

Precinct 8 Town Meeting Member

7 for 3 years

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 M. Avallone

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Community Activities:

Town Meeting Positions

2010 – Present Town Meeting Member Precinct 8

2012 – Present Webmaster for Town Meeting Members Association

2011 Precinct 8 Chair

2010 Precinct 8 Vice Chair

Town Positions

2018 – Present Member Communications Advisory Committee

Volunteer

Mock Town Meeting

Question:

The purpose of the TMMA Information sessions is twofold. One is to allow the sponsors of the articles a chance to rehearse them before Town Meeting begins. It also gives the Town Meeting members the opportunity to get answers to any questions they may have. This saves time in Town Meeting as these questions do not have to be repeated. On any question for which sponsors do not have an answer, it gives them time to research the issue.

It is correct that there is low attendance at these events. I have attended most of them having only missed a few due to being out of town or being ill. I would estimate only about a third of the membership shows up at the peak of any meeting. This is because there is no voting or debate at these sessions. Others may watch on cable television. I am not sure there is anything more we can do except to have better publicity to improve attendance. I feel these sessions are useful to the sponsors and the members who do attend.

Elizabeth R. Barrentine

Lauren Deems Black

Shailesh Chandra

Gang Chen

Andrei Radulescu-Banu

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Community Activities

I maintain <http://lex-wiki.org>, a local wikipedia for Lexington, containing information about local cultural activities, town politics, and issues of interest. A number of years back I served as an Appropriation Committee member, reviewing town budget issues during the yearlong budget cycle, as well as in preparation for Town Meeting.

Question

The TMMA information sessions are essential for Town Meeting members that wish to be well prepared before the night an article is brought to the floor. At the info sessions, members ask questions to article sponsors and to town staff. Asking questions is a form of influencing the debate, as well as informing oneself and others. The issues under discussion are often nuanced and complex.

The TMMA sessions are well advertised in advance, and members are well aware how useful the sessions are. It mostly comes down to whether members have the time available to attend. Usually, we see about one third of members in attendance.

I think it would help if recently elected members were reminded of the TMMA info sessions - for example, through the TMMA mailing list - and, as new members get the broadcast reminder, existing members get cued and reminded of how useful these information sessions are.

Wendy S. Reasenberg

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Question:

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I do not think that physical attendance at Cary Hall is an accurate indicator of the interest by town meeting members in the TMMA information sessions. In today's world we are increasingly receiving most of our information or news, communicating with others and shopping via various electronic media. People have home offices or studies well equipped to talk to neighbors, clients, out of town family, businesses and colleagues around the world via the internet. I suspect that two to three times the number of members in attendance at Cary Hall are watching all or part of the TMMA information sessions on their TV or computer via LexMedia either in real time or later "On Demand."

People increasingly are multi-tasking. Being at home is more comfortable. One can move around more freely, get a snack and also simultaneously be the responsible adult at home, ready to assist children if problems arise, etc.

Even without childcare issues, more and more, people ask themselves, "Do I have to actually be there?" For the real town meeting, the answer is "yes" because we have to be there to vote. For the information sessions, if a person does not have a question in mind, physical attendance is not necessary to get the information in the presentations.

For the presenters, the information sessions at Cary Hall are very important as a dress rehearsal. The questions from the audience alert presenters to where they need to do more preparation. The presenters experience the audience reaction, evaluate the effectiveness of their visual presentation and get valuable feedback on where their speech might need some revision. The result is that at town meeting, the presentations are more complete.

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New Candidate:

Sudhir Ranjan

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Community Activities

I have been a TMM from Precinct 1 since 2018, and have been an active participant. I have also remained associated with vision 20/20 team. I have been an intermittent participant and volunteer at various school activities and town wide events including community events organized by Indian Americans of Lexington. I am currently serving as secretary for Indian-American Getting Involved Group. With more involved citizens, and out-of-the-box thinking, I believe we can keep Lexington vibrant, more affordable and all-inclusive for our children and our senior citizens.

Question

Below are my responses on how to encourage TMMs to attend during information sessions:

- The information provided during TMMAs information sessions remain the same during actual meeting. The sessions can be made more interactive and inclusive.
- Continuous pursuance on the importance of TMMAs information sessions e.g. by sending **personal invite** about each information sessions through email and/or post may help in improving attendance. In the case of members' absence, an email can be sent out to all TMMs about what we discussed in our last information session including number of attendees and a sober request - "we missed you", and looking forward to hearing your voice on our ongoing next TMMa sessions.

- Second option is to conduct just ONE long more interactive information session, and include light refreshment/dinner/lunch option depending upon the time either on weekdays/weekends.