

Randy Hanson

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Town Meeting Governance Committee:

Having served the Town of Andover as Town Clerk for a good number of years, I thought I would send you some personal comments on your task concerning our town governance.

I am a strong proponent of Open Town Meeting for the following reasons:

1. This form of government is the simplest, purest form of democratic governance in the country.
2. Town Meeting keeps power in the hands of the many and not the few.
3. The attendees do not have to file campaign finance papers. There is no undue influence on any attendee except for their own conscience and what they feel is the best options and policies for their town.
4. I have seldom seen Town Meeting not get things right, even if it takes more than one meeting.
5. We all get to see our elected and appointed officials personally and we get to hold them accountable for their decisions and policies.
6. We all get a booklet once (or more) from the Finance Committee (a separately appointed committee from the Town Fathers) that tells us what the Town and our fellow townspeople (through private warrant articles) feel is important to our welfare each year. Yes, a long process, but a necessary and a thoughtful one. We then make a conscience choice to engage in Town Meeting in person or trust the majority of Town Meeting attendees to make decisions for us. I am fine with that.

Having run many Town Meetings myself and having engaged in many discussions with town officials from other towns, I have never changed my mind about how critical it is to keep this important form of government alive. I realize that Andover has the largest Open Town Meeting in the country, and that is something to be proud of.

Andover has always made Open Town Meeting work. It may be somewhat cumbersome to some, but for me, I can attend clinging to my democratic ideals and secure that my fellow Town Meeting members will listen to many sides of an issue and make good decisions for their Town. I do not want to give that power to 9 people that are destined over time to become isolated from the electorate.

Review Town Meeting to make it as efficient as possible. Everything can use improvement. I personally will not vote to eliminate Town meeting if it comes up at Town Meeting or at the ballot box.