

ATM REMOTE PARTICIPATION GROUP

WORK TO DATE AND CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

MARCH 12, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members: Tom Barry, Eric Barber-Mingo, Steve Edwards

Mission: Help increase participation at Westford Town Meetings using Remote Participation

Methods Researched:

1) The Salem, New Hampshire Method

(A) Attend information sessions, complete Paper Ballot at home, return to Town Clerk by date certain.

(a) Per Town Counsel, this method is not legal under Mass laws, citing 1918 case, must debate and vote on matters in person! Would have to amend State Constitution.

2) Two Meeting Method

(A) Attend Town Meeting, discuss and debate articles, then “pause”.

(B) 2nd meeting date established, voters reassemble to vote on each article.

(a) Per Town Counsel, this method would be legal, although no precedent. However, logistics and costs for two meetings, complicated procedures, quorum issues, all present significant complications and problems.

3) Town of Wayland Method

(A) Hybrid Town Meeting. In-Person or attend from home using personal cell phone to question/comment and keypad to vote.

(B) Very lengthy process. Wayland petitioned State Legislature for approval for remote electronic voting in 2021. Currently in 3rd reading in Congress. Expects a lengthy process. Then will start working to comply with conditions.

(a) Cost to develop software prohibitive to develop prior to Legislative approval. Still several years down the road.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

- 1) Prepare summary documenting research conducted with pros and cons of each method, so that future attempts will have a starting point...COMPLETED**
- 2) Steve Edwards to create a half-hour CAT program to document research conducted and results concluded to be utilized by Westford residents for information purposes. Steve will work on this independently over the upcoming months.**
- 3) Remote Participation Group will prepare letter to the Select Board with our ask for their submission of a letter to the State level requesting the involvement of the State to come up with a solution to low town meeting attendance in most towns throughout Massachusetts. The problem should be solved at the state level and not by individual towns trying to solve the issue independently.**
- 4) Tom Barry will continue to monitor progress by the Town of Wayland with their Legislative Petition to allow remote electronic participation by their registered voters.**