

Town of Burlington, Town Hall Annex  
Rules Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 19, 2023

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*By Town Clerk's Office at 8:31 am, Jan 31, 2023*

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

Rules Committee members present: Myrna Saltman (Chairperson), Gary Kasky (Vice Chairperson), Christine Concession, Jeff DiBona, Adam Senesi, Mark Woods.

Also in attendance: Bill Beyer (Town Moderator), Scott Martin (Chairperson, General Bylaw Review Committee), Cathy Beyer, TMM, Precinct #2, Karen Cooper, TMM, Precinct #4.

The purpose of tonight's meeting was to review with Scott Martin, Articles 14 – 18, which are being proposed by the General Bylaw Review Committee to enable Town Meeting, or any public meeting by any Board, Committee, or Department be accessible either in person or via an electronic communications platform. The rationale is to ensure that Burlington is represented by all residents who wish to participate for the betterment of our town.

Scott reviewed the Articles, and then the floor was open for discussion. Scott gave an example of a hybrid meeting with respect to the General Bylaw Review Committee which has been using this form of meeting for the past three years and it has been very effective in getting their projects accomplished, and enabled those who could not otherwise participate in an in-person meeting to be active with this committee.

Jeff DiBona wanted to note that his committee meets in person and felt more was accomplished by meeting in person.

One question asked was if the State Legislature had approved hybrid meetings past March 2023. To date the legislature has not done this.

Concerns about hybrid meetings were as follows:

- Lack of Transparency – it was pointed out that many TMMs do not have their screens on during a meeting which raises a concern as to their attentiveness during town meeting. Those who are in attendance in the auditorium cannot see TMMs who are using Zoom as to how someone is voting for or against a Warrant Article. It was mentioned that the Rules Committee can require all virtual attendees to keep video on for the duration of Town Meeting. This raised a point that all votes may have to be roll call votes to provide transparency, which may also add considerable time to each vote on the Warrant.
- Cost – estimates for conducting TM in a hybrid setting, based on numbers from Town Hall, are over \$5,500 per night. It was also pointed out that costs will probably go higher as a number of people who helped set up the hybrid meetings volunteered their time, which will not be the case going forward. A request has been made to the Town Clerk for updated cost estimates.
- Bill Beyer also mentioned that the Attorney General has not recommended towns continue to use hybrid meetings on a going forward basis.

Also discussed was the wording used in the Warrant Articles. It was pointed out that the wording needs to be tightened up and specific definitions are needed for "hybrid meeting" and "remote" meeting and what order of business can and cannot be conducted for each.

Based on the wording as submitted in Warrant Articles 14-18, the Rules Committee voted 0-6-0 against the Articles.

A suggestion was made for TM to use a classroom in the high school for those who have a need to isolate from the main body due to being immunocompromised. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:17PM.

Submitted by Mark Woods, Rules Committee Secretary, TMM Precinct 7