

Meeting Minutes of the Charter and Bylaw Review Committee Meeting (CBRC) Scheduled on Tuesday September 9, 2025

MEETING MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

Committee attendance: Chris Weithman, Paul Greismer, Saul Beaumont, Harriet Merkwowitz, Bob Awkward [7:36 PM]

Public: Jeff Alderson, Town Moderator

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM. A Roll call vote was taken and a quorum was present. It was announced that the meeting is being recorded by Pegasus.

Citizen's Concerns - none

Update on Special Act - the bill is still in the Committee waiting for a 3rd reading. Legislative bill status here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H3898>. The committee will check in on its status with Rep. Linsky once per month.

Update to previous bylaw changes passed in prior town meetings will now be in effect for ongoing Town Meetings. The Bylaws were approved by the Attorney General. TM procedures for the motion to question can now be taken even if three or more individuals wish to speak, at the discretion of the Town Moderator. Materials from the Attorney General related to past Bylaw Changes are in this meeting's meeting materials [link above].

Agenda item 8 was taken out of Order, the Finance Committee ("FinCom") is scheduled to hold their public hearing on the CBRC motions on September 16, 2025.

The Committee continued their ongoing discussion of comparison of the 3rd Edition and 4th Editions of Town Meeting Time ("TMT") books. The committee discussed assignments and possible motions for Town Meeting. The committee decided to handle the 4 areas of the two book editions where issues were raised and possible motions have been proposed.

The committee started with a proposed Motion A, the requirement for seconds on motions presented on the Town Meeting (TM) floor. According to the 4th Edition of TMT, pages 127-128, "Seconds of motions are not required." However, Motion A proposes to amend the TM procedures via Bylaw, so that any motion brought before TM must be seconded to be considered. This change would add clarity and consistency to the meeting process by ensuring that all motions have support before being handled by the body.

Jeff Alderson spoke to this matter. The Committee discussed the need for a second for a motion on TM floor and the proposed bylaw. Passing this motion, and making it a bylaw, sets the clear expectation that a motion requires a second and there is no discretion on the part of the moderator as to whether to require second. [TMT 4th edition allows for this moderator consideration]. This motion also removes possible points of order such as "we can't vote without a second."

Moved by Mr. Beaumont and seconded by Ms. Merkowitz for favorable action for the motion on the screen [Motion A]. The motion is carried by a roll call vote of 4-0-0.

Motions of Doubtful Legality

In reviewing Town Meeting (TMT), “motions of doubtful legality” three categories are identified (3rd ed., pp. 64-65):

1. The town seeks to do something not allowed by statute.
2. Town Meeting proposes an action that exceeds its powers.
3. A “mandatory condition of precedent” has not been met.

For Natick, the third category means that any matter before Town Meeting must first receive a public hearing by the FinCom. The 3rd edition offers guidance to the moderator and the body on handling such motions.

What Changed in the 4th Edition?

The 4th edition retains the same three categories but shifts how “mandatory conditions of precedent” are applied:

- When a statute expressly requires a public hearing, the moderator should rule the motion out of order if that hearing hasn’t occurred.
- Natick’s FinCom hearing, however, is required by bylaw—not by statute.
- The 4th edition adds a provision, allowing towns to elevate bylaws, such as the FinCom hearings, to the status of “required public hearings” under the rules.

Proposed Motion B

Proposed Motion B would amend Natick’s bylaws to preserve the current practice:

- A FinCom public hearing remains mandatory before a matter reaches the Town Meeting floor.
- The existing “safety valve” is unchanged: with a two-thirds affirmative vote of Town Meeting, a matter may proceed in Town Meeting, even if the FinCom has been unable to hold its hearing.

This approach ensures that Natick maintains its tradition of FinCom review while preserving Town Meeting’s ability to act in urgent or exceptional circumstances.

Committee discussion continued.

Moved favorable action of Motion B, as shown on the screen, [with the typo correction], by Mr. Beaumont and seconded by Ms. Merkowitz. The motion was approved by a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

Motion C is related to the “Motion to Dissolve”. Natick’s current Practice, follows the 3rd edition of TMT such that Town Meeting cannot dissolve unless all matters have been

disposed of. Motions to Dissolve are not debatable and can't be amended and must pass by simple majority.

The 4th edition of TMT [2nd paragraph on p 213] states the motion to dissolve is not in order as long as any article in the warrant has not been acted upon or passed over. In the 4th edition, the words "disposed of" are eliminated. If TM were following the 4th edition, a successful tabling motion means the article was passed over. The meeting could dissolve and this article would not be acted upon. Sometimes articles are moved to the end of the warrant to allow sponsors the ability to be present on the matter. Rescheduling could be considered an action of TM such that the meeting could be dissolved before this matter was considered.

This motion brings back the language from 3rd edition of TMT. This maintains the current practice to dispose of all Articles before the meeting can dissolve.

This motion adds a new 3rd paragraph under section 1. rules and procedures of bylaw article 3. A typo on the proposed motion was corrected.

Moved by Ms. Merkowitz and seconded by Mr. Beaumont to approve Motion C as shown on the screen and corrected. The motion was approved by a roll call vote 5-0-0.

The committee reviewed the assignment to look at different sections of the 3rd and 4th edition of TMT that would be worthy of changing Natick's bylaws.

There was a brief discussion of consent agendas, electronic presentations, accessibility and remote or hybrid TM. Jeff Alderson mentioned that Warrant Article 15 proposes establishing a hybrid town meeting study committee which could lead to bylaw changes or TM Handbook procedures. After review of the assignments, the committee didn't have any other proposed bylaw changes to TM procedures.

Motion Last [in the meeting materials] moved to motion D when no other motions came before the committee.

Motion D changes Natick's bylaw to change the reference edition of TMT from the 3rd edition to Town Meeting Time a Handbook of Parliamentary Law 4th Edition authored by the Massachusetts Moderators Association [the full proper name of the 4th edition].

Naming the actual name of the 4th edition forces TM in the future to review future editions of TMT if a future edition becomes available.

Ms. Merkowitz moved to accept Motion D as shown on the screen. Seconded by Mr. Beaumont. The Committee accepted the motion by a roll call vote 5-0-0.

The Committee had a discussion of future issues of hybrid town meeting in the 4th edition that might benefit future committee studying this subject.

The issues brought forward were:

- monitoring the quorum; how does the body know when a quorum fails if people are still on screen but might not be voting, disappears from the screen, or leaves their video off.
- Amendments, how are they offered? If they need to be submitted in writing how is this managed by a remote member? Is a remote member allowed to email the Moderator?
- Handouts for the meeting, how are they shared with the remote members if the motion has to be scrolled because it is so long?
- Using phones and the internet and what happens if someone's internet goes out
- Right to speak managed by both the in person and remote meeting evenly
- Managing the Voting process
- Moderator Assistants
- Technology usage and training the members on use of the remote equipment.
- How do you ensure that the public can attend

Special Counsel invoice has an error on it and is not yet ready for approval.

Outstanding Meeting Minutes:

The meeting minutes of July 3rd were tabled to the next meeting. Ms. Weithman will send them back out via email to everyone.

Moved by Ms. Merkowitz and seconded by Mr. Awkward to approve the meeting minutes of August 27, 2025 as edited in the meeting. The minutes as shown on the screen were approved by a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

Moved by Ms. Merkowitz and Seconded by Mr. Beaumont to Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM by a roll call vote of 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted:

Date approved:



October 16, 2025

Christine Weithman
Secretary, Charter and Bylaw Review Committee