

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Electronic Voting Rules and Procedures to moderator@grotonma.gov. The deadline for submission is April 24, 2023.

Town of Groton

Town Meeting

Electronic Voting Rules & Procedures

The October 2022 Fall Town Meeting authorized funds to purchase an electronic voting system for use at Town Meeting. Instead of using placards to be counted, voters will use wireless handsets to register their votes quickly, accurately, and privately.

The use of electronic voting eliminates the need for the moderator to estimate votes. Electronic voting counts and tallies each vote.

1) Pre-Meeting

- a) The electronic voting system, including the handsets, receiver and computer, shall be tested and in working order prior to Town Meeting.
- b) All handsets shall be cleaned prior to the start of Town Meeting.
- c) All handsets are attached to lanyards and should remain so.

2) Voter Check-In

- a) Voters shall check-in at the entrance to the hall to confirm voter registration.
- b) At check-in, registered voters shall be issued a handset. The handset ID number shall not be recorded in the voter rolls or in any way associated with the voter's identity.
- c) A limited number of larger handsets with larger printing and braille are available for voters with visual impairments.
- d) Non-voters will not be given a handset and should not be in possession of a handset at any point during the meeting.
- e) A registered voter physically unable to use the handset shall receive a voter card and be seated in the reserved Manual-Counting Section.

3) Manual-Counting Section

- a) If a voter is unable to use EV due to physical limitations or a lack of available EV handsets, a reserved-Manual Counting Section shall be established by the moderator in the first three rows to the moderator's left or in a place of the moderator's choosing.
- b) The Deputy Moderator or designee shall count the votes in the Manual-Counting Section by polling each voter seated in that section and report the results to the moderator.
- c) No voter in the Manual-Counting Section may possess an EV handset.

4) Electronic Voting Committee and Help Desk

- a) An Electronic Voting Committee (EVC) will be appointed by the moderator.
- b) The deputy moderator will serve as chair of the Electronic Voting Committee.
- c) The EVC members will serve the meeting much as tellers have in prior meetings. The Committee will:
 - i) Staff the Help Desk,

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Electronic Voting Rules and Procedures to moderator@grotonma.gov. The deadline for submission is April 24, 2023.

- ii) Explain handset use to voters prior to the meeting, and
- iii) Count the votes of any voter unable to use a handset and seated in the Manual-Counting Section.

5) Test Voting

- a) The moderator will review the use and rules of electronic voting at Town Meeting.
- b) The moderator will ask all voters to participate in a test vote and report any issues to the moderator.
- c) The test may consist of voters being asked by the moderator to vote yes and confirming a yes vote was received. Voters will then be asked to vote no and confirm a no vote was received.
- d) The moderator may substitute a different test method.

6) Conducting the vote

- a) Electronic voting will be used for all votes at Town Meeting, unless the moderator makes an exception.
- b) The moderator will conduct the vote by taking the following steps:
 - i) The moderator will state “prepare to vote.”
 - (1) Voters should have their handsets ready.
 - (2) The system operator will have the vote prepared and the receiver ready to receive votes.
 - (3) The moderator may summarize the question and the result of a yes or no vote.
 - ii) The moderator will open the voting period.
 - (1) Moderator states “The time for voting has now arrived. You have 15 seconds to cast your vote.”
 - (2) Voters then press either Yes (Green button labeled 1) or No (Red button labeled 2).
 - (3) After 3 seconds, voters view the handset display which will show “OK” and a 1 or 2, denoting the vote sent and received.
 - (4) A voter who wishes to abstain from voting should not press any button on the handset. Abstentions are not counted at Town Meeting.
 - (5) Voters in the Manual-Counting Section will be polled by the Deputy Moderator or designee and the results will be relayed to the moderator.
 - iii) The moderator will close the voting period.
 - (1) After 15 seconds, the moderator will ask “Have all votes been cast?”
 - (2) Any voter who has not voted at this point should state “no” and promptly vote.
 - (3) The moderator may grant additional time for voting.
 - (4) The moderator will close voting by stating, “The time for voting has expired.”
 - (5) The system operator will close the voting window at the direction of the moderator.
 - iv) The moderator will declare the vote, as required by state law.
 - (1) The system operator will display the vote on the moderator’s monitor.
 - (2) The moderator will add the manual-counted votes to the EV votes.

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Electronic Voting Rules and Procedures to moderator@grotonma.gov. The deadline for submission is April 24, 2023.

- (3) The moderator will confirm whether the required quantum of vote has been achieved.
- (4) The moderator will declare for the record the vote totals and whether the motion passes or fails.
- v) The system operator will prepare the system for the next vote after the moderator has declared the vote and moved to the next main motion.

7) Proxy Voting Prohibited

- a) Proxy voting is strictly prohibited.
 - i) Proxy voting is any person using a handset not issued to them at check in.
- b) A voter may possess only one handset – the handset issued at check in or by the Help Desk as a replacement handset.
- c) Non-voters are strictly prohibited from possessing a handset.
- d) Anyone who observes the possession of multiple handsets or proxy voting should immediately report it to the moderator, a member of the EVC or a police officer.
- e) The moderator may recess the meeting until order is restored.
- f) In the case of proxy voting or other disorderly behavior, the moderator may act to restore order following M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 17:
 - i) “If a person, after warning from the moderator, persists in disorderly behavior, the moderator may order him to withdraw from the meeting, and, if he does not withdraw, may order a constable or any other person to remove him and confine him in some convenient place until the meeting is adjourned.”
- g) The moderator may order a revote in the instance of proxy voting if the outcome of the vote might have been affected.

8) Leaving the Meeting

- a) A voter temporarily leaving the meeting should keep the handset and return to the meeting with it.
- b) A voter permanently leaving the meeting shall return the handset.
- c) At the end of every Town Meeting session, voters shall return the handset as they exit. Missing handsets will be deactivated and not usable at subsequent Town Meetings.
- d) Voters issued voter cards rather than handsets shall return the cards to at the check-in tables..

9) Malfunctioning Handsets

- a) A voter who believes his or her handset is malfunctioning shall go to the Help Desk and exchange the handset for a new one.
- b) The Help Desk staff will put handsets reported as malfunctioning aside for inspection and repair after the meeting by IT staff.
- c) Seven voters may call for a test vote of the system as described in 5(c).

10) System Malfunctions

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Electronic Voting Rules and Procedures to moderator@grotonma.gov. The deadline for submission is April 24, 2023.

- a) If the system operator detects a system malfunction, he/she shall immediately notify the moderator. The moderator and system operator will confer on the next steps.
- b) The moderator may select an alternative voting method in the event of a malfunction.

Issued by the Town Moderator, April _____, 2023, per the authority granted by M.G.L. Ch. 39, Sections 15 and 18.

DRAFT