

## Precinct 7 Town Meeting Member

7 for 3 years

1 for 1 year

Question for Town Meeting Member candidates:

The Town Meeting Members Association (TMMA) holds three information session nights prior to the beginning of Town Meeting. Attendance at these TMMA information sessions is fairly low. What do you think could be done to encourage more Town Meeting Members to attend information sessions?

### **Incumbents**

#### **Robert K. Creech**

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Phone number: (781) 674-2481

**Community Activities:** Resident participant with the Residential policy Committee, Planning Board, Turning Mill NCD Study Committee

### **Question**

First, I can only guess why people do not attend Information Sessions perhaps because they are finished for the day by that time of night. We also have a strong core of people who step up and ask good questions at the Information Sessions so, if TMMs watch them live, or after the fact, maybe they get just as much information as they would if they were there in person. So it is not clear to me that it is necessary to encourage more Town Meeting Members to every Information Sessions. I think that it should be understood that every TMM is expected to either attend in person or to view the meeting from a remote location. For many voting items at Town Meeting, it is not enough to show up and depend exclusively upon presentations, questions, support and opposition in order to decide on how to vote.

#### **Harry C. Forsdick**

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Phone number 781 799 6002

### **Community Activities**

ad hoc Community Center Advisory Committee  
LexMedia, former member Board of Directors, Chair  
Lexington List, founder and moderator  
Town Meeting Member

### **Question**

1. Ask presenters to limit their presentation to two slides of the most important information and leave the rest of their time to interactive discussions with the audience. This way these will be different than town meeting itself.
2. Broadcast on LexMedia with a return text question capability for questions from remote locations. This could be a model for how other organizations in town could more effectively use two way communications with LexMedia broadcasts.

**Pam Hoffman**

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Phone number 781.862.1434

**Community Activities**

- Precinct 7 Town Meeting Representative since 2005
- Planned Giving Committee, Cary Memorial Library Foundation

Former:

- Appropriation Committee member (5 years)
- Estabrook PTA President (2 years)
- Estabrook Site Council member (5 years)

**Question**

The first question that comes to mind is why is attendance at these sessions low? Are TMMs very busy and don't have time to attend these information sessions? Do they feel that since the information presented in these sessions is the same as what's presented on the floor of Town Meeting, there's no reason to take the time to attend these sessions? I believe the value of attending the sessions needs to be clearly communicated through the TMMA listserv and other means. Personally, I find the info sessions to be valuable because many of the warrant articles, especially the zoning articles, are complex and require time to understand them thoroughly. At Town Meeting, the limited time allotted to each article is spread across the presenters, proponents, opponents, and questioners. There may not be enough time to answer all of the questions, especially if someone "calls the question." At the information sessions, there is time to ask and answer questions about all aspects of each article.

**David G. Kanter**

**Tina M. McBride**

**Umesh Shelat**

**Taylor Carroll Singh**

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### **Community Activities:**

- Appointed Special Permit Residential Development Zoning Bylaw Amendment Committee Member
- Lexington Says #ENOUGH Board Member
- LexFUN! Board Member
- Lexington League of Women Voters Board Member
- Lexington Kids PMC Ride Board Member
- Estabrook Parent and Volunteer
- Coach of Moms on the Mound's Royals

### **Question:**

For the past three years as an elected Town Meeting member, I have made sure to attend the TMMA information sessions prior to the start of Town Meeting. The articles laid out at the info sessions have been through the process of being presented to our Select Board members at public sessions. For many articles, having been created via committee and having been before public hearings, they have gone through a very lengthy vetting process for months to years prior to the warrant article being drafted. As a Town Meeting member, I know I am unable to attend every committee meeting nor public meeting. I am grateful for the TMMA info sessions to bring me up to speed prior to the start of Town Meeting so I can catch up on what I have missed.

While some Town Meeting members can see these info sessions as repetitive, as the majority of each presentation will be relayed again on the actual Town Meeting floor, I find these info sessions vital to be able to make fully informed decisions when the motions appear before Town Meeting. Hence, I would not want to risk a change to the format that I find necessary for me to be most effective as an elected Town Meeting member. Further, it has been pointed out to me that these info sessions are broadcast live on LexMedia. There are Town Meeting members that choose to watch these sessions from the comfort of their own home and therefore we cannot look to attendance in the hall of these sessions to confirm low participation as we do not have the data on how many view remotely.

I am grateful to the TMMA for the info sessions as well as the TMMA Google Group, Warrant Information book and bus tour. The Association's efforts make us a better-informed legislative body and I have valued these resources throughout my time as an elected Town Meeting member.

### **New Candidates**

**Sara Cuthbertson**

E-mail address: Saracuthbertson14@gmail.com

Phone number: 43-513-7467

**Community Activities:**

- Chair, Lexington PTA/O Presidents' Council
- Member, Lexington Public Schools Inclusion Community Input Team
- Appointed Member, Lexington Public Schools Master Planning Advisory Committee
- Estabrook Liaison to Lexington's Special Education Parent Advisory Council
- Member, Joint Mental Health Task Force
- Member, Lexington Public Schools Start Time Task Force
- Estabrook PTO Executive Board (VP Membership, VP Volunteers, VP Community Engagement, President)

**Question:**

As someone who is running for Town Meeting for the first time, I have no personal experience with the TMMA information sessions. However, I have heard many positive remarks about the value of the information sessions and I am looking forward to attending this year. I have been reading the warrants and attending Town Meeting as an observer for years, and I know how important it is to have a comprehensive view of each warrant article prior to the start of Town Meeting.

While I cannot speak to attendance issues, if it is not already being done, having the informational sessions recorded and readily available on the TMMA page would be extremely useful for those not able to attend in person. It could also be a powerful tool for the Lexington community at large to gain a better understanding of the warrant articles so that residents can engage more with their Town Meeting Members throughout the process.

I am grateful for all of the hard work that the Town Meeting Members Association puts in so that Town Meeting Members are able to make informed contributions to the Town of Lexington.

**Samita A. Mandelia**

E-mail address [samita.mandelia@gmail.com](mailto:samita.mandelia@gmail.com)

Phone number 781.354.6644

**Community Activities**

- Have been organizing cultural community events (Navratri/Bollywood night and IAL Diwali) to bring together the local residents. Proceeds from events are being donated to local organizations such as Lexington Education Foundation, Cary Memorial Library Foundation and others.

- Served as room parent for several years and volunteered to assist teachers with the yearly activities and act as a liaison between teachers & parents.
- Served on the PTO board and successfully raised funds for the Estabrook School community.

### **Question**

My recommendation would be to emphasize on the importance of attending by reiterating that the attendance for these meetings are their civic responsibility for which the members have signed up for. Make attendance matter – prepare the agenda to harness the value others bring. Snacks and meals can sometimes be helpful, help them see their contribution as a priority. Potentially, setting expectation for a minimum number of meetings for which attendance is required throughout the year?

Although, this is the first time for me running for town meeting, I would assume the durations of these meeting are not being stretched out than what is required. Also, would be great to send out frequent reminders.