

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Welcome to the Annual Town Meeting for 2003. This will be my first Town Meeting as Moderator. It is a distinct pleasure and honor to have been elected by the voters of Medfield to preside over the Town Meeting and continue a tradition of participatory democracy dating back over three hundred years. It is profound to imagine our forebears in Medfield coming together, over one hundred years before the Declaration of Independence was signed, to meet as we do tonight to determine through an orderly process the rules, budgets and laws which would govern and advance their community.

State statutes declare that: "The moderator shall preside and regulate the proceedings, decide all questions of order, and make public declaration of all votes." At the commencement of the meeting, I will explain the rules and procedures which will govern tonight's open forum. The cornerstones of these procedures will be fairness, open and respectful discourse, deliberative consideration and community interest. I will attempt to use my rightful discretion, wisely I hope, to advance these principles. I ask for your indulgence, in advance, in connection with any rulings made on complex parliamentary determinations. There will, as usual, be reasonable time limitations on discussion -- necessary to balance due consideration with expediency. I will declare at the outset that certain Articles must be addressed and voted on in a particular order because of their interdependency; the order of other Articles will be determined by lottery.

I want to take this opportunity to thank George P. Niles, Jr. for his service and dedication over the past five years as our Moderator. George presided over meetings in which the gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria and nearly all the classrooms of our high school were filled to capacity. These were historic meetings and George deserves great recognition for his administration of these assemblies.

This year's Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting is robust; we will vote on approximately 37 warrant articles. I will attempt to move the meeting along, but we have many important issues for our consideration. Whether we finish conducting the town's common business in one night or two will depend upon the scope and breadth of discussion and deliberation. Although to many an open town meeting format seems imperfect -- sometimes inefficient, sometimes cumbersome -- I am struck by Thomas Jefferson's sentiment that it has proved itself the wisest invention ever devised for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation.

Thank you for participating in our democracy in action.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott F. McDermott
Moderator