

# Report: Moderator's 2015 Survey of Town Meeting Members Lexington, MA



**Report publication date:** June 17, 2015

**Survey data collection period:** May 26 – June 5, 2015

**Distribution:** By email ( or postal mail for those with out email addresses) to all 189 elected Town Meeting members and 6 At-Large Members (Total 195).

**Survey type:** Unique emailed web link to anonymous on-line survey (for those without email, paper survey mailed with stamped return envelope for anonymous submission.)

**Response rate:** Down by 8 (3.2%) from 2014

**2015 Response rate:**  
142 respondents (72.8%).








**2014 Response rate:**  
150 respondents (76%).

**Acknowledgement:** Thank you to Deborah Strod, Barry Orenstein, and Beth Masterman for their assistance with this survey.

## Question 1

### Overall satisfaction

How satisfied are you with the way the 2015 Annual Town Meeting operated?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very satisfied		64.5%	91
Somewhat satisfied		31.9%	45
Neutral / no opinion		2.8%	4
Somewhat dissatisfied		0.7%	1
Very dissatisfied		0.0%	0
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>141</b>

[Last year: 50.3% Very satisfied]

## Question 2

### Electronic Voting: Check In

How satisfied were you with the length of time required to check in and receive your handheld voting device each night?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very satisfied		90.1%	128
Somewhat satisfied		9.2%	13
Neutral / no opinion		0.7%	1
Somewhat dissatisfied		0.0%	0
Very dissatisfied		0.0%	0
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>142</b>

[Last year: 53.7% Very satisfied]

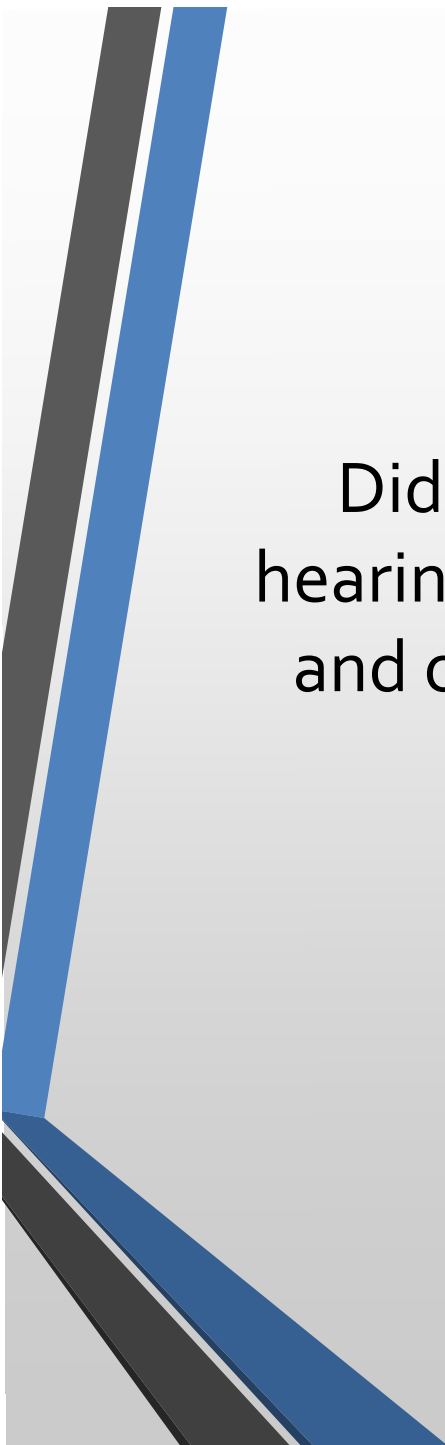
### Question 3

## Electronic voting: Check out

How satisfied were you with the length of time required to turn in your handheld voting device each night?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very satisfied		69.7%	99
Somewhat satisfied		23.9%	34
Neutral / no opinion		2.1%	3
Somewhat dissatisfied		3.5%	5
Very dissatisfied		0.7%	1
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>142</b>

[Last year: 61.3% Very satisfied]



Question 4: **Preparation – Meetings and Hearings**

Did you attend or watch any meeting(s) or hearing(s) of the following boards, committees, and organizations in preparation for the 2015 Annual Town Meeting?

## Question 4 : Preparation – Meetings and Hearings

	Yes Attended	Watched on LexMedia	Neither Watched Nor Attended	Total Responses
<b>Budget Summit (joint BOS, SC, AC, CEC)</b>	32 (26.0%)	14 (11.4%)	77 (62.6%)	123
<b>Board of Selectmen (BOS)</b>	39 (29.5%)	49 (37.1%)	44 (33.3%)	132
<b>School Committee (SC)</b>	21 (16.9%)	31 (25.0%)	72 (58.1%)	124
<b>Planning Board</b>	33 (26.8%)	17 (13.8%)	73 (59.3%)	123
<b>Appropriation Committee (AC)</b>	17 (14.4%)	5 (4.2%)	96 (81.4%)	118
<b>Capital Expenditures Committee (CEC)</b>	15 (12.5%)	5 (4.2%)	100 (83.3%)	120
<b>Community Preservation Committee</b>	16 (13.4%)	7 (5.9%)	96 (80.7%)	119
<b>League of Women Voters First Friday Events</b>	39 (32.0%)	5 (4.1%)	78 (63.9%)	122
<b>Lexington Center Committee</b>	18 (15.5%)	4 (3.4%)	94 (81.0%)	116



Question 5 : **Documents Electronic/Paper**

How helpful were the following documents  
in preparation for and during the 2015  
Annual Town Meeting?

## Question 5 : Documents Electronic/Paper

	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Somewhat helpful</b>	<b>Not helpful</b>	<b>Did not read</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
<b>Appropriation Committee Report(s)</b>	84 (60.0%)	47 (33.6%)	1 (0.7%)	8 (5.7%)	140
<b>Capital Expenditures Committee Report(s)</b>	88 (62.4%)	43 (30.5%)	1 (0.7%)	9 (6.4%)	141
<b>Community Preservation Committee Report</b>	82 (59.4%)	49 (35.5%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (4.3%)	138
<b>Planning Board Report(s)</b>	73 (53.3%)	52 (38.0%)	1 (0.7%)	11 (8.0%)	137
<b>Lexington Public Schools Budget Book</b>	56 (40.3%)	53 (38.1%)	5 (3.6%)	25 (18.0%)	139
<b>Moderator's proposed schedule of articles (and updates)</b>	125 (89.9%)	11 (7.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.2%)	139
<b>Town Warrant</b>	103 (74.1%)	31 (22.3%)	5 (3.6%)	0 (0.0%)	139
<b>Text of motions</b>	96 (69.1%)	41 (29.5%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.4%)	139
<b>Town Manager's Budget Book ("brown book")</b>	70 (50.4%)	48 (34.5%)	3 (2.2%)	18 (12.9%)	139
<b>Written materials by article sponsors</b>	67 (48.6%)	69 (50.0%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	138





**Question 6 : Presentations: How helpful?**

How helpful were the following presentations during the 2015 Annual Town Meeting?



## Question 6 : Presentations: How helpful?

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Did not hear	Total Responses
<b>Board of Selectmen oral reports</b>	95 (67.9%)	43 (30.7%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	140
<b>Town Manager's oral report</b>	111 (79.3%)	28 (20.0%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	140
<b>Appropriation Committee oral reports</b>	93 (66.9%)	42 (30.2%)	3 (2.2%)	1 (0.7%)	139
<b>Capital Expenditures Committee oral reports</b>	93 (67.4%)	40 (29.0%)	4 (2.9%)	1 (0.7%)	138
<b>School Committee oral reports</b>	87 (62.6%)	44 (31.7%)	7 (5.0%)	1 (0.7%)	139
<b>Lexington Public School Superintendent's oral report</b>	84 (60.9%)	48 (34.8%)	6 (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	138
<b>Minuteman Regional High School Superintendant's oral report</b>	66 (47.8%)	63 (45.7%)	7 (5.1%)	2 (1.4%)	138
<b>Community Preservation Committee oral reports</b>	93 (66.4%)	41 (29.3%)	4 (2.9%)	2 (1.4%)	140
<b>Planning Board oral reports</b>	95 (69.3%)	41 (29.9%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	137



## Question 7

### **TMMA Activities and Resources**

How helpful were the following TMMA activities and resources in preparation for and during the 2015 Annual Town Meeting?



## Question 7: TMMA activities and resources:

### # 6 - TMMA information sessions (on LexMedia)

[Last year: 9.9% Very helpful;  
12.1% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		8.4%	11
Somewhat helpful		12.2%	16
Not helpful		2.3%	3
Did not read/use/attend		77.1%	101
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>131</b>

### #5 - TMMA website

[Last year: 18.5% Very helpful;  
45.9% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		23.9%	33
Somewhat helpful		46.4%	64
Not helpful		8.0%	11
Did not read/use/attend		21.7%	30
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>138</b>

## Question 7: TMMA activities and resources:

### # 4 -TMMA bus tour

[Last year: 30.4% Very helpful;  
16.2% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		32.6%	46
Somewhat helpful		14.9%	21
Not helpful		2.1%	3
Did not read/use/attend		50.4%	71
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>141</b>

### #3 – TMMA information sessions **in person**

[Last year: 44.5% Very helpful;  
25.3% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		44.2%	61
Somewhat helpful		24.6%	34
Not helpful		1.4%	2
Did not read/use/attend		29.7%	41
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>138</b>

## Question 7: TMMA activities and resources:

### #2 - TMMA Google email group

[Last year: 36.1% Very helpful;  
45.6% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		49.3%	69
Somewhat helpful		37.1%	52
Not helpful		5.7%	8
Did not read/use/attend		7.9%	11
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>140</b>

### #1 - TMMA information book

[Last year: 47.3% Very helpful;  
41.2% Somewhat helpful]

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Very helpful		54.3%	75
Somewhat helpful		35.5%	49
Not helpful		5.8%	8
Did not read/use/attend		4.3%	6
<b>Total Responses</b>			<b>138</b>



## Question 8 - **Information quantity and quality**

Reflecting upon all the information available to assist your decision making at Town Meeting, please share any additional thoughts you have on the quantity and quality of that information.

See Comments Document







## Question 9

### Article 4 Motion

At t this Town Meeting, the Moderator read the heading only of each section of Article 4 (Operating Budget) rather than reading the motion line by line.

**How do you think the Article 4 motion should be handled in the future?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Continue the new practice of reading just the section headings		84.3%	118
Return to the former practice of reading the motion line by line		7.9%	11
Not sure		5.7%	8
No opinion / doesn't matter		2.1%	3
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>140</b>

**CONTINUE new practice - 84.3%**







## Question 10

### Consent Agenda

Eleven articles were bundled for one vote in a consent agenda that had the unanimous support of the Board of Selectmen and Appropriation Committee. (and Capital Expenditures Committee, School Committee, and Planning Board, where relevant).

**Would you like to see a consent agenda used at a future meeting?**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		87.1%	122
No		4.3%	6
Not sure		6.4%	9
No opinion / doesn't matter		2.1%	3
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>140</b>


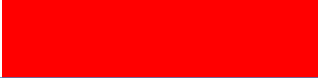

**YES – 87.1%**

## Question 11

### Meeting Duration

The 2015 Annual Town Meeting (and the accompanying Special Town Meetings) lasted eight nights.

**Please indicate your opinion of the meeting's length:**

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Too long		27.2%	37
Just right		68.4%	93
Too short		4.4%	6
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>136</b>

[Last year's 7 nights: 59.1% Just right; 37.6% Too long]

## Question 12

### New member workshop

Please indicate your opinion of the Moderator's workshop for new Town Meeting Members





Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Helpful with the right amount of information		13.6%	18
Too much information at one time		2.3%	3
Too little information /Not helpful		1.5%	2
I am a new Town Meeting Member and did not attend		2.3%	3
N/A		80.3%	106
Total Responses			132

[Last year: 14.4% Helpful; 2.1% Too much info; 0% Too little/Not helpful]

## Question 13

### Process and parliamentary procedure general understanding

How would you rate your understanding of our Town Meeting process and procedures?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Excellent		45.8%	65
Good		45.1%	64
Fair		7.7%	11
Poor		1.4%	2
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>142</b>

[Last year: 42.0% Excellent; 49.3% Good]

## Question 14: Parliamentary Procedure - Specific Understanding

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total Responses
<b>The difference between an article and a motion</b>	98 (70.5%)	33 (23.7%)	6 (4.3%)	2 (1.4%)	139
<b>How to make a motion</b>	74 (53.2%)	44 (31.7%)	20 (14.4%)	1 (0.7%)	139
<b>How to amend a motion</b>	64 (47.1%)	52 (38.2%)	18 (13.2%)	2 (1.5%)	136
<b>How / when to call the question</b>	101 (72.7%)	32 (23.0%)	5 (3.6%)	1 (0.7%)	139
<b>When to rise to for a point of personal privilege</b>	69 (50.0%)	37 (26.8%)	24 (17.4%)	8 (5.8%)	138
<b>When to rise for a point of order</b>	57 (41.9%)	44 (32.4%)	28 (20.6%)	7 (5.1%)	136
<b>How to serve notice of reconsideration</b>	63 (45.7%)	43 (31.2%)	23 (16.7%)	9 (6.5%)	138
<b>How / when to move reconsideration</b>	53 (38.4%)	45 (32.6%)	31 (22.5%)	9 (6.5%)	138

## Question 15: Moderator - Management of Debate

At the 2015 Annual Town Meeting, did the Moderator consistently:

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Don't Remember	Total Responses
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the Yes microphone?	125 (90.6%)	5 (3.6%)	8 (5.8%)	138
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the No microphone?	125 (90.6%)	5 (3.6%)	8 (5.8%)	138
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the Citizens' microphone?	123 (89.1%)	6 (4.3%)	9 (6.5%)	138
Apply the 2-minute time limit at the Question microphone?	115 (83.9%)	6 (4.4%)	16 (11.7%)	137
Alternate among the Yes, No, Question, and Citizens' microphones?	128 (92.1%)	3 (2.2%)	8 (5.8%)	139
Require participants to refrain from personal attacks?	133 (95.7%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.3%)	139
Require participants to keep remarks/questions relevant to the topic of the motion?	127 (92.7%)	4 (2.9%)	6 (4.4%)	137

## Question 16: Moderator - Leadership Feedback

At the 2015 Annual Town Meeting, did the Moderator:

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Don't Remember	Total Responses
Show respect for the traditions and responsibilities of Town Meeting?	138 (98.6%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	140
Set a tone and expectation for mutual respect among participants?	137 (97.9%)	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.4%)	140
Make all participants feel welcome?	131 (94.2%)	2 (1.4%)	6 (4.3%)	139
Treat all participants fairly?	133 (96.4%)	3 (2.2%)	2 (1.4%)	138
Provide clear and adequate instructions?	137 (98.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.4%)	139
Make herself available and accessible before, during, and after Town Meeting?	101 (73.2%)	2 (1.4%)	35 (25.4%)	138
Exercise appropriate management of the meeting process, without influencing the outcome?	132 (95.7%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (4.3%)	138
Demonstrate technical competence required of a Moderator?	137 (99.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.7%)	138
Demonstrate confidence in the role of Moderator?	140 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	140

## Question 17: Deputy Moderator - Management of Debate

At the 2015 Annual Town Meeting, did the **DEPUTY** Moderator consistently:

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Don't Remember	Total Responses
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the Yes microphone?	97 (74.6%)	4 (3.1%)	29 (22.3%)	130
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the No microphone?	97 (74.6%)	4 (3.1%)	29 (22.3%)	130
Apply the 3-minute time limit at the Citizens' microphone?	92 (71.3%)	2 (1.6%)	35 (27.1%)	129
Apply the 2-minute time limit at the Question microphone?	91 (70.0%)	3 (2.3%)	36 (27.7%)	130
Alternate among the Yes, No, Question, and Citizens' microphones?	95 (72.0%)	3 (2.3%)	34 (25.8%)	132
Require participants to refrain from personal attacks?	91 (70.0%)	0 (0.0%)	39 (30.0%)	130
Require participants to keep remarks/questions relevant to the topic of the motion?	89 (70.1%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (29.9%)	127




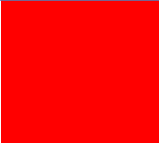

## Question 18: Deputy Moderator - Leadership Feedback

At the 2015 Annual Town Meeting, did the **DEPUTY** Moderator:

	Yes	No	Not sure/ Don't Remember	Total Responses
Show respect for the traditions and responsibilities of Town Meeting?	114 (86.4%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (13.6%)	132
Set a tone and expectation for mutual respect among participants?	112 (84.8%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (15.2%)	132
Make all participants feel welcome?	107 (81.7%)	1 (0.8%)	23 (17.6%)	131
Treat all participants fairly?	108 (83.1%)	1 (0.8%)	21 (16.2%)	130
Provide clear and adequate instructions?	98 (75.4%)	7 (5.4%)	25 (19.2%)	130
Make herself available and accessible before, during, and after Town Meeting?	76 (58.0%)	1 (0.8%)	54 (41.2%)	131
Exercise appropriate management of the meeting process, without influencing the outcome?	108 (82.4%)	2 (1.5%)	21 (16.0%)	131
Demonstrate technical competence required of a Moderator?	98 (76.6%)	4 (3.1%)	26 (20.3%)	128
Demonstrate confidence in the role of Moderator?	95 (73.1%)	9 (6.9%)	26 (20.0%)	130

## Question 19 Participation - Attendance

Regarding your own participation at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting:



Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
I attended all 8 nights of Town Meeting.		59.6%	84
I missed 1 or 2 of the 8 nights of Town Meeting.		34.0%	48
I missed 3 or more of the 8 nights of Town Meeting.		6.4%	9
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>141</b>

[Last year: 63.1% all 7 nights; 34.9% missed 1 or 2]

Question 20

**Participation - Speaking**

Did you speak at the YES / NO / QUESTION microphone(s) during the 2015 Annual Town Meeting?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		52.9%	74
No		47.1%	66
Total Responses			140

**Spoke – 52.9%**

## Question 21 RE: Speaking at Town Meeting

I feel comfortable participating and expressing my views

83.3%

I felt well-prepared to speak

70.8%

I only speak when I feel I have something new to add to the debate

84.7%

I felt TM Members were respectful and listened to my comments

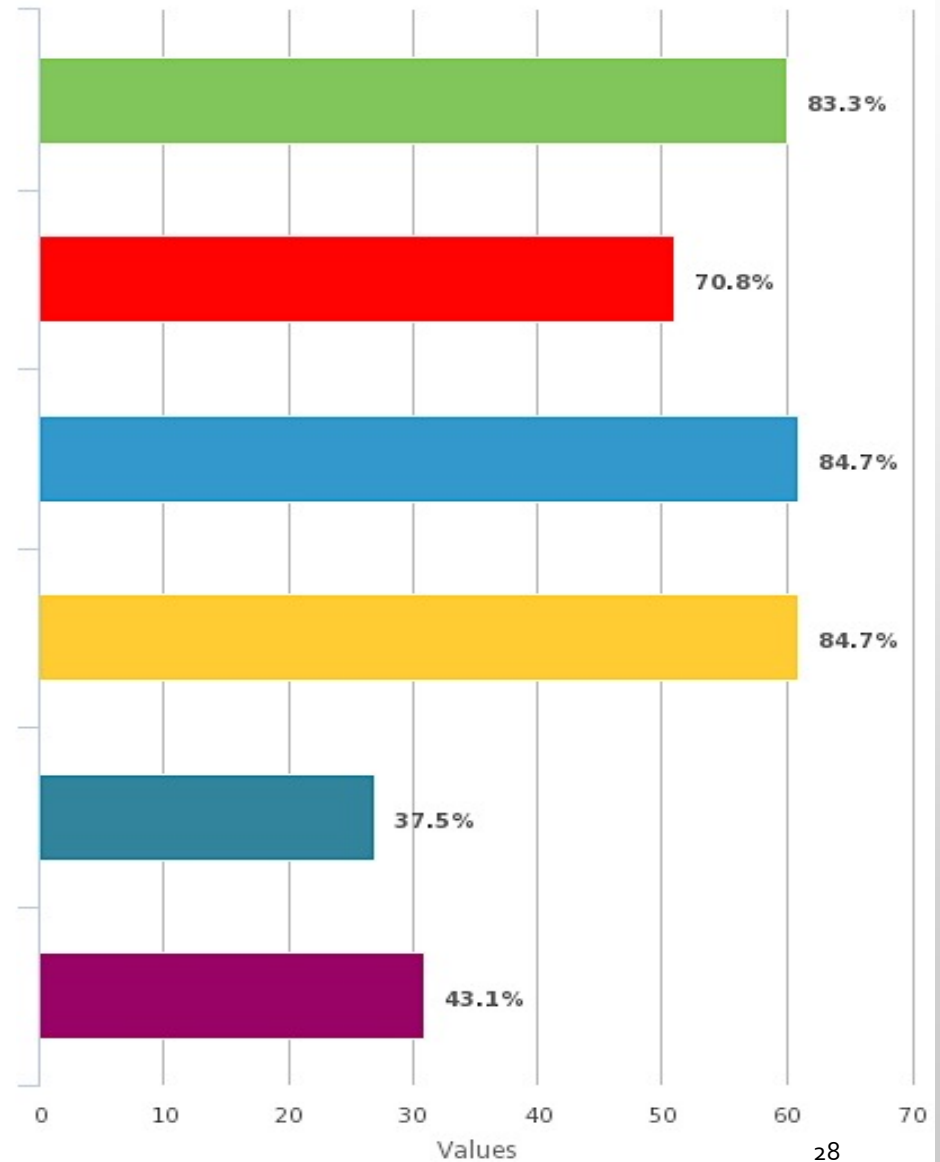
84.7%

I like speaking at Town Meeting and make an effort to share my opinions

37.5%

I spoke at Town Meeting because  
*(see Comments Document)*

43.1%



## Question 22 RE: **NOT** Speaking at Town Meeting

I am comfortable speaking but did not do so at this Town Meeting

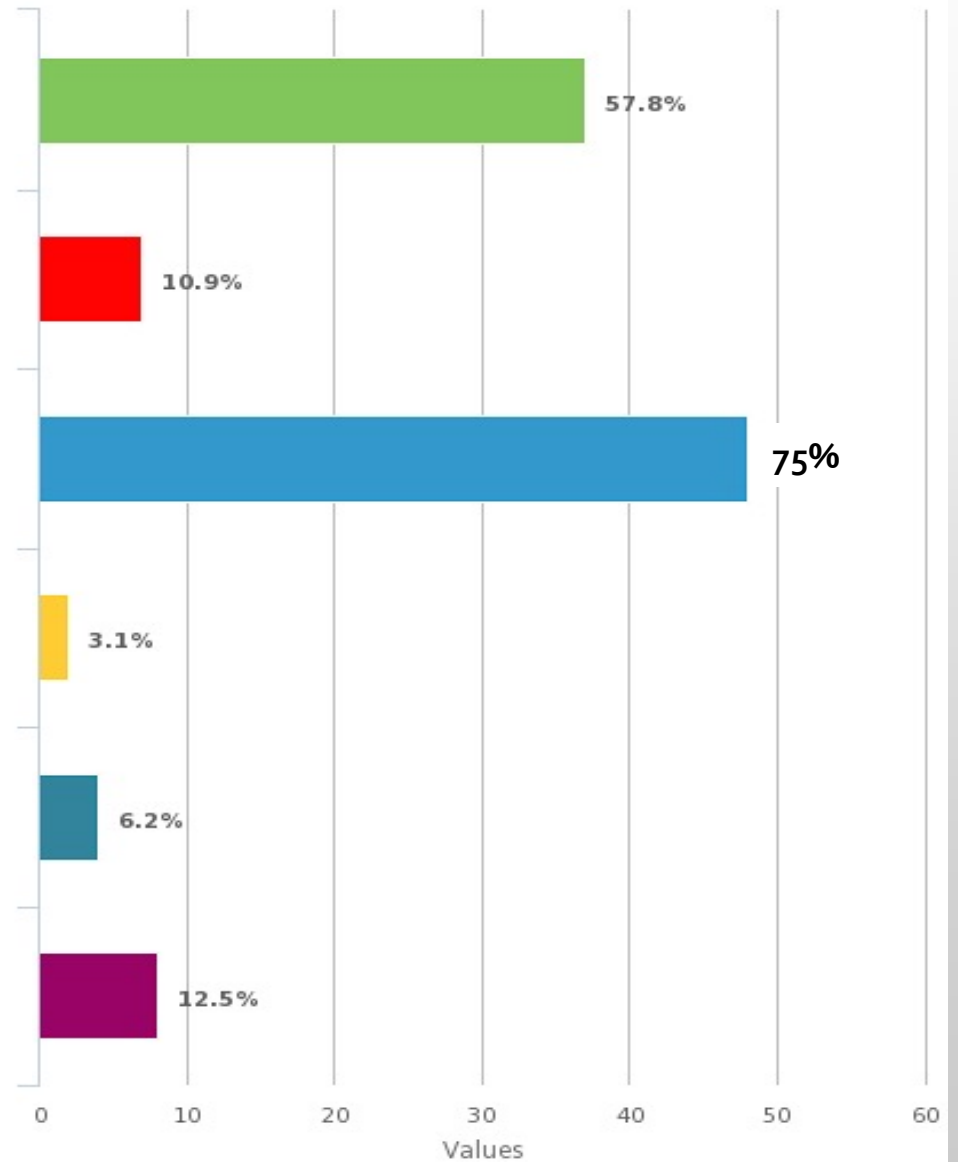
I did not feel well prepared to speak

Others had already expressed my views

I do not think TM Members respect my views

I am not comfortable expressing an opposing or minority view


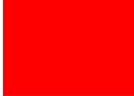
I did not speak because:  
(see *Comments Document*)



## Question 23

### Constituent Contact

Did you receive questions or input from constituent(s) about any of the Articles on the 2015 Annual Town Meeting Warrant?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes (indicate topics)		72.9%	102
No		27.1%	38
[Last year: 67.3% Yes]		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>140</b>

#### 10 - 20 responses:

- Demolition Delay
- Traffic Lights
- Divestment from Fossil Fuels
- Sidewalks
- School Spending
- Center Streetscape
- Schools

#### 1 - 5 responses:


- Parking meters
- Grove St
- First Parish Church
- Marijuana
- Tax relief for elderly
- Grain Mill Alley

Also see Comments Document

## Question 24

### Constituents and voting record

Did you receive questions or input from constituents about how you voted on particular issue(s) at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes (indicate topics)		12.9%	18
No		87.1%	121
[Last year: 9.5% Yes]		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>139</b>

Article 43  
Capital projects, namely schools  
Center streetscapes primarily  
Con the street lights and pro for ability to choose energy provider, pro sidewalks  
Demo Delay, School Budget  
Demolition  
Prospect Hill sidewalk  
School budget  
Sidewalks  
Thanks for supporting sidewalk  
Traffic signals@ Woburn Street  
Woburn signalization  
Woburn St./Mass. Ave. intersection

Question 25  
Reason for Serving:

**I serve as a Town Meeting Member because:**

**Serve the Town**  
**Interested**  
**Community**  
**Enjoy Learning**  
**Involvement**  
**Management**  
**Feel**  
**Decision**  
**Civic Duty**  
**Quality of Life**  
**Issues**  
**Democracy**  
**Volunteer**  
**Money**  
**Believe**  
**Member**  
**Help**  
**Understand**  
**Role**  
**Future**  
**Represent**  
**Public Service**  
**Local Government**  
**Democratic Processes**  
**Demographic Changes**  
**Like being in the Know**  
**Member**  
**Help**  
**Understand**  
**Role**  
**Public Service**  
**Important to Participate**  
**Voice**  
**Able to Contribute**  
**Duty as a Citizen**

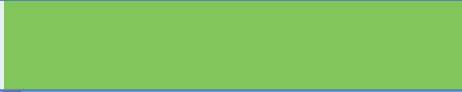





## Question 26

### Good Use of Your Time?

Do you feel your participation in the 2015 Annual Town Meeting was time well spent?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		97.8%	134
No		2.2%	3
Total Responses			137

[Last year: 92.3% Yes]

Question 27

**Years of service:**

How many years have you served as a Town Meeting member?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
1-2 years		19.7%	27
3-9 years		35.8%	49
10-19 years		16.8%	23
20+ years		27.7%	38
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>137</b>

Question 28

**Continuation of service:**

Do you plan to run for Town Meeting again when your present term is up?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Yes		<b>61.9%</b>	86
No		2.2%	3
Not sure		33.8%	47
N/A - I'm an at-large Town Meeting member		2.2%	3
[Last year: 57.4% Yes; 5.4% No; 35.8% Not sure]		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>139</b>

# Food for thought: Members' comments

## Preparing for Town Meeting

- Wealth of information, many outside meetings - Where to focus efforts? What's reasonable to expect from TM Members? And how best to synthesize all that information?

## Timing and delivery of information

- The earlier the better; make more available electronically

## Debate & questions

- Too much repetition in debate; too many questions posed that have been answered in reports or presentations; too many questions with long preambles; a sense that we hear from the same voices

## Meeting duration

- Members overwhelmingly positive about ending before April vacation, but late nights are taxing!
- Enthusiasm for time-saving innovations like consent agenda

## Constituent communication

- How can we encourage/facilitate two-way communication between TM Members & their constituents?



Thank you for your thoughtful  
and constructive feedback!

Moderator Deborah Brown



Deputy Moderator Deborah Strod