered voter in the Town of Hopkinton?
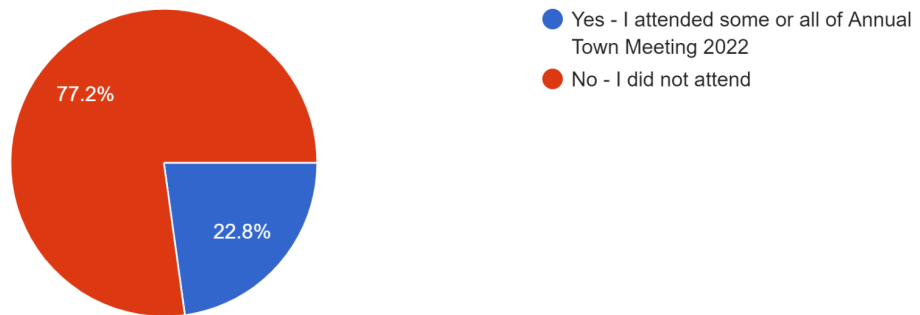434 responses
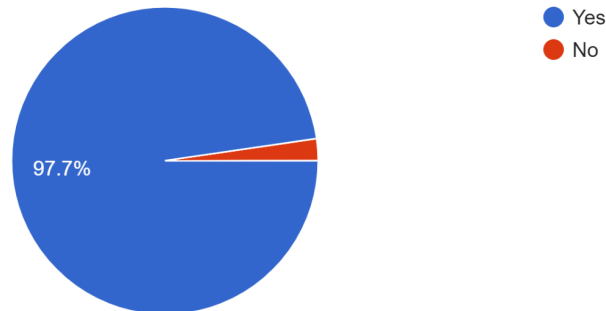
How long have you lived in Hopkinton?
434 responses

- ● Under 2 years
- ● 2 - 5 years
- ● Over 5 years

82%

12.4%

Did you attend any or all nights of Annual Town Meeting 2022?
434 responses

- ● Yes - I attended some or all of Annual Town Meeting 2022
- ● No - I did not attend

77.2%

22.8%

Do you have school aged children in your household?
434 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No
- ● N/A - prefer not to answer

41.2%

57.4%
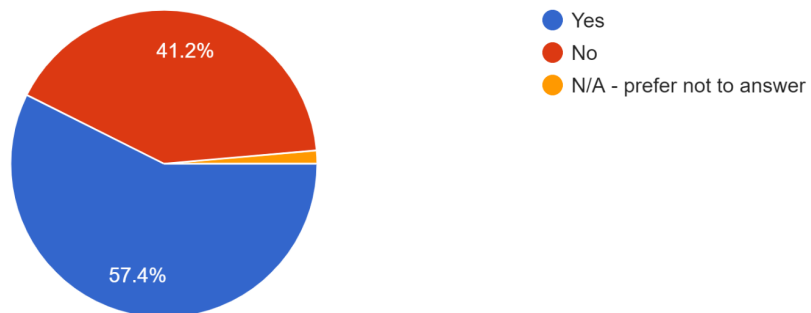
Age	number of responses	% of total responses
N/A - prefer not to answer	4	1%
18 - 24	0	0%
25 - 34	25	6%
35 - 54	258	59%
55+	147	34%

- The majority of respondents get their information about ATM from town social media or local newspapers; followed by word of mouth, and the town website
- Length of meeting was the #1 reason for not attending
  - followed by: meeting time, meeting day/date, and childcare; and then followed by lack of interest in the meeting or topics discussed, and lack of information about topics being discussed.
- The majority of respondents attend ATM "sometimes" or "rarely". Of the 99 respondents that did attend at least one night of ATM, 44% said they always attend.
- For those that did not attend, 67% of respondents said that the covid-19 pandemic did not impact their decision not to attend.
- 39% of respondents said that they would be more willing to attend, more often, if ATM was held on a weekend day; 31% of respondents said that they would be less likely to attend if ATM was held on a weekend day, with the remaining respondents as "N/A - no preference".
- Generally, respondents that attended ATM are more likely to attend other public meetings throughout the year, while respondents that did not attend ATM are less likely to attend other public meetings throughout the year.
- 72% of respondents prefer that the town use a consent agenda at ATM; with 16% not preferring a consent agenda, and the remaining responding as "N/A - no preference".
- 72% of respondents prefer that the town uses electronic voting at ATM rather than the traditional form of voice/standing/paper voting. 13% do not prefer electronic voting, with the remaining responding as "N/A - no preference".
- 51% of respondents think the quorum should remain the same; 25% responded in support of raising the quorum, 6% responded in support of lowering the quorum, and the remaining responded as "N/A - no preference"

Answers to open ended question below:

Do you have any other suggestions or comments to improve Annual Town Meeting, or changes that could be made so that you would attend future Annual Town Meetings?

More notice, reminders, timing so as not to conflict with sports, etc.

The town should consider options to allow for live streaming and online voting options. There are many ways that more participation could be generated, but the need to sit in a room for hours on end is just not practical for a large number of residents.

Having it on a weekend day in late winter/early spring Vs May makes sense! May is jam packed with activities after we've all been locked inside all winter. Westboro held theirs around March 19 this year. We should do the same.

Separate the discussion from the voting. The meetings tend to be an endless rehashing of arguments that have gone on in the weeks and months prior. The meetings are not productive or informative compared to other means of getting information, learning about the issues. .

Allow for virtual joining or zoom voting

End earlier. I stopped going because they took too long. Too much time was spent on each warrant article.

It annoys me when people start to "monologue" during public comment. So many are unprepared & never thought about the topic until that night (usually admittedly). I hate to see all the hard work of town staff & committees be dismissed because some random person in the audience thinks they know better. I'd rather trust the other responsible voters to sit through that and vote on my behalf. Maybe we need a representative town meeting. But I also recognize that if I don't go to town meeting, I can't complain about the voted Outcomes.

I would really like to participate. It's just about the timing and childcare.

Hopkinton is big enough to consider Town Meeting Representatives. Elect them, they represent a section of town.

Figure out ways to streamline the meetings and make them more efficient.

It would great to have a virtual option as I am often out of town.

Thank you for the great work of putting together the ATM. I wasn't able to attend the most recent meeting and am at the same time sad that we couldn't even meet quorum (and that only 10% of voters came out for Town Elections) but understand why at the same time. I don't think, however, a lot of people understand just how much of an impact the decisions made at ATM have on day-to-day life in the town and perhaps a campaign around raising awareness of just how important it is might help leading up to ATM...We can't afford a babysitter for two nights to have both adults attend and didn't feel comfortable doing so during COVID and we also didn't want to split up where one adult of the family attends and misses family dinner, for example. Babysitting could be offered on a weekend, for example, at the meeting. Electronic voting and consent agenda are great ideas. Any way to split up if it rolls into a 2nd day further apart so there would be less fatigue, drop in attendance?

Town meeting is difficult with school aged children and especially sports schedules/dinnertime. Not sure that a weekend would make it better because the kids also have sports then too

Monday Nights typically are very busy days /nights for working people . I would suggest mid week

Make it a zoom meeting with specific access for registered voters to vote via an app Am handicapped and unable to site at a town meeting for more than an hour Impossible

Three days is TOO LONG. reduce the amount of commentary beyond motions or Set a time limit on overall commentary. Other towns have done this successfully.
A remote option would be helpful for us older folks or parents at home with young children. Most meetings run too late for me and I can't attend multiple nights
If there's a way for voting residents to participate and vote remotely, that way parents w little ones can participate. It's not reasonable to get a babysitter for that length of time and when it goes on for 3 days there's no way to do it 3 days in a row. Due to covid pandemic and recent flare I was not comfortable leaving my little one w a babysitter.
Allow remote involvement. It's 2022. We need to get with the times. Nothing will change without this.
as a parent, only one of us will ever be able to go on a weeknight. Also If it's on a week night, it's got to last fewer nights, ideally 1
These meetings are long and being able to do remotely will definitely increase participation.
I think electronic voting would greatly increase participation
The time of year is incredibly difficult for our family, although we do try to attend. Rarely are we free all three nights.
Allow attendance and voting via zoom
Is there no other way to do this? Mail in voting etc? Households with small children find the weeknights and length of these meetings prohibitive and it keeps them from having a voice
Allow virtual attendance and voting
We should have remote voting on issues. This current method prevents mostly women from attending since they have to take care of young children in the home. I have already written to Senator Spilka to help change this.
Change time to earlier
It needs to move faster, I've been there many late nights!
Enable in-person and encourage in-line participation and enable online votes.
John's Ritz's letter to the editor had some good comments. The issue needs to be studied. I was out of town for work but I did watch some.
Remote options for voting would be impactful. We have not felt comfortable attending during COVID pandemic but have watched
Provide child care for parents.
One comment per person rule. Presentations sent beforehand and not done during meeting.
Could it be split into multiple times like a quarterly meetings ?
No
When I have attended it has been very long and tedious. A couple of years ago outside I was very cold for an extended period of time and was unwell for a few days afterwards. Unless it can be tightened up or made more pleasant, it will take an item of particular interest to get me out.
Generally speaking, we need to know what's on the agenda, and what we might want to show up to discuss vote on etc - for instance it seems too many local long time residents are dominating these meetings and the voting outcomes and quite frankly, I'm shocked at the lack of progress in terms of

retail/commercial development in the town given the growth of it and level of income of the residents - making town voters aware of key issues regarding schools and economic growth that are coming up for vote should be a priority for the governing body of the town

Perhaps enable commenters on controversial topics to sign up in advance and/ or allow written comments from residents who may or may not be able to attend town meeting in person.

Town meetings need to move online. In this day and age there is no good reason not to.
I think participation would greatly increase. Exercising my right to vote is very important to me but NO ONE, I'll say it again, NO ONE has time to go to a town meeting that can sometimes last for multiple days….it's just not feasible. It doesn't work.We need to get with the times. Let's modernize our system of town government.

There needs to be greater advertising for the meeting and steps need to be taken to allow for greater inclusiveness. The time and duration of the meeting and lack of childcare means that parents have to decide who gets to participate in the process.

Make town government more accessible and work to increase citizen participation to ensure representation. Improved communication with the community is also important.

Option to attend virtually

All voting should be digital/Google form

The length really needs to be addressed. Need a strong moderator that keeps people to time. I also think the presentations should be made available ahead of time and NOT be done at the meeting. Watch the videos and come with questions. Air conditioning and Wi-Fi in the MS auditorium would be great too.

Having a remote participation option would help. I watch import at board meetings and town meeting on HCAM

I have heard that some local towns allow virtual voting. It would be great if we can watch on hcam and vote from home. Childcare is expensive and it is a lot to ask young parents to hire a babysitter for three nights in order to be able to attend town meeting. I have seen town meeting and Hopkinton run 2 to 3 nights for 4 to 5 hours each on several occasions. This has meant that only myself or my husband are able to attend. We cannot afford to hire a babysitter for three nights in a row for five-6 hours in order to get to, stay at and return from town meeting.

send every voter a copy of all the articles

no

Shorten the meeting.

The world has modernized radically since 2020. Everyone works remotely, we've even successfully schooled our children remotely- we need to find a way to encourage remote/virtual attendance and participation (including voting). It's time for annual meeting to enter the 2020's and embrace a hybrid physical/virtual mode— this is the way you get around childcare issues, inconvenient day/times. All of these are exacerbated when the only way to participate is in-person.
I have attended every town meeting since I moved to Hopkinton (12 years ago), except for this year. I just was not able to make the days/times work with my work schedule and responsibilities at home. If town meeting had a virtual option, I would have attended— I would have been able to participate while I was ensuring my kids were fed, bathed and put to sleep.

The town should adopt remote/virtual attendance and voting.

Spread out items from same dept so people have to stay

Include a virtual option for attending
You should have required masks. Hopkinton Covid is out of control.
Zoom option, not multiple days
Being new to the town and state, I had no idea that elections were held this way. I assumed that I'd be voting for all items on May 16th and had marked my calendar accordingly. The best way for me to get town info is by email. It's too easy to miss things on social media.
Modernize the meeting. They feel like we live in the Stone Age.
Can they be made entirely virtual?
Let us watch and vote from home
I did not know about this in time, but I also would not have attended due to Covid cases increasing.
Make it so you can attend and vote remotely
Please better publicize the town meeting. I didn't realize the date this year and could have planned better had I known.
Make it a virtual event (zoom) with electronic voting.
We can do nearly everything today virtually, and our jobs are demanding more and more of our time. The town could drastically increase participation through virtual meetings and voting. If we can renew our drivers license virtually, town voting should be able to be conducted virtually. Also the town does not do a good job of announcing when these meetings are. Where are the signs? Notices? An announcement board? Millennials aren't reading the newspapers, I'm certainly not perusing the town website. Make this easy. If I drive through town, I should see dates of the town meeting somewhere. Holden has a nice bulletin board near the state police barracks that serves this purpose without being tacky.
If it could be completed in 4 or 5 hours on a Saturday. I wish we could vote by mail or online during town meeting so we could attend from home.
Bring able to watch and vote remotely
The town meeting is archaic for 2022 in general. The entire process should be modernized to accommodate the future of this town appropriately. There is a multitude of involved families that are not able to attend and appropriately show their support because a process that was established centuries ago has not been modernized to accommodate today's living. It's bizarre, sad and unfortunate.
Have meetings outside and or mask required during large covid surges
I would prefer to be able to vote, just as I did on May 16th. I would support becoming a city, which would enable this change. I find it interesting that we can't get a quorem for town meeting yet two weeks later 2000 voters cast their ballets.
The process of "town meeting" should reflect the changes in the times - meaning as technology advances how we do business those should be reflected in how a town conducts its business. I view voting as sacrosanct, but having multiple children in multiple activities all but makes it impossible for me to attend. Changing the date/time of the meeting won't fix this, but changing the process will.
Meetings are too long and spread over too many days. This is difficult for families.
This form of governance does not work for a town of our size and current times. It essentially disenfranchises anyone who doesn't have 8-12 hours to spare, especially those with small children or medical issues. I would prefer to have a ballot to fill out.

It would be great to be able to vote electronically from remote, watching via HCAM. Not sure how that would be possible, though.

Town meeting members/council representing the voters of Hopkinton?

Move to representative town meeting.

Allow virtual participation and voting in addition to in person option. Shorten length of meeting. Clearly share questions to be voted on and planned date/time when questions are planned to be covered

I have attended in the past and watched on HCAM even more often. I tend to be informed on town issues. A major problem is that there are too many articles and the same people get up year after year and pontificate entirely too much. This makes it very unappealing to choose to spend an evening (or 3) at the meeting.

Most people do not attend meetings as they are hours and days long. Families with children have a difficult time attending whether it be child care or sport obligations. I think a question missing is would people like to see is move to district representation

Majority of these articles should be on the ballot and not be determined by residents that can go to town meeting.

I feel strongly that we should maintain open town meeting rather than switch to elected representatives. Everyone should have the opportunity to vote on an issue. I think the key to making it successful is to make it shorter and on a weekend

advertise them more

Several suggestions: There are way too many powerpoint presentations covering material that could be easily shared in advance & time at the actual meeting could be for q&a with article sponsors. I would strongly support a representative town meeting format, held on one Saturday in early May. All elected representatives could be given access to the warrant and background info before the TM, and could be mailed to their homes directly. I did not attend the most recent meeting because of Covid concerns but also because of the facilities. To expect folks to come in at night and sit on metal folding chairs for anywhere from 3:00 -4:00 hours at a time is uninviting at best, unreasonable at worst.

There should be written motions to read ahead of time for voting items and voting should be able to happen electronically not in person for those of us with schedules that make attending the meeting difficult.

I have been a resident of Hopkinton for over 30 years and have attended most Annual Town Meetings. This survey assumes that most people are disinterested in Annual Town Meeting which is an erroneous assumption. People were just being cautious for the 2022 ATM as Covid-19 was spiking and continues to spike. Also most residents here were negatively impacted, financially, by Covid-19 whereby many residents went from a two household income to a one income household. In addition, families are now struggling with higher prices for basic living needs due to the war in Ukraine. Maybe they can't afford the additional monies requested in the town budget. Did you ever consider that the delays due to a lack of quorum was because people are struggling financially? This town continues to act like there is no Covid, no war and everything is hunky dory. Well you will appreciate we do not live in a vacuum here in Hopkinton and people are struggling here as they are nationwide. You need to take that into consideration before you make any changes to Annual Town Meeting that would limit the rights of voters to legislate policy and budgets in the Town of Hopkinton.

Outside or masks required with covid numbers extremely high in town

I did watch the town meeting live on YouTube this year and was thinking counting voters itself took too long each time. Electronic buttons will do the job in a minute or two.
Can they be attended virtually?
I would love that meetings aren't scheduled around elementary childrens bedtime.
Town meetings need Togo electronic
More social media advertising regarding date and times of meeting. If i happen to drive by the high school i may see a little sign regarding town meeting but never can make it because i didnt plan for it. There needs to be more facebook annoumcements on hop uncommon for instance well in advance regarding town meeting.
There is no perfect day or time. For me during the day would be much better than late at night. People will still have conflicts on a weekend, especially with kids sports, but it's worth trying. Also people are still fatigued from the pandemic which is affecting participation in lots of things so I'm sure that affected this year.
Can residents attend via zoom and vote online?
Move to representative meeting!
I strongly endorse TM be scheduled for a Saturday with no other town groups sponsoring events on that day. Make it a day to celebrate participatory democracy, perhaps with food trucks for lunch and fun, free activities for children of attendees. Take a couple of breaks to sing a patriotic song or 2 with words projected on the screen: America the Beautiful and God Bless America come to mind.
Too many items. Should not take b 3 nights.
Replace town meeting with ballot voting
Being able to participate virtually from home. There must be technological ways to make this happen.
the length is the biggest concern for me and anything that could be done to shorten it would be ideal; perhaps breaking it up into several different nights with different agenda items on each night?
For us, the length is a problem - we dont have the time to spend 5+ hours on this meeting, especially when we have 2 small children at home. Best case one one of us parents can attend - and the other stays home to put the kids to bed. And that assumes we dont have work or other obligations. It seems like the Quorum is tricky; it's good to have a representative number of people present, but it's a tough ask to have them sit through 50 items over many hours and or days. I definitely think things should be clumped into groups, esp the routine items that shoudl be pretty automatic to advance forward. Not sure how many hours that would save in a typical meeting, but I'll guess it could help a lot.
If there was a way to do the voting at Town Meetings like how we vote for school committee, etc. (i.e., voting machines available for a full day), you'd get way more participation. I understand that this removes the ability to comment, but people honestly have their mind made up in advance and the in-person commentary merely adds to the time. Another idea is to broadcast the town meeting to HCAM or another method and allow people to vote from home electronically.
The requirement to be present to vote on issues addressed at ATW is ridiculous in this day and age, and discriminates against families where the eligible voters in the house have parental responsibilities. It also does not appreciate that significant part of town population travels for work, or drives to Boston daily for work and cannot return in time to vote. Allowing time for citizens to speak on topics that matter to them is fine - but requiring a citizen to be present to vote is fundamentally flawed.
end town meeting altogeher

Provide a good education package on how town meetings work, and find a way to reach out to residents about it, especially new residents. I see that Hopkinton is one of the fastest growing communities and I suspect I am not the only one who did not understand the process.

I love town meeting and will always attend. Weekdays and weekends are just hard in May when children are thick into Spring Sports.

Can we switch to voting on issues in elections instead of during town meetings?

Have a weekend meeting and have high schoolers available to provide childcare to those who need it.

Have been to many town meetings but they do run long - and I find it unsettling that some people attend for an article they're invested in and once it's voted on, the entire group leaves the meeting,.

Municipal governance is often a mystery to many of the attendees. The language of the motions is obscure and hard to follow. Much of the town meeting agenda is generally pro-forma (paying last years bills, accepting reports, etc) and there shouldn't even be votes on it.
They introduce a lot of tedium without any value. Recommendations for No Action and disagreements between committee recommendations rarely have context. The comments at town meetings often reflect this confusion (the discussion about using free cash to pay for police vehicles several years ago was a good example). If nothing else, we should make a significant effort to streamline and explain in plain language what the item is about, and committees should provide an explanation as to their guidance in the materials.

IMO, Town Meeting is an antiquated form of government that doesn't scale to the size of the town and we should move to a representative system (mayor + councilors or representative town meeting) where individuals who can come up to speed on municipal governance can engage in this process more fully.

Spring is a tough time of year for many people - much more busy. End Jan-early Feb or late Feb/early March would be better times (quiter before spring). Also, maybe not "annual", but twice a year - one for more routine items and get all those out of the way. maybe even tackle the single biggest issue in that one meeting, then tackle all others at a 2nd. Mondays are tough too - maybe start on Tue/Wed? Just ideas to get more people to attend. More definitely should! Also, we the Weston property decision was made with hand raising and to this day i still feel it was not an accurate count being so many people there and the counts so close! Definitely move to a better voting method! Thanks!

I attend all other meetings in town via zoom- I would much rather be on a zoom for the town meeting, due to length and convenience with work and children

Change town meeting questions to ballot questions. Have the town meeting separate from voting - let everyone say their peace, and then vote on another day. Lower the quorum so that those who want to attend can get started.

I find it infuriating that the meeting gets packed with new, young residents to pass school related agenda and budget items, and then those people leave the meeting. This should not be allowed. One reason I don't attend is because there is zero chance of reeling in spending on schools in this town. Money seems to be no object to many people. I am a life long resident of this town and I loved (past tense) the way the town used to be. All the character is lost and it really is useless to even try to make a difference with my vote at town meeting.

A mailing or email explaining all town meeting issues should be sent to residents at least one month prior to the meeting. Also, meeting time/date/place reminders should be emailed phoned or texted at 2 weeks prior, and 1 week prior.

Why can't it be live streamed and we electronically vote from home? I hate voting in front of others because of the online backlash, and I have kids and a job. I cannot stay up so late so many days in a row!!

Publish Separated agenda items with points of discussion, pro and con

Allow absentee ballots. Amend the Town Charter to allow representatives from the 5 wards. Post the financial implications at least 2 weeks before town meeting so only questions can be taken at that time instead of reading to us for the first hour. Have a 6pm start.

A big issue has been the start time of 700 which then often gets delayed. Staying until 11 is not possible for people that wake up at 500 a.m.

Sitting on folding chairs for 4+ hours does not work for people with physical challenges…many older citizens have back issues. This may have only been a covid issue.

The vote/revote on Legacy still stings. How did this happen that the town voted no and then after voters left a new vote was taken. How do we trust the process.

Not everyone can go 3-4 nights. Somehow there should be a way to schedule the articles for each night with a strict cutoff so people know which night(s) will include articles that are important to them. They may need to make arrangements to be there. Corporate boards can do this so it is possible.

There should be better advance communication that articles are being withdrawn. The last town meeting I went to I waited until about 11 for an important vote. A few minutes before it was withdrawn by I believe the town attorney. The audience was startled and felt their time and passion were disrespected. We need to respect people and their time if this process is ever going to work.

Representative town meeting

Remote and recorded, on demand meetings, surveys, electronic voting and lay language of issues being addressed. And advertise the town meetings by text or short emails. I've been here for over 5 years and don't know when they are or where they are held.

Shorter meetings over several weeks. Simple language to understand what is being voted on in the Hop newspaper, Facebook and website.

Time of year is problematic too.

Allow electronic live viewing & voting

The duration is too long and the day/timing is not convenient for parents with young kids to attend. Consider splitting into multiple sessions/days if possible. I would definitely attend if it were held on a weekend as our schedule is very hectic on weekdays given both of us work.

More publication. We used to see a lot of signs, a banner, mailed notices....

We were isolating due to COVID exposure . The spacing looked fine, the chairs looked like the worst I have ever seen. Even the Board had padded seats. So assuming you wanted people there for the same amount of time as the meetings would take...that is unfair to ask of people and had we been there, we would have left. Even before COVID if there were sometimes bleachers, not comfortable, but you could move around, chat if you wanted to quuietly and it was not a distraction.With the set up as seen in the uninviting picture of this past TM...if you stood up to move around, did anything to alleviate the discomforrt and (yes) boredom...it would have been a distraction.

Not indoors in a stuffy (on good days) location without required masks during a plague
I would prefer no Annual Town Meeting or a representative town meeting. I can very rarely attend because of work and kids schedules (I am a HS coach so evenings and weekends are generally not available). When my kids were younger, my husband traveled a lot and I couldn't afford a sitter often and would not have brought my kids with free sitting offered because the meetings were always way past their bedtime. When I have been and/or when I have watched in HCAM, many people who get up to talk say the same things that have already been stated and/or get way off topic. It is very inefficient. I do consider myself an informed voter and I vote in every election. I read about the issues in local papers, watch debates, read candidate statements, and speak to elected officials. I would rather just be able to vote by ballot without a town meeting. The small percentage of people who attend I think shows that many feel the same. If town meeting is to continue, I would be in favor of electing representatives to attend meetings and vote on the issues.
Limit the time of presentations. Keep to the time limit for public comments. Stop public comment when it is just repeating the opinion of others. End the meeting at a reasonable hour.
Limit repetitive discussions
Permit virtual attendance so that I may attend using a ZOOM-like platform.
Move to Saturdays, make sure it can be completed in 4 hours or less.
Remote attendance and voting
More information on what to expect would be helpful for new residents.
It is time to make all meetings accessible via internet, such as zoom, Google meet etc
Limit debate. Gather feedback on advance, present a summary, then move directly to voting.
Absolute time limit on voters speaking. Publicize the limit (5 mins?) ahead of time, and enforce it.
If there was a way to make attendance count with virtual meetings or virtual options available I would be more likely to attend. I have two toddlers (3, 21 months) and am expecting another baby in October- 7pm is a difficult time for me because of night time routines.
Is virtual attendance possible? Childcare/work responsibilities make it difficult to attend in person
Allow visa holders to vote. We pay taxes that are used for town expenses but do not get a say/vote ? This was the reason that we fought for independence from the British and somehow it's ok to impose the same rules ?
Make live remote voting possible
Change the time
There is little interest among residents in attending and participating in town meetings. It seems as though people are all about receiving the benefits of town services but not in guiding it's direction.
I believe that nights 1 and 2 should de dedicated to presenting each item and allowing for debate. For those interested in learning more, they can watch on TV or they can attend in person. No quorum needed for this. The few town meetings I've attended seem to have the same people every year arguing for the sake for arguing. So let them do that. Then the 3rd night is strictly voting. No arguments/opinions allowed. I would personally attend the night articles get voted on. It would be quick and over in a couple hours tops.
If televised and electronic voting were allowed, I believe more people would "attend" virtually and then vote at the appropriate time.

May is the busiest time for parents with sports and end of school burnout - if possible rec March or early April - May/June is the worst
Fewer articles
Can you possibly make it a virtual meeting, like Zoom, with the option to vote?
It would be helpful to be more effective at raising awareness about Town Meeting and always making handouts/info sheets available in advance rather than the night of Town Meeting. Changing it to a weekend daytime might improve attendance and also increase the variety of voters who come.Keep in mind that the workday evening times are very challenging for a variety of folks (professionals with day jobs, senior citizens, etc.) not just those with children.
Please support virtual participation. Maybe also separate presentations & debate from voting. Let people learn at home, say by watching HCAM, then vote the next day, potentially electronically. I love the flexibility of a traditional full day of voting.
Ensure meetings run efficiently to respect everyone's time.
I think all issues in front of the town should be voted on by the town in full, whether or not they can attend the town meeting. This was a fine way to govern in the 1800s. Doesn't work now. Families have too much going on. It takes 3 freaking nights. I think the council is there to discuss what the important issues are and let the town vote for them in a free and fair election, where this is more time for more people to represent themselves and their views. I recommend that we abolish the town meeting. It is really a stupid way to govern. I moved here from NJ almost 12 years ago. Always found it to be an unrepresentative way to run a democracy and have never attended because of that.
We need an electronic/online voting option. People are too busy, sadly, to vote. Working parents need electronic options to vote. Parents are tied up with sports on nights and weekends and I only see an electronic method increasing the level of engagement. The partisan politics in this town also needs to be put to an end. Since living here 5 years I see it is divisive more than anything. The head of Hopkinton Democrats should step down and the group barred from Hopkinton. The campaigning based on party is not right for these elections. I suggest this as a registered Democrat myself. I would not join that group because of what it has done to this town.
Would it be possible to set a time allotment per question so that town meeting could follow a timed agenda? Be realistic and set it up for 2-3 nights. This would allow people who aren't interested in certain questions to skip those but be present for others. Also, I like the idea of electronic voting which seems like it would streamline voting and save time.
Consider options for remote attendance, participation and voting
Zoom meetings and electronic voting.
These meetings are simply too long. There needs to be a way to make them under three hours. Would be nice to be able to vote on them electronically and not be in person.
early May is also difficult for families. 2 high schoolers in sports.
Have people submit questions and comments on the particular articles they are concerned about to the appropriate Board or Committee 2 weeks prior to Town Meeting. The presentations by the sponsors of the articles could then address many of the issues raised in their presentations. This would save time I believe. Judith Weinthaler
The chairs were ridiculously uncomfortable.

More online access to voting.

An inperson town mtg does not seem logical in today's world. Other towns and communities in the rest of the country use representative government to respond to town issues and needs.

Not noted in your survey. My wife and I watch relevant town and committee meetings on HCAM. Also, just becoming aware of Town Meeting generally as other areas I have lived in don't operate the same way.

Go to some sort of elected councilor at large that represents each voting district so everybody could have a voice even if they don't attend personally. 128 out of about 13000 is to low a number and this would keep special interest groups from packing certain agendas for votes and then leaving right after.

Have we gotten to be to large a town to decide things in town meeting?

Don't let the same 8 people talk on every topic over and over. quick responses and move on. Its the length of time that is the greatest deterrent and they same people standing up for everything. Maybe they have to choice only 3 items for each night that they can speak about...usually not even a questions is being asked but more of hearing themselves talk.

Past experience that has negatively impacted my desire to attend: 1) Extremely long time to check in (the year we debated the main st project - took more than 30 minutes to enter because of the time needed to type names in an ipad) 2) Presentations on important topics are too long and overly detailed, 3) Detailed materials should be available to those that want to access them, but the focus should be on providing executive summary level materials.

Town meeting is antiquated! Please convert to representative town meeting. The fact that it's difficult to get even 1% of our town's population to attend should tell you something. Otherwise, reduce number of articles so business can be finished in ONE night.

Do it virtually so working parents can complete other tasks while also attending(apparently milford does this). Reorder so important things are first. Limit each meeting to 2 hrs and spread it out over multiple weeks.

Make it shorter; more efficient with every aspect; consent agenda sounds like a good idea but not sure I trust those who do that part of agenda; maybe we should go to a city council approach; maybe hold online/zoom discussion the night before and then vote; also no way I am giving up an entire weekend for town meeting so that's not a good option. It takes less time to vote for president than it does to approve paving a street around here!

How about releasing topics to be discussed on eHop as well as the local papers?

Get word out more about meetings

It has to be more concise. Three nights for multiple hours is too much on a school night

I would like the items that are to be voted on to be accessible online well ahead of the Annual Town Meeting. Each item should be thoroughly explained, including pros and cons of each. This may decrease the time needed at the Annual Town Meeting if residents are able to be well informed ahead of the meeting.

I also was disappointed that when it came time to vote on May 16th, that there was no explanation as to why these items were needed. Examples: Why was it necessary to acquire a new fire engine? Was the engine of the current one not fixable or were repairs cost prohibitive? And, why were two new classrooms needed for the newly constructed Marathon School? I did not see any explanation online nor in the Hopkinton Independent paper.

My concern of grouping line items together for one vote, is that the items may not be able to be broken apart. For instance, a resident may be in favor of 3 out of 5 of the grouped items, but would be forced to approve all 5, much like how pork-filled bills are passed in any legislature. I would hate for that to happen in Hopkinton.

Thinking outside of the box, if the items were explained ahead of time in the manner suggested above, then at the Annual Town Meeting, each item could be brought forward for a vote, it may move quicker. Also, moving the start time to 6pm may be helpful. I have not attended in the past because the 7 pm start time is late for me.

Although I answered that I am not in favor of electronic voting, the idea is intriguing. However, without knowing the details as to how it would work, such as can it be tampered with or manipulated, it is difficult to make an informed decision. I would like more details as to the process and mechanics. If all is safe and valid, I think that is a good way to go.

Provide a simulcast with concurrent online voting (trusted and verifiable). Current in-person to vote requirements are not convenient.

Create an email list, send information via email. Do governing docs allow electronic voting by proxy?

Create better awareness of to n meetings and the agenda being voted on. (Email, social media, text msg, etc) Allow people to vote remotely.

Somehow limiting the amount of time for commenting/questions. Say each person get s max of 1 minute to express their question or concern. Some people drone on and on

It is outrageous that we continue to allow the vast majority of our town to be disenfranchised by an outdated system constructed specifically for 18th century white landowners without real jobs. This system keeps out parents (usually women), people with evening jobs or second jobs, people who have issues with transport, and people with disabilities. There is no reason to continue it and to do so demonstrates that town leadership specifically does not want these people voting.

I think town meetings are critical, but between the pandemic and my work schedule, it has been nearly impossible to attend on weeknights.

Allow voting from a remote location (home). It is very difficult for many residents to make time in their busy lives for two, or potentially three, nights of a town meeting. Doing your civic duty is important, but family does come first.

Representative town meeting should be considered as an option.

We need to stress the importance to the public our town government and how decisions made at town meetings affect the entire town.

Sitting for 5 hours over 3 nights once/year is just not possible for most people. I would much rather see town meeting occur 2x/year or quarterly and the length be significantly reduced. I think electronic voting would significantly reduce the amount of time, as well and allow for people to vote honestly without opposition from friends and neighbors. Additionally, I feel as though there needs to be more resources available that covers all of the issues being voted on; what a yes vote means and what a no vote means in more clear/simplistic terms for those who do not have working knowledge of these topics.

It would be pretty amazing if you could watch town meeting on a computer and vote from your home. I guarantee more people would watch and vote.

I feel like the low interest in Town meeting and number of voters on town-related things is a reflection of the lack of cohesion in Hopkinton. Everyone is disconnected

Weekend for those of us who work and travel during the week.

Remote participation and voting should be available

A one day/night town meeting would be my preference. Three nights is way too long. However, I do not want a representative town meeting.

I think town meeting should be a special day on the week end, specifically Saturday,and maybe have no other events planned that day. I don't attend town meeting because I am often still at work. I know for others, they work and then come home and have obligations with children or elderly parents. Often one parent is away and the other has to man the fort at night. It's not like in the past, when people worked 9-5 and both parents were home at night. It might also be worth considering some kind of electronic voting that allowed people to vote from home. Thank you.

Prefer weekends and shorter meetings. The duration of this year's meeting was listed as 7-11pm, which is very late for a weekday (past my bedtime!).

Hold the event on the weekend -or two weekends - carving out time after 7 pm is a challenge

Time limit on comments needs to be strictly enforced. Often people are allowed to ramble. Also a cap on the discussion time per topic might help. Overall comments are what make the meeting drag on and are often repetitive.

I don't know how you're announcing these, but I've never heard of any of them, ever. I moved here in 2016.

More information, well before the Town Meeting, through various sources, (not just newspapers) should create more interest. Further, a completely detailed Annual Report showing the budgets of each department, salaries and payments to town employees (at least by job title if not by individual) and as much information on the Town Warrant as early as possible will obviate the idea expressed by some (and in a recent letter to the editor) that Hopkinton should change to a representative town meeting so that the elected town meeting members would be self informed in advance and time would be shortened. This revision would totally destroy the concept of direct democracy embodied for centuries in the tradition of the New England Town Meeting that has worked and still works well even in much larger towns! Further, the potential for corruption, manipulation and domination by special interest groups, corporations, etc. by eliminating the "1 person - 1 vote" reality of the present system would lead to even more frustration and feelings of exclusion among citizens concerned for the common good. I, as well as many others, who used to attend regularly, feel the results are fixed, opposing views are not listened to or seriously considered. So: why attend? Perhaps some changes in scheduling, communication ,etc. might bring people in if they and their opinions and ideas are valued even if they oppose the town bureaucrats.

I had never lived in a town with meetings like this before moving here. I was surprised to learn that the meeting lasts several hours over multiple days. With children and other time commitments I am not surprised to learn that meeting and maintaining quorum is difficult. If you want to drive engagement and participation, reducing the meeting time to something manageable is a must! I don't know how it would be done, but I'd target 3-4 hours to be completed in one session

Electronic voting from home or mail in voting should be used. One person, one vote.

We need to move to a more updated format