

Paul J. Salafia
1/12/2021

I'd like to thank the committee for their work. The process is incredibly informative and helpful. I often ask myself "if I had a magic wand, what would I do?" It helps me clear away the clutter and makes me to focus on possibilities. In my "magic wand" scenario I would want the most people possible involved in the decisions that affect them. Andover's \$200 million dollar plus budget, zoning bylaws, town and school buildings and more are matters of extreme importance to our citizens and the more they are involved the stronger our community will be. Any citizen can bring a proposal before Town Meeting, make the case and ask for a vote. At no other level of government can an individual citizen be so intimately involved with, and affect the outcome of, the business of government.

I certainly share the frustration and the hard work that an open town meeting can often present. It is certainly not the easiest way to govern but although it has its flaws, it is the most transparent and affords the participation of most people. In the best-case scenario illustrated on slide #20 a representative town meeting will have no more than 250 participants and that an open town meeting will draw hundreds and often thousands more. I don't see any good reason to disenfranchise hundreds of our citizens in the name of efficiency and agility. Good government is often hard work but is always worth it.

The efficiency and agility of the open town meeting can be improved with electronic voting, remote attendance and a focused effort to educate and inform town meeting voters. Separating the general business articles in a spring town meeting from zoning articles in the fall will afford town officials, presenters and most of all the voters the time to offer deeper insight and help us all understand the gravity and complexity of what is before them.

Improving Open Town Meeting should be an ever-evolving process. We should be open minded enough to see what works, what does not and be mindful of other communities successes and failures.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

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