



Memorandum

To: Honorable Jeanette White Chair, Senate Government Operations Committee

From: Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy (khorn@vlct.org)
Gwynn Zakov, Municipal Policy Advocate (gzakov@vlct.org)

Date: December 4, 2020

RE: Town Meeting 2021 Recommendations

Congratulations on your re-election! We look forward to working with you again on issues that provide local governments the flexibility to effectively discharge their responsibilities to their constituents.

Thank you so much for taking up the matter of assuring that Town Meetings are held in a safe manner that provides everyone the opportunity to participate. The last day that local governments may warn their Town Meetings is Sunday, January 31, so time is of the essence! We offer the following recommendations for legislation as soon as the legislature returns.

1. Authority to move to Australian ballot exists but local governments need authority to send out ballots to all voters. They will also need funding to pay for the mailing of ballots.

2. Local governments need authority to move the date of Town Meeting.

MOVING THE DATE OF TOWN MEETING:

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Notwithstanding the provisions of 17 V.S.A. § 2640 or any provision of law that require the legal voters of a municipality to meet on the first Tuesday of March for the election of officers and the transaction of other business, in the year 2021, any municipality may require that its legal voters so meet on some other day by vote of the local legislative body.

3. The selectboard or city council must have authority to adopt a budget and set a tax rate if Town Meeting is moved to a later date.

4. Brattleboro, with its representative Town Meeting, needs to be given the authority to vote remotely at Town Meeting again.

5. The selectboard or city council must be authorized to delay voter-petitioned special municipal meetings.

DELAYING VOTER-PETITIONED SPECIAL MUNICIPAL MEETINGS:

Notwithstanding the provisions of 17 V.S.A. § 2643 or any other provision of law that requires the legislative body to call a special town meeting, during a state of emergency declared under 20 V.S.A. chapter 1 that affects a municipality, the legislative body may

vote to move the date of any voter-backed petitioned meetings either to a date warned within 60 days of the rescission of the state of emergency or to the municipality's next annual meeting.

Below please find a link to our webpage for Town Meeting. This site includes information about what the law says today, a Remote Public Meeting Toolkit, Australian Ballot Information Sheet and FAQs.

<https://www.vlct.org/municipal-assistance/municipal-topics/town-meeting>