

A Look at SB2 Procedures:

Briefly, Senate Bill 2 requires the following: a public hearing held by the School Board to discuss budget and warrant articles for placement on the preliminary Warrant; a deliberative session wherein residents are afforded the opportunity to discuss and amend those articles as presented on the warrant; and; the official ballot vote to be held on the second Tuesday in March at which eligible voters will either approve or disapprove the operating budget and warrant articles as written on the ballot.

So what, in a nutshell, does this mean for us in the School District and the residents of our Town? It means an earlier budget season and, more importantly, active and diligent public participation in the deliberative session in order to assure a complete understanding and awareness of the forthcoming warrant articles, as the official ballot vote presents no opportunity for clarification.

Public Hearings: Prior to the Deliberative Session, a public hearing is held, allowing public input regarding the form and content of the final articles. This hearing also includes discussion of items relative to budgetary and financial matters, as well as the bottom line budget for the ensuing year. Subsequent to this public hearing, a preliminary Budget and Warrant will be posted according to State statute in preparation for the Deliberative Session.

Deliberative Session: This session very closely resembles the familiar format of the New England Town Meeting, with one fundamental difference. Articles are discussed and amendments considered, however no official final action is taken at the time.

The Session will be presided over by the School District Moderator, who is charged with the obligation and responsibility of maintaining order at all times. The Deliberative Session, as is the case with Annual Town Meeting, adheres to the current “Robert’s Rules of Order.”

Each article will be addressed in the order set in the posted Warrant, unless the body votes to advance or postpone a specific article. Articles will be presented and moved by the School Board, and may be explained by the sponsor or petitioner before discussion is opened to the floor.

Per “Robert’s Rules of Order”, a Point of Order may be put to the Moderator at any time during the session. This is not a motion, but rather a claim that the current discussion or speaker is out of order.

The Deliberative Session will not be adjourned until all required business has been transacted, however, it may be necessary to recess the proceedings for continuation. This is usually due to the lateness of the hour and/or the number of articles remaining for discussion.

As articles are discussed and accepted, the School District Moderator shall instruct the School District Clerk to place the article, as amended if applicable, onto the official ballot. Prior to the Official Ballot vote, a secondary Warrant and Budget will be posted, reflecting those changes resulting from the Deliberative Session, and shall serve as the final warrant to be voted on.

In order to participate in the Deliberative Session, one must be present and be a registered voter in the Town. Non-voters and non-residents will most likely be allowed to remain in attendance, however they will be unable to address the body or cast a vote on any issue.

Official Ballot Vote: Held on the second Tuesday in March, the official ballot of the School District will encompass election of officers, and all approved warrant and budget articles for the Town. As indicated above, voters must be diligent regarding the public hearings and deliberative sessions for both Town and School, as election day affords no opportunity to question the meaning or results of adoption of warrant article.

Due to the multitude of items the official ballot will contain, voters must anticipate a potential wait at the polling place. Voters will be completing two ballots, encompassing many issues.