

TOWN OF BECKET

Minutes

Town Meeting ByLaw Review Committee

9/27/2012

(APPROVED 10/22/12)

Members Present: Bruce Garlow, Rob Gorden, Ann Krawet, Jeanne Pryor

The meeting began at 11:00 a.m. The organization of the committee was discussed and the committee voted to appoint Bruce Garlow as Chair and Jeanne Pryor as Secretary. Bruce handed out copies of the following items:

1. Charge to the Town Meeting ByLaw Review Committee
2. Suggestions for future Town Meetings from Select Board
3. The existing bylaw, "Article 1--Town Meetings"
4. Town of Becket - Open Town Meeting Participation Guide, 5/12/12

The Charge to the Town Meeting ByLaw Review Committee was reviewed. It was noted that the charge was for 5 members but only 4 have been appointed.

Voice votes and voter card votes were discussed. Ann suggested that the voter cards should be used as much as possible. Bruce noted that voters should feel free to interrupt the Moderator and state that they cannot hear. It was suggested that the sentence "Voters may address the Moderator to let the Moderator know when they cannot hear." be added to the participation guide.

The Suggestions for future Town Meetings were reviewed.

Item 1. The Committee agreed that the Town Clerk must check with Town Counsel regarding all ballot question wording.

Item 2. The Committee agreed that Annual Town Meetings should be held at the school. Special Town Meetings should be held at Town Hall or the school depending on the nature of the meeting.

Item 2.a. The Committee agreed that we should respect the school's wishes for voters not sitting on bleachers, if possible, but that more chairs may be needed.

Item 2.b. The Committee agreed that this suggestion should be changed to "The Town Clerk should divide the check-in list and have 4 people working at town meeting."

Item 2.c. The Committee agreed that this suggestion should be changed to "Continue having a police officer at town meeting."

Item 2.d. was discussed. Committee members agreed that:

- parents and children should not be separated and that the Town Clerk should advise check-in workers that children can sit with their parents.
- on controversial votes, voters should be asked to raise their voter card

TOWN OF BECKET

The committee recommended that Town Meeting warrants should be mailed to all households with voters and to part-time residents with homes in Becket.

Item 2.e. was discussed. The Committee agreed that microphones should be used. The need to purchase sound equipment for town meetings and possible other town events, such as public hearings, was discussed. Ann will look into the cost of purchasing 2 speakers, amp, 4 wireless microphones and 2 stands. It was suggested that she ask the Town Clerk to email town clerks asking what equipment for speaking they use at town meeting and if they are satisfied with it. It was suggested that a Boy and Girl Scout be used at Town Meeting to bring a microphone to a voter wishing to speak; perhaps they can get school credit for this.

The committee voted to endorse the Suggestions for future Town Meetings as amended and clarified.

There was a discussion of how Rob would receive materials for the meetings since he objects to using a computer. Some items would be placed in his Historical Commission mailbox. It was agreed that Rob would not have input in reviewing other towns' bylaws on-line but would be given a copy of summarized items taken from such bylaws for review at committee meetings.

The Committee reviewed the existing bylaw. In Section 1 the location of the town meeting was changed to "Becket Washington School." In Section 1A the location of the election was added as "at the Becket Town Hall or elsewhere as determined by the Board of Selectmen." In Section 2, Special Town Meeting was changed to "Meetings." In Section 3, it was agreed to delete the words ", calling the same" and adding after Becket Transfer Station ", on the town's website,". The mailing of the warrant, although not included in Section 3, was discussed. It was agreed that the warrant articles without any attachments should be mailed and a section concerning the election of offices should be included at the end of the warrant. Section 4 was discussed. Bruce will work on revised wording for this section for our next meeting as the Committee wants all sections to be understandable to all. Sections 5 and 6 were reviewed and discussed and no changes were suggested. Section 7 was discussed and it was agreed to change part of the first sentence to "All special purpose committees created at Town Meeting shall be appointed...." It was explained that the reference to Town in section refers to Town Meeting. Bruce also explained that he, as Moderator, would not allow discussion of any item that is not included in the subject of a warrant article. Section 8 was reviewed and no changes were made. A copy of the existing bylaw with these revisions is attached.

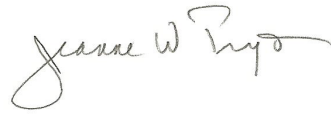
There was a general discussion about town meetings and how to ensure that they are conducted in a fair way for all voters. Some towns hold an informational meeting before their town meeting and include an opportunity for candidates to be present to answer questions. The Board of Selectmen may want to consider this. The town may want to consider other ways to encourage participation such as mailing the Annual Report to all town residents.

TOWN OF BECKET

Bruce will forward to committee members an email with links to other town bylaws that the committee should review before our next meeting. The committee will also consider how to address items such as reconsideration or if the Moderator can be challenged and how can that be done. **Town Meeting Time** includes rules specific to town meetings and will be used as a reference. It is used now by the Moderator at our town meetings. Bruce also noted that he will not moderate the portion of town meeting where the committee's bylaw recommendations will be presented but will ask the Town Clerk to do so.

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, October 22, 2012, at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeanne W. Pryor".

Jeanne W. Pryor