



Lex-Wiki.Org is a local Wikipedia for Lexington, MA. Lex-wiki.Org covers Arts and Entertainment, Local Flora and Fauna, Local History, City Life as well as Town Government and other issues of public interest in Lexington.

Name: Deborah Brown

Web Site Address: N/A

Phone: 617-512-7901

Email: campbrown@gmail.com

Submission Date: Feb 7, 2015

Biographical Question

1. *What can you tell us about your experience and qualifications that have prepared you for the Town Moderator office?*

I am running for my 7th one-year term as Moderator. Prior to first running for Moderator in 2009, I served nine years both as an elected Town Meeting member from Precinct 7 and as a member of the Appropriation Committee (including two years as the committee's chair). Both positions gave me a great appreciation for the institution of Town Meeting and the importance of preserving civil discourse, as well as a keen sense of, and respect for, the roles of citizens, professional staff, and elected and appointed participants in our local government. I had the great privilege of observing, close-up, one of the best moderators in Massachusetts (my predecessor, Marge Battin). Her example continues to inform my own thinking about the role. I'm fortunate, as well, to have access to the wise counsel and best practices of fellow moderators throughout Massachusetts, through my involvement in the Massachusetts Moderators Association. I'm currently serving as 1st vice president of that organization and look forward to assuming the presidency next November.

Town Meeting Operation

2. *How do you see the role of Moderator for the Lexington Town Meeting?*

At Town Meeting, it's my job to preserve order and set the tone for civil discourse. I am responsible for ensuring that motions taken up at the meeting are within the scope of the warrant (sent to all citizens to alert them to topics to be discussed). I prepare in advance with boards and committees

and article sponsors to try to streamline the proceedings so we can work efficiently at Town Meeting. And I try to manage the meeting with the goal of supporting Town Meeting members and citizens who wish to participate, with clear rules and fair access.

3. *How would you balance public comment and Town Meeting member comments during Town Meeting session?*

I intend to continue my practice of rotating among the microphones set up to facilitate balancing member comments (pro and con), members' questions, and public comments. Typically, I call on one member each at the "yes" and "no" microphones, one member at the "question" microphone, and then call on a citizen in the balcony, then repeat the cycle. If there is an especially long line at the "question" microphone, I may go there twice in the rotation to help members get answers to their questions.

4. *What changes, if any, would you make to improve civil discourse during Town Meeting?*

The Moderator needs to set the tone for debate from the very beginning and stay constantly vigilant throughout the meeting. I have to gently nudge speakers back to civility who are teetering on the brink of incivility, and step in more forcefully when the line is clearly crossed. At the same time, I don't want to be so heavy handed that I stifle constructive debate. It is a delicate balancing act and requires constant, close attention. I don't propose any particular changes, but vow to remain vigilant, to seek the right balance, and to use humor to diffuse tension.

5. *What are your criteria for selecting members for town boards and committees appointed by the Town Meeting Moderator?*

As Moderator, I appoint the nine members of the Appropriation Committee, the five members of the Capital Expenditures Committee, the members of the Cary Lecture Series Committee, and the town's representative to the Minuteman Regional District School Committee. For the two finance committees (Appropriation and Capital Expenditures), I'm seeking intelligent, thoughtful candidates representing a range of viewpoints and skill sets, who can work collegially. I want candidates to feel free to disagree and question conventional wisdom, but to do so respectfully and be willing to listen and maintain an open mind. Those committees benefit both from astute number-crunchers as well as skilled communicators. For the Cary Lecture Series, I seek creative candidates with a range of interests and contacts in the arts and sciences. The ideal Minuteman rep is familiar with school budgeting and educational policy.

6. *Over the last year, can you describe one issue which Town Meeting handled very well? And one issue that Town Meeting could have addressed better?*

As Moderator, it's my role to help Town Meeting do its important work, but it's not appropriate for me to comment on its deliberations.

All candidates are asked to limit the response to each question to at most two or three paragraphs, and to provide the questionnaire responses by Saturday, Feb 7th, 2015. Responses will not be edited, and will run as submitted. They will be posted on lex-wiki.org in PDF format and announced through other town media. Questionnaire coordinator: Andrei Radulescu-Banu (bitdribble@gmail.com, 617-216-8509).
