

To assist Sterling voters interested in petitioning the Select Board to place an article on the warrant for Town Meeting, please refer to the following guide for helpful explanations and procedures.

### **Guide to Citizens' Petitions for Town Meetings Sterling, Massachusetts**

1. A citizen's petition article is an article brought to Town Meeting for discussion and possible action by a citizen (rather than by a Board or Committee of the Town). Any voter may submit a citizen's petition, provided that the petition is relevant to action by the Sterling voters at open town meeting.
  2. Before beginning the petition process, it is strongly recommended that petitioners meet with the board or committee that has jurisdiction over the subject matter in order to seek feedback, advice, and support. The board or committee may agree that the issue needs to be addressed and may therefore decide to undertake the process of proposing and supporting it. This outcome will make a citizen's petition unnecessary. If the board will not propose the idea itself, submitting a citizen's petition is an option still available.
  3. To submit a warrant article for consideration at the **Annual** Town Meeting, Ten (10) registered voters of the Town must sign a written request. Signatures of one-hundred (100) registered voters are required to insert an article into a **scheduled Special** Town Meeting warrant. Two-hundred (200) signatures are required to **call** a Special Town Meeting for the purpose of considering a citizen's petition.
- Notes:
- Proponents of an article are encouraged to secure more signatures than the number required in case some signatures cannot be verified as registered voters.
  - Articles must be submitted by the deadline established by the Select Board.
  - The required Citizens' Petition paperwork may be obtained at any time of the year from the Town Clerk
6. Appropriate subjects for Town Meeting action under a warrant article include: (1) adopting, repealing, or amending Town bylaws; (2) authorizing the filing of home-rule legislation; (3) accepting or revoking the acceptance of local-option legislation; (4) making and amending budgetary appropriations; (5) authorizing the acquisition or disposition of interests in land; and (6) making resolutions.
  7. Care in the writing of articles is very important. Petitioned articles must contain the wording that will appear on the Warrant. Petitioners should ensure that the action, which the article proposes, conforms to State law, Town of Sterling by-law, and is within the purview of Town Meeting. An article should be phrased to accurately accomplish its intended purpose. Depending on the subject matter of the article, it may require further review by the appropriate Board or Committee. In some instances, a public hearing may be required. Articles must be initiated early enough to allow all legal and procedural requirements to be met before it can be included on the Town Meeting Warrant. Petitioners should consult with the Town Administrator early in the process to establish a reasonable time line for the article's inclusion.
  8. Care in writing the accompanying motion is also very important. The wording of the motion does not necessarily have to be the same wording as the warrant article. However, if the motion *is* to be the same wording as is in the article, the motion could request that the article be adopted "as printed in the warrant".
  9. Citizen petitions should also include a short factual summary of the Article.
  10. All Citizen petitions must be submitted to the Town Administrator in electronic format before the deadline for submission of articles.
  11. Once a citizen's petition is submitted, the article and summary will appear on the Town Meeting Warrant exactly as submitted, including spelling and punctuation.
  12. The Select Board is responsible for determining the order of the articles on the warrant.

13. At Town Meeting, the petitioner should approach the microphone when the article number is announced by the Moderator and move that the article be adopted. No discussion will occur on the article until a motion is offered and seconded. If the petitioner wishes to amend the printed language in the warrant, the new language needs to be read aloud in the motion and a written copy of those changes shall be presented to the Town Clerk. The Moderator will then allow petitioners to present their article for consideration.

- Audio-visual materials may be used at Town Meeting to expedite the presentation and explanation of the article and motion.
- All presentations for Town Meeting must be approved by the Town Moderator in advance of the Town Meeting.
- Petitioners are encouraged to print copies of presentation materials and place them on the table outside the auditorium at Town Meeting.