



Goshen Town Meeting

Basic Procedures and Motions

This handout, prepared by Town Moderator Steve Estelle, draws from the book *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law*, previous Moderators, and Goshen Town Meeting traditions.

Advice for Motions at Town Meeting

At Town Meeting, **registered voters hold the final authority** on all motions and decisions. Any voter may make a motion or propose an amendment, provided proper procedure is followed. While voters are free to make motions as they see fit, it is important to offer clear and well-reasoned justifications. Thoughtful, informed proposals help maintain the integrity of the meeting and ensure decisions reflect the best interests of the community. The Moderator may rule a motion **out of scope** if it strays too far from the article as printed in the warrant, to ensure discussion remains focused and legally valid.

Making a Motion and the Need for a Second

To propose an action, a voter must first be recognized by the Moderator and then clearly state, “*I move that...*” followed by the proposed action. All motions must be seconded by another voter to proceed. A second indicates that at least one other person considers the motion worth discussing. Without a second, the motion is not debated or voted on. This process ensures the meeting’s time is used efficiently and that proposals have some initial support.

Basic Motions and Common Practices

Moving an Article from the Warrant

Say: “*So moved*” or “*I move the article.*”

The Moderator will read each article from the warrant and ask for a motion and a second. A voter may simply say, “*So moved,*” followed by another saying, “*Second,*” without needing to be recognized. This officially places the article on the floor for discussion.

Discussing the Article

To ask a question or speak for or against a motion, raise your hand and wait for the Moderator to acknowledge you. The Moderator may first invite a department, board, commission, committee, or elected official to speak to the article being discussed.

Voting on the Article

When no additional discussion or new information is offered, the Moderator will call for a vote. Voters may respond with “aye,” “nay,” or “abstain.” If the result is unclear from a voice vote, the Moderator may request a show of yellow voter cards.

Limiting Debate

Say: *“I motion to move the previous question.”*

This motion ends discussion and calls for an immediate vote on the article or motion at hand. It is not debatable or amendable and requires a **two-thirds vote** to pass. The Moderator has sole discretion to accept or reject the motion if it is premature or used after a speaker has already argued the merits of the question.

The Budget (Article Changes Every ATM):

After the motion is made and seconded, the Chair of the Finance Committee will provide a 5–10 minute overview of the proposed budget. The moderator will then read each budget category—such as General Government, Public Safety, Public Works, Public Health and Sanitation, Community Services, Pensions and Insurance, and Education—and pause to ask if there are any questions, comments, or motions related to that category.

If a voter wishes to speak, they should raise their hand, and the moderator will call on them to share their questions or concerns. At this time, individuals may also make motions to amend specific line items or propose changes to the entire category. If no one wishes to speak, I will request a motion to approve that section of the budget. We will proceed category by category until each part has been addressed. Once all individual categories have been voted on, we will take a final vote to approve the entire budget.

Motion to Amend

Say: *“I motion to amend the motion by...”*

Used to change wording, amounts, or details of a motion currently under discussion. Amendments must relate directly to the main motion and cannot introduce unrelated issues. Amendments must be seconded and are debated and voted on before returning to the main motion. Only one amendment and one amendment to that amendment may be considered at a time.

Motion to Reconsider

Say: *"I motion to reconsider Article (x)"* or *"I move to reconsider the motion on..."*

This motion allows the meeting to revisit a previous vote. It may only be made **once per article**, must be offered by someone who voted on the prevailing side, and must occur **within two articles** and during the **same session** in which the original vote occurred.

Motion to Vote by Ballot

Say: *"I motion that the vote be taken by ballot."* or *"I motion we fix the method of voting to ballot."*

This motion calls for a written ballot vote instead of a voice vote or show of cards. It must be seconded and requires a majority vote to pass. If approved, the Moderator pauses the meeting to organize and conduct the ballot process. Because this is time-consuming, it should be used sparingly and only when privacy or precision is necessary.

Motion to Table

Say: *"I motion to table the motion."*

This motion temporarily sets aside an article or motion to allow the meeting to proceed with other business. It must be seconded and is **not debatable**. An article that has been tabled may be brought back later—**but only if a motion to take it from the table is made before the meeting adjourns**. Any article still tabled at the end of the meeting is considered dismissed. This motion should be used with care and only when there is a valid reason to delay discussion.

Motion to Adjourn

Say: *"I move to adjourn."*

Used to end the meeting. It may be made at any time, must be seconded, and is **not debatable**. If passed by a majority vote, the meeting concludes or is recessed to a later date and time as announced by the Moderator.