

# Results from Concord ATM25 Survey

## Very Quick Summary

Eric Moore, 7/1/25

N=207 relative to about 500 unique attendees. Of the 207, 32 did not attend, so N for responses is 175.

How many responses came in after the mailing? TBD

The majority of respondents where there 3 nights – the survey did not ask about one’s typical attendance patterns, but I’d surmise these are regulars.

Response to clickers was strongly positive.

Response to the Warrant in the Bridge and to Briefing Book was strongly positive.

Response to the earlier start and end was strongly positive.

The experience of Town Meeting didn’t change much – other people still talk too much, article sponsor presentations were about right.

This document also contains all the open text responses from the survey. This quick summary does not address them.

## Survey question responses

Count of 'How many nights did you attend Town Meeting this year?'

How many nights did you attend Town ...	Count of How ma...
3 Nights	95
2 Nights	44
1 Night	36
0 Nights	32

Count of 'Hearing others' views during deliberation'

Hearing others' views during deliberati...	Count of Hearing ...
Too Much	105
About Right	57
Too Little	10
Not Sure	3
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

---

Count of 'Voting'

Voting	Count of Voting
About Right	146
Too Much	23
Too Little	3
Not Sure	3
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'The clickers were easy to use'

The clickers were easy to u...	Count of The clickers were easy...
Strongly Agree	122
Agree	50
Strongly disagree	2
Disagree	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'I understood when we would use clickers to vote and when we would vote in another way'

I understood when we would use clicker...	Count of I unders...
Strongly Agree	114
Agree	58
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'I would like to continue to use clickers at Town Meetings'

I would like to continue to use clickers a...	Count of I would l...
Strongly Agree	96
Agree	38
Disagree	22
Strongly disagree	19
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Clickers improve Town Meeting'

Clickers improve Town Meeti...	Count of Clickers improve To...
Strongly Agree	79
Agree	49
Disagree	27
Strongly disagree	20
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'With the Briefing Book, I felt more informed about the topics this year'

<b>With the Briefing Book, I felt more infor...</b>	<b>Count of With the...</b>
Agree	109
Neither agree nor disagree	45
Disagree	10
Not Sure	6
Did Not Attend Before	5
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'It was easier for me to attend and vote on the articles I was most interested in'

<b>It was easier for me to attend and vote ...</b>	<b>Count of It was ea...</b>
Neither agree nor disagree	80
Agree	59
Disagree	25
Not Sure	6
Did Not Attend Before	5
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'I liked starting the meeting earlier'

<b>I liked starting the meeting earlier</b>	<b>Count of I liked starting t...</b>
Agree	149
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Disagree	9
Did Not Attend Before	4
Not Sure	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'I liked that the sessions ended earlier'

<b>I liked that the sessions ended earlier</b>	<b>Count of I liked that th...</b>
Agree	155
Neither agree nor disagree	10
Disagree	5
Did Not Attend Before	4
Not Sure	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'The meeting was more interesting'

The meeting was more interesting	Count of The meeting wa...
Neither agree nor disagree	105
Disagree	42
Agree	19
Did Not Attend Before	5
Not Sure	4
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'The meeting felt more efficient'

The meeting felt more efficie...	Count of The meeting felt m...
Agree	65
Disagree	51
Neither agree nor disagree	50
Did Not Attend Before	5
Not Sure	4
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'We reached a consensus more quickly'

We reached a consensus more quic...	Count of We reached ...
Disagree	70
Neither agree nor disagree	65
Agree	27
Not Sure	8
Did Not Attend Before	5
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Voting was faster'

Voting was faster	Count of Voting was faster
Agree	91
Neither agree nor disagree	45
Disagree	33
Did Not Attend Before	5
Not Sure	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'I liked that my votes on articles were private'

<b>I liked that my votes on articles were pri...</b>	<b>Count of I liked th...</b>
Agree	93
Neither agree nor disagree	47
Disagree	31
Did Not Attend Before	3
Not Sure	1
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'The Warrant for Annual Town Meeting printed in the Concord Bridge'

<b>The Warrant for Annual Town Meeting ...</b>	<b>Count of The War...</b>
Helpful	102
Didn't Use	57
Not that Helpful	16
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'The new Annual Town Meeting Briefing Book mailed to my house'

<b>The new Annual Town Meeting Briefing ...</b>	<b>Count of The new...</b>
Helpful	151
Didn't Use	13
Not that Helpful	11
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Attending or watching recordings other forums (e.g., League of Women Voters)'

<b>Attending or watching recordings other ...</b>	<b>Count of Attendin...</b>
Didn't Use	93
Helpful	74
Not that Helpful	8
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Articles in the Concord Bridge'

<b>Articles in the Concord Brid...</b>	<b>Count of Articles in the Conco...</b>
Helpful	146
Not that Helpful	22
Didn't Use	7
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Editorials in the Concord Bridge'

Editorials in the Concord Bridge	Count of Editorials in the Co...
Helpful	99
Not that Helpful	53
Didn't Use	23
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Town News & Notices service'

Town News & Notices servi...	Count of Town News & Notices...
Helpful	81
Didn't Use	71
Not that Helpful	23
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Town Website	Count of Town Website
Didn't Use	77
Helpful	71
Not that Helpful	27
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

Count of 'Town social media (e.g. Facebook)'

Town social media (e.g. Facebook)	Count of Town social med...
Didn't Use	137
Not that Helpful	26
Helpful	12
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>175</b>

## Is there something that stood out?

---

There should be a limit to the number of times a given individual can get up to talk—definitely on a given article and perhaps in a given evening. Hearing from the same person over and over and over again diminishes the experience for others. We need a gong. Ok maybe not but at least some kind of limit.

---

Clickers were great, made close votes for easier, and captured the magnitude of votes providing feedback to those bringing articles. Please Lee them!

Dislike using clickers. They disconnect us from the vote and from each other.

---

If clickers and remote participation actually result in a wider span of participants across age groups, that will be a good thing. However, I will say that my husband and I participated back in the day when our kids were little, so I disagree that it's impossible at that stage of life. I worry that these innovations will change the character of our beloved TM, as participation becomes more private. But if that results in greater participation in the town's legislative affairs, then that change in culture/character is a cost I think we should accept.

---

The moderator did a good job of balancing opportunities to speak with seeking efficiency (such as suggesting that those who had already spoken yield to those who had not) but occasionally let repetitious comments go on for too long (such as encomiums for Newbury Court when its quality wasn't even the issue before us). She at appropriate times reminded speakers that they had to address her but for some reason not at all clear to me permitted one speaker to twice query meeting attendees about the ages of their children. That seemed like favoritism, either toward that speaker or toward her position.

It's a tough job; she handles it with grace and skill.

---

I wish high-interest articles were scheduled on the same night. I couldn't attend all of the articles I was interested in. Wasn't this a recommendation of the Town Meeting committee? I liked using the clickers especially with the timer.

---

Would like to use clickers only if the paper ballot vote is too close to call. That would be the most efficient way to vote.

---

As usual the same town power brokers carry the meeting. The faster we can get remote participation the better. Need more broad views and participation which is frankly not possible with a 3 night format.

---

I do t think clickers should be used on straight forward non controversial articles

---

Its time to move to remote access to encourage more inclusion. It's no longer sustainable to have 400 people attend town meeting to decide for the 15,000 citizens in town. It's complicated but it must be done otherwise the risk of apathy for town meeting and the future of the town . We need to do it within 2 years , 10 year planning this is not acceptable and creates great risk to the town

---

The lower turnout this year made the meeting feel less engaging. The energy felt completely different this year. Perhaps it was because the meeting was in June. Perhaps because there were no significantly controversial articles compared to years past. But this is a preview of what it might be like if we have hybrid meetings where a small number of people are in person and the majority of people are quiet behind their screens at home.

---

I liked that I knew the exact number of votes for each article. It was particularly helpful for the close votes.

---

---

Use clickers for 2/3 and close votes. Use ballots for others.

---

I commend the Moderator for gently curtailing the repetitive comments. I wish there were a way to avoid the rehash completely. The timer is a good thing..could it be even shorter like 90 seconds?? Resident comments are invaluable, maybe limit the town boards/committees. It might be enough just to get their opinion by a vote report (ie., Select Board voted 3-2 to approve)

---

It was dismaying to see such a relatively small turnout for Town Meeting. As with hot button school-related articles, voters nowadays seem only to turn out when they have a burning issue. This year it was the residents of Newbury Court, most of whom left as soon as their Article was passed. With such a small turnout, why keep open two meeting locations? It built in more inefficiency to keep checking what was going on at the auditorium microphones. The Moderator makes somewhat snide comments that feel a bit biased at times. She doesn't read the room well, and we were grateful for Mr. Van Loon repeatedly calling the question in order to move things along. A lot of time was wasted in the clicker discussion on the first night. Great to waive the detailed reading of the consent calendar, but I missed the boy scouts presenting the colors.

---

Town meeting needs to be dramatically revamped. Presentations on the articles should be made available online in advance, not live at the meeting. Debate on items that will pass by wide margins needs to be scaled way back. Hotly contested items should be front loaded. And the town needs to push the state hard to allow for remote participation.

---

- 1) For most articles, 250-300 votes were sufficient for passage. How is it a good thing that 300 people are making decisions that will affect the population of Concord (about 18,000 people). In what way, shape or form is this democratic, or even practical?
  - 2) Each warrant article is considered in isolation, and there seems to be an innate bias to pass most articles. As we approach a fiscal crisis, we need a mechanism so that before we get to the check-out line and the cashier, we can see how much we are spending on individual items (e.g. roads project, amenities building, etc) so we can put things back if necessary and stay within our budget.
- 
- 

Nothing has changed in terms of accessibility and inclusion. It still takes too long, over too many nights and I am unable to participate as much as I want to. Only one night at best. We are still overrepresented by an older demographic that has time and flexibility that others do not.

---

---

The briefing book was a good idea - I especially appreciated that the handouts were included. Clickers are expensive and slower than ballot slips. Seeing the pro/con vote count was a plus. I liked the earlier

start but parking was a big problem (Was it student sports? Could away games be scheduled on TM nights? We left home in West Concord 50 minutes before the start of TM just so we could get parking, and ended up on the grass verge for two of the three nights.) If the briefing book and the moderator announce board approvals or disapprovals for an article, then there's is no need for board members to get up and repeat the same thing - BUT it is useful if a board's decision is not unanimous or if the boards disagree. Discussion on many articles is still too long, repetitive. I thought we voted in using clickers for this town meeting only - as an experiment - but then head teller Abe Fisher said tellers weren't needed anymore (?) I can't find any record about how that vote (on night 1) was worded. If we voted in the permanent use of clickers, it was not clear to me, and I would not have voted the way I did. In your survey, about 800 people said they wanted clickers, but there were about only 500 people (at most) at TM. The clickers were a worthwhile experiment, but they did not reduce the amount of time needed for each vote. I doubt that the promise of anonymity is enough to bring stay-at-home residents to TM, and in any case that should not be the deciding factor in the continued use of clickers (IMHO).

---

The moderator is incredibly good

---

Unlike previous years, I had time to attend only one session (Tuesday). I continue to be struck by how unrepresentative of the Town those who attend TM are. 300 people making decisions when there are about 12,000 voters.

---

I thought that the discussion about remote voting was painful. I thought some people were very judgmental on the con side. I know change can be hard. But our process seems to me to be very undemocratic right now because the attendance is so low. We need to keep moving forward to see what could be possible.

I thought the acoustics were wonderful. Last year I needed the hearing assistance devices, but I did not need them this year.

---

Doing this at weekdays is challenging. Also, other town cancell any other events incl school sport events for the Town Meeting days to increase participation.

---

What strongly stood out was that Henry Dane, supposedly acting as a private citizen, but actually a very recent member of the select board, instituted a power grab to try and remove the oversight provisions from the cell tower citing bylaw. Then during his presentation stated that nothing had been done about improving cell service in town for years - which was a flat out lie. The landfill has a tower in the works and Keyes road is a strong contender. People expect a higher degree of ethics from their elected official than Dane showed last night. The planning board should have voiced what their objections were - not hoping that members of the public would state the obvious which was it was an attempt to avoid oversight and reasonable precaution over the very important decision around the location of cell towers.

---

Moderator should be more aggressive cutting people off when rehashing the same argument or going on about a topic which isn't directly related to the article.

As usual, certain people felt they needed to talk too often, which can be aggravating. Carmin ran the meeting very well and was inspiring in some of the things she said.

---

This is too much in 2025. We need remote ballot voting on a given day. If anyone is sick, disabled, busy or has to be at work in the morning, they are denied democracy. Who has 3 straight nights in a row to do this? We'd like to vote on all the items but we don't have this utterly absurd amount of time available? Have the presentations and broadcast them. Let people vote another day. The current system is ridiculous and anti-democratic.

---

Overall I had a very positive experience with clicker voting. But it seemed like the length of time needed for voting was still being worked out, and that there was a lingering possibility of votes being missed in the count. When the vote spread is wide, it's usually possible to show that missing votes could not have affected the outcome anyway (by comparing the ratios of yes and no votes to the total number of voters who have checked in). But those comparisons may not help when the vote is very close. How can we be more confident in the close cases as well?

---

Need to discourage "duplicative comments" and "meandering off-the-subject comments" from the floor somehow. Thank goodness for "move the question".

---

The Planning Board should have made presentation/comments on relevant citizen petitions. The presentation on article 37 was not well organized (and probably caused the motion to fail, too bad).

I appreciated that someone (Eric Van Loon) was monitoring all the pro/con comments and called the question at the right time.

---

If felt very much the same except for the clickers. Loved them! Definitely continue to use.

---

It stands out that under 500 people in a town of many thousands is not representative.

---

No article needs more than 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, the moderator should ask how many people are ready to vote. If a large majority are ready to vote, then call the vote. If there is not a large majority, continue discussing for 10-15 minutes, then ask again.

---

I'm glad we will explore ways to allow remote participation.

---

It did seem expedited. Sometimes it seemed rushed.

---

The way the last few votes dribbled in at the end of the voting window for most votes did not give me confidence that the votes were completely accurate.

---

Clickers were so small and the buttons/screen is so tiny that it's not a good form factor in the age 55+ category. I have to say I felt doubt that my vote was even counted because the clicker didn't give an obvious confirmation that my vote had been tallied.

---

I think that the use of clickers does not feel necessary for a lot of articles that pass by overwhelming majority. However, the benefit is on the more debated articles where "automatic" counting and privacy can make things go more smoothly.

---

I liked the briefing book over lots of individual papers.  
Gym seemed cold.  
Pre-scheduled articles made sense.

---

Need opportunities to stand once per hour.

---

Thanks to all the boards and staff for preparing information in time for inclusion in the briefing book sent out before the meeting.

---

Kudos to the Finance Committee for preparing an excellent report this year. The text was succinct and the graphics were very focused and informative. I liked the "Estimated Tax Change" column, and I liked to see how the Finance Committee voted on each article in the "Finance Committee Recommendation" column. Great job!

And in the Warrant, I liked to see the votes of the Select Board and Finance Committee listed when they weren't unanimous.

I also liked the "Update" from the Town Clerk (?) at the Tuesday and Wednesday meetings, and posted on the website on Thursday, which showed the results of the previous night's voting.

I support using clickers, but there needs to be some thought given to making the actual voting process flow more quickly. Having to "open the voting window" may have been necessary, but it was cumbersome. Perhaps shortening the voting time to 30 seconds would make it feel more efficient.

I missed the Scouts bringing in the colors.

The fact that Mr. Van Loon needed to "call the question" numerous times suggested to me that he was doing a better job of reading the room than the Moderator.

---

The finance committee report was superb and should be shown earlier in the booklet. The graphics and simple explanations of impact were appreciated along with how much each item would add to our taxes.

---

Attendance was very poor. I assume this was because of the June vs. April date. I only like the clickers for the privacy of voting. I approve of having a thoughtful party to call the question when discussion becomes repetitive. TM is a deliberative body, not a town square to express opinions.

---

It remains a significant concern that a very small percentage of residents attend town meeting. Younger residents were particularly absent.

---

As usual, I found Laurie Hunter's presentations of the school budgets lucid, efficient, and helpful. The presentation of the joint parking article was horrendous and left me and my 86 yr old mother in law utterly confused as to the issues. I thought overall the Moderator did an excellent job.

---

Too much public comment. There are about 15 residents who make town meeting unnecessarily tedious and lengthy — they lack self-awareness to realize they are being repetitious or adding nothing to the democratic process when they step up to the mic repeatedly. Limit public comment period to 10 minutes per article and then take a vote as to whether the comment period should be extended for another 10 minutes. Don't wait for someone to call the question.

---

Town Meeting is a wonderful civic process. Democracy at its very very best.

---

I DO hope that Town Meeting will always have an in-person component, even if there is some remote participation. Being in that room, together with others, is incomparable and invaluable.

---

The first two nights could have been longer. The third night was rushed at the end and it got very late. The hurry to get home shortchanges deliberation. People leave. I think the plans for trying out remote town meeting and even the clickers may have made people more lax about the solemn experience of town meeting. In a way a rushed approach was sanctioned from the get go.

---

"I was surprised and disappointed by the low attendance. These are important issues--and decisions are made by a very small number of registered voters.

The meetings before Town Meeting are where the decisions are made. Articles are reviewed in depth, there is time to discuss and get more information, there are public hearings, and committees reach decisions prior to Town Meeting.

For years, people have wondered; "why bother to go? Everything is going to pass. Anything that won't pass never made it to Town Meeting.

Town Meeting has lost credibility.

I believe our elected officials have a responsibility to get people there. Especially since they know how to rally people for elections or get support when needed."

---

The meeting felt more structured & professional this year. I liked that there weren't loads of separate papers in the cafeteria accompanying the official writeup of the articles. I noted that there were possibly less attendees this year than last year, which (to me) makes the case for remote participation. I did vote for us to keep investigating that.

---

Poorly promoted and therefore poorly attended.

Moderator should work with presenters ahead of Town Meeting to ensure they are well presented.

Pace was slower than ever - falls in Moderator.

---

Would be nice if a few food trucks were available out front from 5:30-6:30 so we could grab a bite and picnic w TM buddies. Would help to build community spirit AND make it easier for folks rushing home at end of the day.

---

Carmin Reiss is a superb moderator...thoughtful, witty, and reassuring, for she creates an atmosphere of warmth and congeniality--no small challenge in a huge space.

---

The opportunity to talk to neighbors at TM was more limited than previously, because the pauses for teller counted votes did not materialize. The 'stretch' was brought back on night #3, but the limited

movement of raising arms to vote seldom happened, so the overall TM experience seemed more sterile this year. Is 'efficiency' really better than community?

---

Seemed low energy.

---

The low number of attendees. The disproportionate demographics of attendees.

---

Attendance was extremely poor - maybe because it was June. The Town Meeting Study committee's work did not bear fruit and bring additional attendees. More work and creative ideas are needed. I suggest additional "experiments" are needed. (e.g., \$100 tax rebate (one per family) for each attendee for each night attended; raffle; use of CCHS baby-sitting corps; etc.). Was disappointed at mass exodus on Night #3; suggest high interest articles should be mid-session rather than at the beginning. Impact on taxes should have been on the title page of each warrant article rather than buried in the briefing book. More explanation was need for the stabilization vs free cash vs reserve funds. Voters were not properly informed. FINCOM section of briefing book was excellent; use of the word "precarious" was unfortunate; but it didn't seem to affect the voting for new debt; "challenging" would have been more appropriate.

---

---

---

Keep The Clickers:

A young town meeting attendee explained that she came to town meeting for the first time because she has a preference for private voting. Subsequent speakers dismissed this woman's feelings giving the opinion that no one judges you at town meeting, you will adjust and expressing that maybe voters who want privacy are really seeking "secrecy" and "non-transparency". Suggesting that your feelings are wrong, don't matter and require adjustment or that you have a secret agenda in your preference for privacy sure looked like overt judging and shaming took place at Concord Town Meeting.

It appears that some town meeting members declare everyone is welcome at Concord Town Meeting while simultaneously adding their opinion and the condition that you must give up any expectation of private voting when you walk through the door. Please, please, please keep the clickers.

Yes to Remote Voting:

I was only able to attend town meeting two nights but did watch part of a night by video. It seemed like there were more people on the video feed than were at the high school. It was plain to see that all demographics were not represented at the high school and I wonder if there was a better demographic representation on line. This speaks volumes to the need/desire for remote voting.

---

The comments from voters go on far too long. The same people over and over, too much repetition, that's the biggest time suck. This applies to all years, not just this year.

---

Voting got faster once folks got the hang of clickers and we could see the number of votes on the big screen. Need to speed up/shorten the clicker voting time/window. The Ex moderator/audience member would call for a vote before a lot of people had their say on articles. Sometimes it was good, sometimes it was too early. It would be helpful if the Article ppts speakers presented were available online in advance so folks could do a pre-read. That would speed things up as we are not seeing the information for the first time.

We made changes to increase attendance, but attendance was way down, so that didn't go well.

---

---

I strongly disliked the clicker experiment. I strongly disliked the Moderator recognizing Mr. Van Loon to call the question repeatedly, when other people had been standing for longer at the other microphone.

---

Have it earlier- last week in April or first week in May. June is too late. Understand it was because of the 250th, but it was painful this year. Too much going on in late May and June. It was hard for people to attend due to conflicts. Put a firm Agenda out and stick to it so people interested in particular issues can just show up one night. Such as school-related or zoning-related issues. Put all Budget Articles on Day 1 or Day 2. Put all School Articles on Day 1, put all Zoning Articles on Day 2 or 3, etc. Liked the fact that Special Interest Articles had a specific time- you should do that again.

---

Voting by clickers must continue. Efficient. Way too few attendees to use as a barometer of what the whole town might think. Clearly the age was weighted over 60.

---

I wish the moderator had been a little more active in ending debate more quickly

---

Attended remotely on Monday. Did not attend Tuesday. Stay until last article 10:30 pm on Wednesday

---

The deliberation feels generally predictable. the same people do all the talking.

---

---

---

---

Was only able to attend the first night of TM but think that there should be a maximum amount of time allotted for total comments from the audience. I know there is the 2 min. limit per person and someone can move the motion but it seemed there was an inordinate amount of time spent on whether we should vote to use clickers or not. And a couple of other issues as well.

---

Privacy in voting was amazing! loved Clickers. Felt more democratic, less neighborly nosy. Meeting felt civilized, orderly and professional. Many of the Articles seemed half- baked/premature by at least 1 year. More than usual! Articles should not come to Town Meeting before major decisions are made about scope of projects. Town Moderator should be on the lookout for this.

---

An excellent job by the Moderator.

---

Felt no different than previous town meetings.

---

Early start was a family challenge, but I can manage.

---

I like having a private vote with clickers, but the cost and reliability may not be worth it.

---

I wish the moderator was a bit more forceful with instructions to citizens about repeating the same comments. I found it rather irritating to hear the same point made repeatedly. I know it is a hard job, but I would not have objected to her interrupting some of the more flagrant abusers. There are a few "blowhards" that just have to repeat the same points already made.

---

---

There seem to be 2-3 people who talk way too often on basically every topic

The low attendance stood out to me.

The overriding issue with Town Meeting is the alarmingly low citizen participation.

The moderator was clear in her instructions to everyone and moved the meeting along. I also liked the screen captions showing what people were saying.

We did not receive the briefing book. Will make sure we get on next year.

Also the voting to use the clicker took way too much time.

Clicker discussions took too long.

Too much time was spent waiting for people to vote with the clicker. It should be as brief a time as the hand raising vote is. I like that the count is accurate.

The attendance is paltry. We would have much better participation if we could ballot online - or even in advance like an election. I find very little value in the endless citizen comments.

Clickers were great; I felt it was the first time people were able to vote authentically without peer pressure. Strongly recommend the use of clickers. Although time savings was debated, there 3 or 4 close votes where the time savings using clickers was significant.

Strongly recommend the use of clickers for all future town meetings. It was good to see votes actually reported and independently.

I especially appreciated the fin com listing of costs associated with each article and on split fin com votes, explaining the reasoning of the minority position.

Also, the calm gentle humor that helped us through the tough moments.

Moderator could have moved meeting along better. Too many people talking about the same things at the microphones. Frequently votes were called from the floor demonstrating that discussions lasted way too long

Too few citizens!

The moderator let people speak on articles that were clearly popular and going to pass by wide margins for FAR too long.

Given that this was our first experience with clickers, there was ambiguity at first whether individual votes showing up one by one around and past the end of the voting period were from voters voting late or from the system count catching up to clicker buttons that had been pressed earlier. It was helpful when the moderator ran a "1-2-3-vote" test, which demonstrated that the system was able to count our ~300 votes in a second or less, revealing that those final slow counts had actually been from voters who were voting late in the period, rather than from delayed system counting. Things may change a bit if/when we get ~2000 people, but I bet the same result will hold. I think the moderator can confidently call for the results to be displayed a few seconds after the end of the timed voting

period, assuming that any worrisome count increases that occur within those few seconds are actually from voters who pushed the buttons late, rather than from system delay. (A technical solution to this issue would require that the clickers have accurate clocks built in and that they tag their messages with the time, so that the system could recognize after-closing clicks and ignore them, but that would be asking a lot.)

Given the schedule on the final night, it was helpful that Eric VanLoon positioned himself to keep things moving by calling the question. While someone complained later in the Bridge about one person cutting off debate, I thought that Eric did a good job of waiting until the views on an issue had been aired, and of course the meeting could always just have voted down his motion if people thought he had jumped the gun.

---

Processing every vote with the clickers is inefficient. A better approach would be for the moderator to first call for a show of hands. If the vote is close, then use clickers. It often took several minutes for a vote to be registered and counted using clickers when a show of hands would have shown overwhelming support (or disapproval) immediately.

---

The moderator was really vigilant about the amount of time people could speak. Thank you!

---

Making sure to keep speakers to their allotted time, not go over.  
Going to a vote when discussion gets repetitive.

---

We object when votes are secret in the MA legislature. It should be no different for the Town legislature

---

Town meeting still feels anti-family and anti-family on purpose. It is infinitely too long—should be one night and one night only—and this year’s “discussions” were particularly inane and pointless. I would also deeply object to the moderator allowing certain people extra time to babble on. Everyone gets the same amount of time, matter what. Can’t do much about the babbling or unsupported claims, but at least don’t give it special, anti-democratic room to make the too long meeting even longer

---

deliberations could be fater

---

This was my second TM after moving to Concord. TM is a ridiculously antiquated process that disenfranchises most voters. I know it is a cherished institution but it is not responsive to the views of most voters who are unable to participate. +/- 400 people attend and vote in a town of +/- 20,000 to decide how we operate is on its face ridiculous. The moderator does a good job but the entire process is an anachronism that should be replaced. Also having to share how one votes publicly, again a cherished institution, is ridiculously anti democratic. I know there is not really a path to reform absent statewide legislation but TM is absurd in 21st century America. Editorial side comment there is much that is absurd in America’s politics in the 21st century) but TM is not the way to run a town efficiently and with broad representation.

---

I felt some of the debating went too long and made the meeting arduous.

---

Electronic voting became smoother as the Meeting continued. Recommend giving people 30 seconds moving forward.

---

The town moderator is outstanding.

## The use of Clickers

---

Meeting went too slow. Moderator needs to figure out how to speed up...

---

The Town Moderator excelled again this year with wonderful balance and kept a good pace.

---

The Planning Department must learn to present articles coherently with an eye to who the audience is. This was most on display with the presentation of article 37. By confusing us with lots of irrelevant detail there was a wide opening for opponents to pick at minor details incomprehensible to most of us and thereby cloud the issue enough that voters were reluctant to vote in favor of the article. In contrast, when I was preparing for the ConcordCAN breakfast where we reviewed about 8 articles, I spoke with Sue Felshin who gave me a concise, 3 sentence description of the mild benefits of the article. The ConcordCAN audience found it simple and supported the article. When the MBTA communities article came up at Town Meeting a few years ago a similar thing happened.

---

Based on how few people were there, I felt too having two locations (auditorium and gymnasium) was overkill. Too much time was lost "checking in on the auditorium".

Also, I was disappointed that some of the proponents of their own measures clearly had not tested their own pitch. And the vote was less on the issue, but more on which side had an easier to understand position.

---

Pace: This year's meeting was the slowest I can remember. Even with very few controversial articles, it went into overtime on the third night. Something's wrong with the management of deliberations when a former Town Moderator repeatedly feels compelled to call the question.

Clickers: The moderator reminds us each year that Town Meeting is the town's legislature, and that all of us should keep Concord's interests at heart. It doesn't feel right for a legislature to vote in secret - it promotes personal interest over community interest. It's especially important when so few of us attend, representing the many others who do not. Town Meeting is not a voting booth. Clickers could be helpful if a vote's too close to call. Otherwise they take much longer. Waiting for the results of routine votes was tedious.

Scheduled articles: The tendency of single-issue voters to "pack the meeting" is often cited as one of the biggest flaws of the open town meeting form of governance, yet Concord seems to be embracing that by scheduling articles of "special interest" in advance. How will we control spending as budgets get tighter over the next few years if a group just needs to show up for an hour to get their way? Short of switching to representative town meeting, I'd prefer the opposite approach - picking the next article for deliberation out of a hat.

---

The use of clickers made Town Meeting more focused, relaxed and efficient. Big improvement.

---

1 still more control on people repeating opinions  
2 need 3 mic rows - agree disagree and other clarity etc.

---

The first evening a speaker was given extra time to present his opinion in favor of an item before it went to deliberation. When that happens, a speaker representing an opposing opinion should also have time to present their argument

I appreciated that an earlier start time allowed the sessions to end earlier, however, the earlier start time was challenging in that it was a direct conflict with the commute home, getting dinner on the table and getting the kids to bed.

---

Everyone debated respectfully and assumed good faith. That was wonderful to behold, and I'm honored to live in a town where my neighbors honor one another's common humanity. Shout-out to the town moderator, who was wonderfully no-nonsense and humorous at the same time.

---

I appreciate that police officers, while present, largely stayed out of the chambers. However, police should be even lower-profile, perhaps seated off to the side of the entrances rather than standing and hovering at the actual entry doors. The overt presence of armed and uniformed officers may be intimidating for voters, especially new voters and those from minoritized communities.

---

This year's meeting was over-full of data and documents during the evenings. Most of this was complex and time consuming.

---

Clickers are necessary to protect voter pri

---

I appreciate the moderator cutting g off comments when no new information was being offered.

---

---

---

---

I was extremely disappointed with the same people complaining about the clickers  
There has to be a way to not let the SAME people get up and drone on about their old views on every article- 99% of all the people their don't care about their opinions- they don't listen to anyone else's  
Those 20 or so people are why people hate going to town meeting  
Maybe you should limit the number of times people can get up and talk or cut the time in half- I realize how hard that is but it is a problem- it is like it is their big social event of the year and they like to hear themselves talk  
They extended the meeting by an hour the first night over the use of clickers and then the vote showed that everyone ,except them, wanted the clickers

---

Carmen continues to be an excellent moderator.

---

Some individuals seem to need to speak about every article - whether their observations have already been covered or not. Perhaps people should be allowed a certain number of time to speak each evening (2 or 3) so they have to budget sharing their opinions?

---

The lack of participation is unfortunate. A concerted effort should be made to get more young people educated about the process and engaged in attending.

---

Clickers interfere with key democratic functions of our town legislature. Town meeting is not the place for privacy - rather just the opposite: sharing in a civil fashion differences of view. Failing that,

which clickers cause to fail, we abort this central democratic function. Clickers would be useful just in the cases when the Moderator cannot be sure of the vote or a secret ballot is voted.

---

The representative participation was abysmal. People still repeated the same things. Certain individuals are over represented and those are often not that informed.

---

It is difficult when a few people comment at every comment opportunity

---

It was a quiet year except for the clicker experiment. I don't think the Town Meeting Study Committee did a very thorough job, or if they did they didn't do a good job explaining all they did and why they rejected suggestions. It seemed there were many conclusions based on the survey which didn't represent all voters

---

Based on my perception of the mix between pro and con position statements and general inquiries for further information, I would recommend against continuing the use of specific pro and con microphones. The general idea behind them seems to be that we can have the discussion oscillate between positions, but this really doesn't work out when folks just asking questions choose a random mic, so I would advise abandoning the practice.

---

I was disappointed that there were so many articles that were based on increasing debt. I wish that I had known what was the total amount of debt we're going to take on and then go article by article to approve or disapprove.

---

Keep using clickers. Limit all discussions to 10 minutes.

---

It's an antiquated form of government. We should have a representative democracy or we should expand voting to include mail-in voting, in-person voting, etc.

---

The use of clickers was the single most significant change to Town Meeting. I opposed the institution of clickers. The use of clickers during Town Meeting did not speed the voting process. Clickers did, however, prove beneficial during the first night on close votes requiring a 2/3's margin for passage. That might be the only timesaving aspect of clicker usage.

---

The prime reason for their usage is that our community voiced its preference for clickers as a proxy for a secret ballot. The anonymity of that preference fundamentally changes the nature of Town Meeting. It carries the potential to stifle community-wide dialogue on matters of significance in the service of creating a false sense of comity.

---

Clickers alone, do nothing to increase community engagement in civic activity. As an example, look at the difference in attendance between the 2024 Town Meeting and this year's meeting. The issues under consideration last year, drove community interest and engagement. Though infrastructure management, storm water management, amenities building, and Old Marlboro/ORNAC land development were topics of interest, the use of clickers did not increase community engagement or attendance.

---

A, clicker driven, secret ballot alone, will not supplant the work required to be an informed and engaged citizen. That always has and always will, require an individual's effort. As such, I remain opposed to clicker usage.

---

I liked that residents could ask questions in their comments, and that those would be answered by the appropriate committee or individual at the request of the Moderator. This should be encouraged, given that the Moderator believes the question is pertinent

---

Keep up the good work!

---

I cannot stand seeing only 500 people on the first day and 250 by the last day because the generation who we must rely on--the working generation between 35 and 60--don't attend. At 70 years old, I was one of the youngest in the audience! That's just plain WRONG.

I love our Town Moderator's incredible ability to keep the meetings fun and serious. Big shoes to fill next year. I do think that we need to recognize the names of the Fin Comm people leaving after their term expires--yes they are volunteers but that makes it even more important to recognize them (even over Schools).

---

---

The clickers seemed to work well. I would have liked to know how many attendees were present and how many votes were recorded. In past use of clickers, some clickers did not register. If there was a mechanism that let you know your vote was recorded it would have been better.

---

We need to boost attendance, shorten the amount of time each person has to speak.

---

---

Voting with clickers took much longer. I wonder how to "take down the concern" about seeing how people voted for some folks can be "handled", so we can go back to paper ballots. Please DO NOT purchase clickers. I think making town meeting a priority for voters (ie citizens) is important and I think there can be articles in the Bridge, in a newsletter sent to all residents and information about the importance of TM attendance and democracy about that FROM THE Town, from the moderator, from past moderator, from tellers, League of Women voters, etc. Tag onto the 250th!!!! I used to bring my young kid (now 34) to ATM and he learned a lot. And I was a single mom, so didn't have an option of someone at home. Consider having childcare area also have a monitor for parents to be with their kids but keep up with what is happening on the floor. There used to be food available. That could come back. I liked 6:30 but it's early to have had dinner.

---

Low participation is a concern for many. But clickers are not an answer (makes no difference) and remote participation is only going to increase single issue voting. Remote participation increases the likelihood of social media and mail networks actually corroding the intent of town meeting which is to encourage deliberation. The introduction of remote voting will likely have no impact on voter education, as people will simply respond to the leaders of their own support group. Further, it's HIGHLY unlikely that remote participation will encourage citizens to participate in more than one article per meeting. It's time to seriously consider Representative Town Meeting as a better model.

---

Except for the counted vote or 2/3 vote, the clickers seemed slower than just raising the ballot.

---

The moderator is very fair and courteous, but I think she should move things along faster--not so many comments saying roughly the same thing.

---

Eric Van Loon was frequently too quick with his call the questions, and called it too frequently.

---

There were at least three close votes that would have required counting, so using the clickers reduced that time. Otherwise I felt the votes took a bit longer, but probably only took 1.5 minutes per vote, so perhaps added 10 -12 minutes overall. Mixed feelings about voter privacy, but it's acceptable.

---

---

---

The ages of the attendees demonstrated that Town Meeting looks nothing like a true democracy. If there's even a chance that remote Town Meeting leads to more representative attendance, we should do everything in our power to pursue it in order to preserve the ideals of direct democracy.

---

## Comments or suggestions for improving?

**What additional comments or suggestions do you have for improving Town Meeting?**

---

I regretted voting for the clickers immediately, after seeing how they contribute to the delay. But I appreciated the work that had gone into it and the chance to try them. Thank you to all the organizers!

---

Reduced time for speaking (1 minute not 2). Less debate. Fewer articles. Capping limits on the same 4-5 people that add endless time to town meeting by constantly offering unending questions and comments. Enforce from the moderator that comments be germane to the specific article. Keep clickers. Consider omnibus warrants that bundle like approvals together, like our 3 parking related ones. Keeping high interest articles earlier in meeting improved turnout for them, but I strongly suspect that some motions that failed on Day 3 would have won if town meeting wasn't at the very end only populated by die-hard activists and people who liked hearing the sound of their own voice over and over in comments. Town meeting remains profoundly anti-democratic excluding those who can't make it due to many circumstances. Consider bundling together approvals that need 2/3 town meeting approval, bookended by high interest items, to ensure that consequential votes aren't taken over by "the regulars"

---

I found the slides/screens difficult to read. In part it's a question of font size, larger would be better. Maps, too, are almost impossible to read, presenters should more accurately describe what the map depicts, or drop them. Also, the lighting or projection quality on the two screens in the gym was variable, sometimes parts were "shaded" and made it even more difficult to read them. Also, I missed the part (on Night 3?) when the Moderator used to call out the public staff/teachers retiring after many years of service; bits like that help to bring us all together as a community.

---

Please be careful to not improve it out of existence. The clickers are great. If there could be a venue at the west side of town, say at the middle school auditorium, that would be a help to some residents.

No doubt there would be technological problems to overcome, and another assistant moderator etc. needed, but it's worth considering. The idea of voting from home, though, makes me shudder.

---

Doing a straw poll at 15 minutes (or 30) automatically to see if everyone was ready to vote would make the meeting quicker and nothing would be lost. People had way too many questions about the articles. The couple of articles that failed on night 3 would likely have had different outcomes if more people were able to attend (parking, cell tower). I am hopeful for remote participation in the future.

---

Would like to use clickers only if the paper ballot vote is too close to call. That would be the most efficient way to vote.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Town Meeting is the time each year where I see neighbors I haven't seen in a long time. I wish there was more time to greet each other. A community gathering prior to the meeting with food would be great. When we get this many neighbors together, it would be great to have time to talk to each other prior to meeting and deliberating together.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Does it make sense to have a mic for questions only?

What happened to the bake sales?? 6:30 is a great start to be able to get done earlier each night, but having sandwiches or 'something' available would be a boon.

Why is the clicker rental so expensive??? Siince I helped with check-in, I saw first-hand how the system worked.

Checkers spent the entire session the first night organizing the boxes of clickers, something that should have been done prior to delivery from the rental company. That particular clicker company did not meet the \$15,000 price expectations. We also didn't need nearly 2000 clickers; maybe that elevated the rental expense.

---

If we continue with clickers, the abstain button should be active, so that you get an accurate count of the voters present. I agree with the Head Teller's comments on Monday night about the lack of human verification of the results. Votes were registering before the timer started. Too much faith is being placed in the survey results from only 1,000 voters. Other towns are grappling with the same

problems. I assume you have seen this report:

<https://www.lincolntown.org/DocumentCenter/View/86161/Acton-Area-League-of-Womens-Voters--TM-Report---2024?bidId=>. Creating a family area might be something to consider. Remote voting is not the answer.

---

I think town meeting made sense in a small, agrarian community. It is not a good fit for decision-making in our town in the present moment. I think that community members and the volunteers do the best they can. But the lack of participation, and the way that special interests can recruit "majorities" are symptoms that we need to find a different way altogether to govern the town. My recommendation would be representative democracy with special ballot referendums where needed.

---

Chairs are bloody uncomfortable

---

Put all of the high interest articles on one night. Do more to limit deliberation time. Some is good but after a few people everyone says the same thing and just wants to hear themselves speak to the detriment of the many. Limit so that a person is only allowed to speak to 3 articles across town meeting. There are a small group of people who think they need to say something for every single article. It's way too much and the impact is that many Concordians are unable to participate because those small group of people like hearing themselves talk.

---

I appreciate the huge amount of work the Town Meeting Study Committee has done and thank you for your time and effort. I wish I had more suggestions to offer, but you have already considered all the possibilities (although I did briefly think of having boxed dinners available, or food trucks on site if we are continuing with the 6:30 start time!) Sadly, only about 30% of registered voters went to the polls in the last election in spite of it being a 1-day event with good coverage by committee presentations, LWV forums, The Bridge, etc. If voter turn-out on an high-interest election is so low, I'm not sure that there is anything you can do to improve town meeting attendance, which involves making significantly more effort over several nights.

---

Would like to use manual voting unless the vote is close. Would like remote voting

---

I wish that there was a way to more quickly cut off discussion, rather than wait for someone to get to the head of the line to call the motion, when it's clear to 99% of the attendees that they are ready to vote and there's nothing new being said; just time being wasted. (And it's the same 10-20 people who have to comment on virtually every motion.) Maybe a third microphone?  
Pro/Con/CallTheMotion?

---

One day should be a Sunday. Also, all events in town incl school sport events should be cancelled.

---

Organize the warrant articles so that those of us with limited time can actually show up to vote. ALL the financial articles should be together for example. On the other hand, it was distressing to see that an article that was included in the content calendar shouldn't have been.

---

---

Could start even earlier, like 6, though missing dinner can be tough. Perhaps there should be snacks available like I think there used to be some years ago.

---

Mail the warrant to households. The newspaper should not be an arm of the government.

---

One improvement would be to bring the quality of the presentations up to a uniformly high level. It's clear that all presenters are trying—and I appreciate that, but there's still a wide range in terms of their success. The presentation by the citizen petitioners behind Article 36 (Ban SGARS) was outstanding in terms of clarity and completeness, for example. On the other hand, I found the presentation of Article 37 (Joint Parking Bylaw) so confusing that I voted against it just to be on the "safe side."

---

Keep the outstanding moderator.

---

Best practices for clicker time to vote is 30 sec. Nights 2 and 3 were much more efficient. Loved it.

---

I would like to have Town Meeting online as well as in person and the ability to vote remotely. This works well for a number of groups I'm involved with.

---

Town Meeting, which requires a voter to be present at the exact, unknown moment a vote is called, is counter to modern trends of early voting, absentee voting, mail ballots, polls open for 12 hours, etc. Concord needs a modern form of citizen involvement in decision making.

---

I both like the earlier time but it poses a real challenge for getting dinner. Wish we had food available and/or had voting in a location that allowed food, like the did in the cafe in the old high school. We'd just bring our dinner and there was no rushing.

---

Keep doing what was done with the consent calendar this year. It made a huge improvement in the efficiency of town meeting. If you can ever bring back a room where people can eat and drink (and have food available) that would help people who work 9 to 5, especially with the earlier start time.

---

Town meeting may be a dead format in the digital age. Concord would be better served if we had a voting week(?) where all residents could use paper ballots at town hall to vote on all the articles whenever their schedule permits. Overall voter participation is more important than preserving debate via two minute statements.

---

There are still barriers to full participation (vs. pick and choose your issues of interest). Time and scheduling will always be a challenge. I think grouping/scheduling all articles of special interest to give some predictability may allow more to prioritize participation when time is limited. I don't have any suggestions for "efficiency" because the biggest time sink is the open participation and sharing of opinions we value.

---

Fine to leave out some of the ceremony of previous years (flag ceremony, longer farewell tributes to departing people).

---

The voters should be able to add ANY article onto the consent calendar at the beginning of the meeting.

The Moderator should feel freer to promptly bring debate to a close after seeing that a vast majority have already made their minds up.

---

I think the Gymnasium should be the primary space for Town Meeting and only when it fills up should the Moderator open the auditorium. This was a long-standing practice that we seem to have moved away from recently.

I agree with one of the speakers who pointed out that the "timer" obscured a portion of some of the slides. That needs to be corrected at future meetings.

The "Abstain" button on the clicker should be activated which, when added to the "Yes" and "No" votes, will give a better sense of how many attendees are checked in for the meeting in total.

The process for determining the "high interest" articles needs to be reviewed. Neither of the high interest articles this year produced very close votes or were that contentious. And there were several other articles that had very close votes. The Stormwater article (34) might have been of great interest to town staff, but it was no more important than many other articles to voters.

The recommendations of the TMSC clearly did not have any statistically significant effect on town meeting participation, and in that sense they failed to achieve one of their primary purposes, although I think some of their recommendations, like beginning TM at 6:30 instead of 7:00, were improvements. I think the conclusion from this year's TM, and from those of prior years, is that people will attend when there is an issue that is important to them, as shown by the participation of Newbury Court residents this year, and the participation of parents of school age children in prior years when there has been an issue related to schools.

---

Push forward to allow remote voting. I had to leave early one night and would have voted at home if I could. I'm often away for business or family and I would like the option to listen in and vote remotely in the future.

---

I must confess that this year I felt the Town made more poor decisions than usual. I believe that it might be better to have a representative assembly given that we had such small numbers, little time to delve into each Article, poor understanding of the Articles for which some had not prepared despite the Handbook, and such a great expenditure of time. I can only see remote voting greatly complicating matters. Call me "sour Concord grapes". I also found it very concerning that the business community could not represent their opposition to the pesticide issue for fear of losing customers. It might be useful to allow pro and con views on each article in the handbook.

---

Please don't allow audience members to "amend" an issue. Any amendments should be rejected or resolved beforehand. The one issue where an amendment was proposed seemed to take a very long time, and was confusing. It also seemed to waste 20-30 extra minutes. AND don't make any survey questions "required". Just accept whatever the respondent decides to say or not say.

---

I believe that we should consider moving to a representative town meeting. However, given the reality that the current formal will not change, I encourage remote participation options to encourage younger residents, as well as others, to attend.

---

Advise article sponsors/ presenters not to rehearse the text or details of the article--we have that, there have been hearings--but to present the case, which after months of hearings should be clear: what are the issues, why is this important, what are the potential downsides. Also, those chairs in the gym are terribly uncomfortable -- advise folks to bring a foam pad so they can sit for 3-4 hours...

---

1. Put all financial articles on one night and clearly outline the cumulative impact on taxes if all pass.
  2. Put all zoning and bylaw changes related to development on one night.
  3. Implement remote voting ASAP. It will be better for the environment.
- 

Two suggestions:

1. Each night is grueling, for the audience and surely for the moderator and the committee members. The third evening went beyond 10pm -- over 3 and 1/2 hours. This is too long for anyone to be able to maintain their attention and energy. It is also a disservice to those articles that are presented late in the evening. Residents and officials need to be able to give their energy and attention to each article, not be exhausted by the process. I would urge more shorter nights. (For example, four nights of 2.5-hour meetings, rather than three nights of 3.5-hour meetings. Or, make sure no new business is started after a certain time, even if it means coming back the next night.) People can plan for four nights of Town Meeting (even if they can't attend all four nights).

2. I would urge the Town to consider a suggestion made by one of the residents on Night 2: that the town try to avoid scheduling events (e.g., youth sports, concerts,...) on the nights of Town Meeting. This might allow more residents with school-age children to attend. Town Meeting deserves to be prioritized.

---

I am not sure about special times for "high interest" articles - especially when people from Newbury Court were bused en masse. It is good to have elderly voters present of course. Also, in general, with high interest articles, interested people do show up even when inconvenient. However the actual promoter of this particular Article legitimately busing his supporters, and with advance notice, seemed to inappropriately bias the result. It should at least be announced in advance that supporters will be brought in buses for this.

It was also inappropriate for the Moderator to seem to advocate for the Newbury Court Article by mentioning that the Planning Board reviews things in open session. Yes, they do, but that does not mean the Zoning change will not influence the Planning Board's legal limitations, not to mention that open meeting or not, developers often prevail in Planning Board discussions.

Also, often giving priority time to high interest articles ends up shortchanging other articles, also of interest, by pushing them to the end of the session.

It is very discouraging to see a crowd show up for an article and then leave immediately afterwards -

and then many complain about town meeting being inequitable!

Pro and Con microphones may be a bit more efficient, but have a reductive effect.

I also agree with the comment that asking people if they have made up their mind after some time is not a good reason to end discussion- because we do not know who would say what next that may bring new light.

---

"Calling the question appeared to be planned in advance. In addition, the way it is managed minimizes the importance of an issue to individuals."

---

I notice that there's a set of residents who continually get up to offer their opinion & use uninformed assumptions, misunderstanding of the basic elements of the article, or just plain conjecture to bolster their point of view. This has the effect of downgrading the quality of deliberation & probably disincentivizes some people from coming to town meeting in the first place. I'm not sure how to fix this... maybe provide 1-2 "microphone cards" to ea resident as they get their meeting materials & they can use their cards to comment on up to 2 things of their choice but when they've spent their cards, they just need to listen as others have their turn.

---

For next year and thereafter, please return to circulating printed warrant to voters in early January and then printer Finance Committee report with Select Board and Boards/Committees include for each article in warrant.

Moderator should do homework on predesignating high interest articles so that time is not wasted on non-high interest articles - i.e. Art. 34 which was handled in 15 minutes.....

---

See above.

---

Allowing distance participation and voting via Zoom (or some other vehicle) will not improve town meeting.

---

This survey is restricted to those who attended this year, and that will provide some useful feedback. Equally useful would be a survey of those who did not attend, asking questions such as, "what did you do/where were you on June 2, 3, 4 between 6 and 10 pm?" and also, "are you aware of / satisfied with the decisions reached by your fellow citizens who did attend this year?" Perhaps the decisions taken are more representative of the voting public than appears at first glance, or perhaps many non-participants are fine with others deciding for them.

---

More use of social media. Improve town website

---

There were quite a few people watching remotely. It will be nice if someday remote voting is allowed.

---

In additional to the above, I think the Moderator should gently interrupt/shut down speeches that are not focused on the article at hand. Too much pontificating about things not germane to the discussion.

---

---

---

### Improve Deliberation:

Consider a way to shorten deliberation and discourage repetitive time consuming comments. The sponsors of an article are by design afforded more time to present the pro side of an article with slides, charts, committee endorsements etc. Maybe allowing the con side of high interest articles to select a representative to present the opposing opinion with equal time would be helpful. Both sides might be more likely to adhere to the plea "to not repeat what others have said". At the least, it would encourage fairness.

---

The clickers are first step in the right direction but something is very wrong when 200 people are deciding everything for the whole town. And this is in today's climate when democracy is supposedly valued more than ever! The process has to be much more palatable, much less time consuming. Maybe fewer articles? Maybe a way to vote remotely?

---

Shorten the voting window for clickers. Keep the speaking window at 2 minutes/per person. Provide all the slides/ppts. on each article on-line in atleast a week in advance so folks can pre-read before Town Meeting. Definitely will speed things up. Put all Zoning articles on the same day so folks who want to just vote on Zoning don't have to attend other days. Put all School items on one day for the same reason. Know the Briefing book is supposed to be the "Agenda" but need to be more firm about which articles are on which days. Folks may just want to attend to vote on what is important to them. It is hard for people to get a babysitter, juggle work/home responsibilities etc. would get a larger number of more diverse voters if you could do something like: Articles 1-10 are on Day 1, 11-20 on Day 2, 20-30 are on day 3 and keep to the schedule. I like that the Special Interest Topics such as Newbury Court, had a specific time. Not everyone can devote 2 or 3 days to Town Meeting and would like to attend on topics they are interested in.

---

We should get rid of clickers.

---

---

Do not continue down this path of remote participation. It is a half-baked scheme for which you do not have technological solves and which will cost the town time and focus on the legislative process, likely to no eventual end.

---

Provide all the presentations and slide decks on line atleast 2 weeks prior to Town Meeting for a pre-read. Folks will come prepared and it will move faster. Allow folks to post questions based on the presentations prior to the Town meeting online for presenters to address in their presentations or answer an FAQ. The presenters show these presentations at LWVCC and I believe need to submit them in advance to the Moderator so they should be available. Put them on the Town Website in a central place so folks can review them and find them easily.

---

I liked the person who called the question on several articles to move the process along. Think it helped with efficiency as sometimes the debate goes on too long. For example, it was clear most people wanted to vote for the Newbury Court but we had to listen to lots of Pro comments and very few Con comments before someone called the question or the Moderator stepped in. That should have been shortened by 15 minutes. Think the calling of the questions is a good idea; otherwise, folks will debate endlessly. Keep the comments to 2 minutes per person- that is sufficient.

Keep the clickers- think it ill speed up once people get used to them. Shorten the time to be able to respond with clicker to 1 minute. It shouldn't take that long to vote.

---

Online voting if safe against tampering.

---

Shorten some article presentations a bit more. Limit individual speaker time more.  
Provide more viewpoints by recognizing speakers who haven't spoken before repeat speakers.

---

Time to allow remote voting

---

The white folding chairs are not that comfortable after 3 hours... perhaps the main activity could be moved to the auditorium where it is more comfortable. and overflow in the gym.

---

---

---

---

Would definitely watch and vote from home if remote voting were available.

---

ADD SECOND MEETING LOCATION (CMS), BREAK MEETING UP TO SPRING (fiscal) and FALL (all other votes) (3 days in a row is too hard on everyone), Remote Voting when possible, Space for families to gather and vote.

---

I did not support allowing virtual participation in Town meeting. While we need to improve participation (there were only about 125 participants the last hour of day three) there are ways we might consider to make it easier to participate. Making it virtual opens the door to a range of unanticipated consequences.

---

Save the town money but not using the clickers. They are nice, but not worth the money.

---

---

I do not know how you can get people to not repeat points already made. Maybe we could have a proposal from a committee about introducing rules to shorten discussions. For example, maybe have a shorter comment period be the default and give the moderator the latitude to allow a person to continue to speak if they are introducing new information. I suspect this would make the moderators job more odious. I would even have a vote to allow the person to speak if the appealed.

---

Also, why did it take people so long to vote? Shorten the time they have to push their buttons.

---

---

---

Very unfortunate do few attended

Maybe create an agenda when roughly each vote will take place - I did not know what vote was going to be taken each night

---

I am concerned about the upcoming generation being able to keep Town Meeting as in person.

Increase access to Town issue information and expand both options for voting and the voting period (perhaps five days), viz., paper ballots, mail ballots, voting in all public buildings, online voting, interactive voice response, electronic devices at Town Meeting and elsewhere...

---

---

---

Virtual attendance would be a great improvement, allowing more people access to all meetings.

We were not sent a briefing book and would have found one useful.

---

Simplify simplify simplify. The less we need to deliberate the better. We hear from the same people over and over making it very difficult to sit through. May be a limit on pro and con speakers? Maybe 5 each and by default call to question unless there is a majority who object?

Need to find a way to reduce the number of warrant articles and to use media and in-person discussions to inform voters on critical budget issues.

Reduce town meeting to 2 nights and warrant articles.

Sadly, current pressures on families keep residents from coming to TM. Less than 500 voters on such major spending articles will not bode well for future buy in when residents realize the costs of what has become policy. And those same people were not present to hear the presentations. My guess is that they will probably not pay attention until they get their bills. Perhaps a summary of the biggest cost items could mailed along with a summary of the reasoning for the proposals and the subsequent support of the meeting, for these items. Or, instead of a mailing, a supplement or long piece in the Bridge. However, it is important that whatever appears in the Bridge comes directly from Town representatives, not from a reporters interpretation!

---

---

The moderator should ask if people are ready to vote far sooner. The public debate went round and round in circles. The fact that the school amended their order so that people could vote on the amenities building and night one was excellent. There should be this flexibility to take maximum advantage of people's limited time for important issues.

---

See above

(1) I hope we can eventually have remote participation, where people could listen and vote, with the understanding that they can't address a topic personally from home. (2) We did not receive the Briefing Book at home; the only thing we got was a newspaper "broadsheet" listing all the articles. Could there be extra ones at town meeting to borrow?

---

I don't think it's appropriate for the same person to call the question for multiple different articles. It just seemed that he wanted the TM as soon as possible rather than furthering understanding of the articles.

Shorter shorter shorter. 1 night only. Move as much as humanly possible to a single consent calendar vote. Having free or even low cost child care is fine and all but utterly and completely useless when a meeting runs until 10pm, or even really 9pm, on a school night, especially because the reason is often child-free people using the space to babble. No extra time, for anyone, no matter what. Ever. Town meeting as it is is hopelessly anti-democratic. Trying remote access will help. Or as another option (try both!), scheduling major items at a specific, family friendly (basically between 630-8) time would be helpful. But needs to be 100% all and always on one night and one night only

---

See above. I don't expect any change in a town that can't even figure out how to get adequate cell service. I really like Concord, but it is a poorly run town that is held hostage to the aluminum foil hat brigade on issues like cell towers, and the institution of town meeting perpetuates that type of ridiculous outcome. If it only takes +/- 200 people to make a decision, a small minority can get out of touch policies enacted by motivating a very small number of voters.

I have said my piece, and I will continue to serve as a volunteer in town but holding on to antiquated systems is a detriment to those who are unable to participate which is over 95% of voters.

---

I would recommend that the town meeting only entertains 5 speakers or less for and against each motion, limiting each to 2 minutes and striving to avoid repetitive points. It might tighten up the length of each debate and the overall meeting.

---

Please don't use the auditorium if not needed

---

The chairs in the gym were very uncomfortable.

---

The chairs were extremely uncomfortable for 3 hours of sitting.

---

The two big projection screens excellent help!!!! Super excellent!!1  
BUT, they were too low, and very difficult to read past the 5th (?) row.... (In 'flat' room - cafeteria?)

---

Attendees to Town Meeting need to understand a few basic concepts and perhaps the Moderator could point these out at the start of Town Meeting or even every evening, or they could be on a handout. The LWVCC is likely to hold a First Friday on these concepts but they reach a small and already reasonably well-informed subset of the voters. My wording is approximate - I'm sure the Moderator can be a bit more precise.

- 1, Zoning comes before planning. If the article is about zoning, you probably will not see any plans.
2. Capital budgets and operational budgets are not the same. Capital projects may involve borrowing (i.e., excluded debt. (define excluded debt.)
3. Home rule petitions - affirmative action does not mean the concept will be put into practice in Concord for a few years, if ever, because the MA House has to grant our petition. If they do we get to vote again on the concept. If they don't we will see the home rule petition if it is again brought to Town Meeting. Because voting to support a home rule petition article doesn't result in the concept being enacted until and unless the legislature grants the petition, lengthy discussion is not a good use of time. The Moderator could gently frame the discussion as a first step...we get a "second bite" if it comes to Town Meeting again.

I feel that making the effort to attend in person is important, but during the town meeting it became clear that the majority of voters skews to older folks with no young children. By the end of the 1st night, voting numbers dwindled to around 200. These things drag on too long and measures pass or fail because of peoples' lack of endurance, not because of merit.

I'd push for the town to make this an online event, so that parents have the ability to feed and put their kids to bed without having to pay for a babysitter, and still attend. Child care at the event is not enough.

---

Perhaps each citizen should have a quota of time that they can use for comments over the course of the meeting, so they can focus their remarks on the motions where they have the most to add.

---

---

We're already holding Town Meeting in two locations. Next year, we should use the middle school auditorium instead of the high school auditorium. This would dramatically improve participation and satisfaction.

---

Shorter presentations. Like an elevator presentation if you can't get it across in 5 minutes you lost people too much repetitive information

---

Carmen has been fabulous. I will miss her

---

I strongly believe that remote participation would vastly increase participation and improve the overall town meeting experience.

---

I was disappointed to see voters turn up en masse to support a single article and then immediately leave after the article passed. Organized campaigns like this contravene the spirit of Town Meeting. Is there anything Town Meeting can do to discourage voters and sponsors from acting this way?

---

---

Presentations spend too much time describing the wonderful jobs they have done or will do.

Presentations are over-detailed on many slides, shrinking the text to be almost unreadable. I want to see fewer spreadsheets in almost all cases.

---

I really wish we could vote remotely. So many more people in town would be involved.

---

Reduce the number of articles. Move more articles to consent agenda (move budget articles to consent agenda if at guideline). Deliberate in advance at hearings. Reduce deliberation at TM. Deliberation DOES NOT change minds it wastes time. Allow QUESTIONS but not opinions (deliberation).

---

I think a representative TM would help TM be more representative of the town as a whole.

---

More items on the consent calendar

---

---

Possibly have town meeting on a Saturday so more people can attend

---

See above

None

---

Clickers should only be used on high profile articles or articles requiring 2/3 vote., not on straight forward perfunctory articles

---

See above

---

Move clickers to those two cases.

---

Getting better representation is the MOST important thing to me

---

Hybrid please.

---

META: would have like a N/A choice on section 3. (I used "Not Sure", instead.)

---

More on the consent calendar, taking things off if people object to them being there

---

I believe that RTM should be explored more robustly than it was covered in the TM Study Committee report, perhaps via an explicit RTM Study Committee. I believe that efforts to expand access via remote participation will only very modestly increase general attendance, and exacerbate single issue voting, which I consider a perversion of the TM legislative function in favor of election-style campaigning and turnout operations.

---

Keep the clickers. Consider holding it on a Saturday starting at 9 am.

---

The changes were fine but it's like putting a band-aid on a wound. The entire process needs to change. It does not allow for representation across the town's different constituencies.

---

What constitutes remote participation? If a municipality uses several of its buildings (i.e. Concord Carlisle High School, Town House, Harvey Wheeler, Ellen Garrison Building at Concord Middle School) to regionally accommodate its citizens and simultaneously connect them, is that still remote participation? If the municipality provides reasonable childcare at each site, in addition to briefing books, and even clickers, might that entice more citizens to participate?

---

'Calling the question' should not always be acted upon by the Moderator to stop the comments...more debate should be allowed until repetitive and not covering new perspectives.

---

Please work to institute remote or early voting--yes, if I participated in this format, I would miss the opinions of others but honestly I know what I'm doing and in the 35+ years of ATM never has someone else's opinion swayed me.

---

The moderator needs to be more active in wrapping up perseverative comments/debates. Town Meeting is too poorly attended, and the demographics of attendees are too skewed to the older population. Study/efforts should be made to allow/encourage the younger demographic to attend, as well.

---

Remote voting has its challenges. I think listening to peoples comments on the articles can help form your own opinion. If there is remote voting there is no way to know if the voter has listened in. It is

way to maybe get more participation, but im afraid people may vote a certain way without being fully informed by listning to the informatin presented at town meeting before a vote??

---

I would like the moderator to encourage attendees to attend as much as they can of the meeting, rather than showing up for the article they particularly care about and exiting once it's done. The exodus of school committee members once school issue are over particularly disturbs me. There is a broader context for all articles that are addressed, and we benefit from understanding that context.

---

I liked when we had town meeting outside with 1 minute comment time. I do not like the suggestion of having remote meetings. I don't think that low attendance is because of time availability or childcare. More needs to be done to make the community aware of the fact that Concord is governed "by the people" and of the need to be involved in decisions on the issues. The community needs to be encouraged to participate on boards and committees. The town and Select Board should be represented at all town events (picnic in the park, Ag day, tree lighting) to inform the public.

---

I would have appreciated more moderation during open debate. People need to be heard, but it seemed like there was a lot of discussion of matters not directly related to the motions at hand.

---

see above. Also, how about TM not in June, but earlier in spring. Especially since we aren't having it outside.

---

Town meeting participation (on site presence) is unlikely to improve as those who don't attend are very unlikely to attend any format. And, remote participation will weaken the effectiveness of the existing meeting format. I think enough has been done to tweak what we have. Leave what we have alone and consider representative town meeting.

---

Somehow we need to increase attendance. It seemed that the attendance this year was much less than previous years. I am usually able to attend more meetings than I did this year. We need to be more efficient with our time and shorten the debate when points are being repeated. The moderator is "kind" to allow everyone to speak, but it lengthens the evening too much. The screens (especially the dialogue screen) need to be higher; if one is seated in middle or back of gym, you invariably have blockage with low screens.

---

I think that the gathering of the town an important occasion and should be encouraged and continued. I am concerned that off-site voting will take away from this gathering; it needs to be made interesting as well as important.

---

I suggest less light or warmer lighting; more convivial seating arrangement-filling up an area before spreading out; stand and stretch pauses at least every 30 minutes; use only one room unless there really is an overflow. Work to create the feeling of friends,neighbors, fellow citizens coming together and working together as a community.

---

Publish a list of names of those who actually attended in thge Bridge.

---

---

---

---

Remote participation and minimal or no presentations (the presentations are a huge time suck and the info contained in them already is (or should be!) available elsewhere).