



Town Meeting '24

Danville Town Meeting Committee (TMC)

All Those in Favor, Frank Bryan and Susan Clark - There are a lot of factors in our world that are pushing us away from each other. Town Meeting builds something Vermont has always had a lot of: social capital.

Identifying options for enhancing local participatory democracy in traditional
Town Meeting

Presentation as of March 4, 2024



Town Meeting Committee

- At the 2023 Town Meeting, there were articles on whether to continue floor meetings or move everything to Australian Ballot (for both Town and School)



- The articles failed, but the discussion raised many good points – pro and con ...so the Selectboard chartered a committee to see if there are better ways
- *The Town Meeting Committee identifies options for enhancing local participatory democracy in traditional Town Meeting by conducting research, soliciting and considering public input, and making recommendations to the Selectboard and School Board by January 2025*

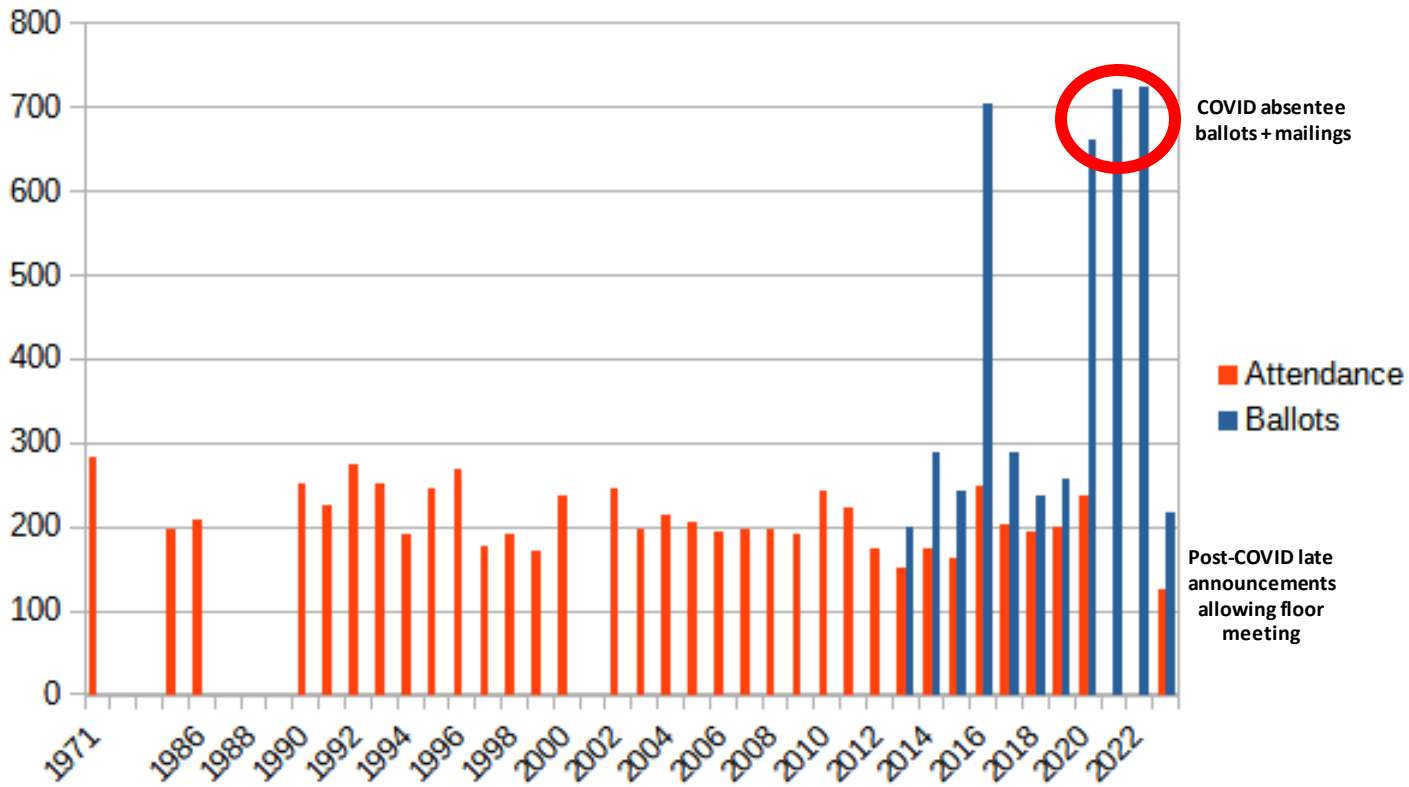


Danville Town Meeting History

- First Danville Town Meeting: March 17, **1788**
- Early meetings reflect an abundance of officers; controversial issues were generally about livestock and land
- In 1840 town population peaked at 2,633; recently the population hovers around 2,200 with a voter checklist around **1,700**
- A **2010** petition led to charters that **require Australian Ballot for budgets**
 - Charters are for Town and School
 - Same thing could be done with votes, instead
- Over the past 35-40 years...
 - Floor meeting attendance has ranged from 153 to 275 with an average of **209**
 - Ballots (without COVID mailings) average **305**

Attendance is NOT really dropping, but...

- Attendance has never been high
- Maximum voter turnout (for ballots) seems to be ~40%
- Hot issues bring out voters - even without mailing ballots to everyone





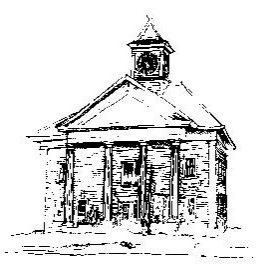
Town Meeting Options

	Floor (Only)	Hybrid A: Elections	Hybrid B: Budgets	Ballot (Only)	New Combination
	TM is conducted entirely by Floor Meeting	TM Elections are by Australian Ballot; remainder is conducted with Floor Meeting	TM Budgets are by Australian Ballot; remainder is conducted with Floor Meeting	TM is conducted entirely by Australian Ballot	TM is in two parts: Floor Meeting a month in advance sets Australian Ballot items
Positives	Allows attendees to legislate any/all TM issues; meeting brings voters together	Allows attendees to legislate (discuss and make changes to) Floor Meeting items; maximizes convenience for voters to say yes or no on specific types of issue; meeting brings voters together		Higher turnout; maximizes convenience for voters to say yes or no to TM issues	Allows attendees to set potential solutions and maximizes convenience for yes/no voting
Negatives	Lower turnout; people who don't attend can't vote Attending meeting takes effort	Prevents voters from legislating Australian Ballot issues (yes-no only) People who don't attend Floor Meeting can't vote on those issues Attending meetings takes effort		Prevents voters from legislating Voters don't need to attend to issues to cast ballots	Unique system will be confusing May not improve participation for meeting or ballot
Officers	Officers elected from floor; only attendees can vote and may or may not know candidates	Officers petition to get on ballot; voters know candidates ahead of time for ballot	Officers elected from floor; only attendees can vote and may or may not know candidates	Officers petition to get on ballot; voters know candidates ahead of time for ballot	Candidates chosen at Floor Meeting; voters know candidates by ballot time
Budgets	Attendees may modify budgets as needed; TM should always result in official budget	Attendees may modify budgets as needed; TM should always result in official budget	Attendees may only change budgets by voting down, requiring future ballot cycle(s)	Attendees may only change budgets by voting down, requiring future ballot cycle(s)	Attendees may modify proposal at Floor Meeting; budgets should usually pass at ballot
Expected participation	Floor Meeting ~14%	Floor Meeting ~12%	Floor Meeting ~12%	Floor (Information) Meeting 0%	Floor Meeting ~14%
	For ALL options (including Floor Meeting only), special / high-interest issues can still go to Australian Ballot with potential for up to ~40% participation				
	Australian Ballot 0%	Australian Ballot ~20%	Australian Ballot ~20%	Australian Ballot ~27%	Australian Ballot ~27%
Change Process	2025: TM vote to repeal charter; Legislature rescinds 2025 or 26: TM vote to discontinue use of ballot for budgets in following year	2025: TM vote to repeal charter; Legislature rescinds (optional) 2025 or 26: TM vote to hold elections by Australian Ballot in following year	No changes required, but... 2025: TM could vote to repeal charter (would continue to vote on budget by Australian Ballot unless/until rescinded)	2025: TM vote to repeal charter; Legislature rescinds (optional) 2025 or 26: TM vote to use Australian Ballot for all measures in following year	2025: TM votes for new charter with Combination TM rules ~2026: Legislature approves changes (after deliberation) ~2027: TM begins new format



Participation Boosters (for any Town Meeting)

- Public Encouragement
 - Ensure accessibility on par with balloting
 - Offer online attendance
 - Offer daycare
 - Involve young people
 - Advertise services and issues
 - Host welcome / TM orientation
 - Mail ballots to all active registered voters
 - Select or School Board action
 - Expect ballot increase from 27% to 40%
- Improve Ballot Item Input
 - Host info meeting before TM warning to allow voters to comment on, if not amend, items
- Change Floor Meeting Date/Time
 - Saturday before first Tuesday
 - Saturday evening
 - Sunday or Monday
 - Tuesday evening



Tell us what you think...

- Take the survey!
- Come to the meetings!
- Contact us any way that works for you!