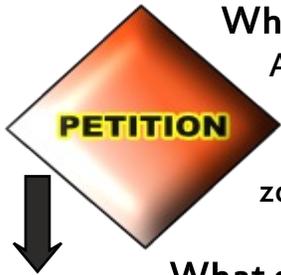


HOW TO BRING A CITIZEN PETITION ARTICLE TO TOWN MEETING



What is a Petition Article?

A Petition Article is a proposal brought to Town Meeting by a citizen or group of citizens. The petition can be on any topic that is relevant to action by Amherst Town government. In the past there have been petition articles dealing with zoning, expenditures, environment and social justice issues.

What should I know before bringing a petition article to Town Meeting?

Be aware that a petition article is a lot of work for you and may create work for Boards. It should be used judiciously. Consider if there are other means to the end you seek. Try to work with the appropriate board or committee and be ready to compromise before embarking on a petition article.

Gaining support for a 'minority' position beyond the scope of the board or committee's planned work may be difficult but it can still be important to bring a proposal before Town Meeting for discussion and action. Even if defeated, it can lay the groundwork and influence future decisions.

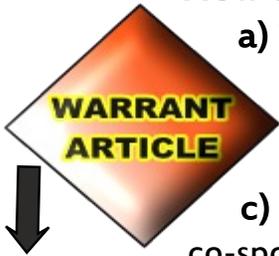
The number of valid signatures needed is significantly different depending on the type of Town Meeting to which you bring the article. Annual (spring) Town Meeting requires only 10 signatures. Special Town Meeting held in the fall, or any other Special Town Meeting, requires 100 signatures to submit a petition article. To call a Special Town Meeting or a Special Town Meeting within a previously scheduled Town Meeting, 200 signatures are required.



How do I get a petition article on the Town Meeting warrant?

- 1) Deadlines for petition articles are set by the Select Board (413-259-3001) and posted on the Town Website at www.amherstma.gov. Note: the deadline for zoning articles is considerably earlier than the Planning Board's.
- 2) Request Petition article forms from the Town Clerk's office on the first floor of Town Hall
- 3) Consult with the Moderator to be sure your article says exactly what you want. It cannot be changed once signatures are obtained. Print, or type and tape your proposed article in the space provided on the form.
- 4) Attach the petition to a clipboard along with a pen. If others are helping you get signatures you will want to prepare several. The information on the forms must be readable, complete and correct to facilitate validation of the petition.
- 5) Seek signatures from Amherst registered voters only. Sometimes people will mistakenly say they are, so it is wise to get more signatures than the minimum amount required. Addresses must be filled in legibly for each signer.
- 6) When sufficient signatures are collected, turn them in to the Select Board Office where the name of the person delivering the petition will be attached to the Article. If the petition is from a citizen group it may be identified with the article but the Select Board Office can choose to use the name of the person delivering the petition. This person does not have to be the one presenting the article at the Warrant Review or Town Meeting but the Moderator should be kept informed of any change.

How to inform Town Meeting members about the article?



- a) Talk to people as you seek signatures, knock on doors and make phone calls to potential supporters.
- b) If you are a Town Meeting Member, read the FAQs and start a discussion on: amhersttownmeeting@yahoogroups.com
- c) The Town Meeting Coordinating Committee and the League of Women Voters co-sponsor the Warrant Review. It is aired and replayed many times on Amherst Media on Channel 17. You will be contacted and given a brief time in which to explain what your article proposes to do (without advocacy) and answer questions if time permits.
- d) You may provide 350 copies of a one-page handout to be included in one of the two Town Meeting Packets sent out in advance of Town Meeting. Contact the Select Board for packet deadlines. Copies of additional information can also be placed on the back table at Town Meeting.
- e) TMCC may hold a bus tour of relevant locations prior to Town Meeting. If the article references a particular location it can be included on the tour and you can explain it without advocacy.
- f) Precinct Meetings are held in various locations, days, and times to discuss the Warrant. You may be present at as many as you wish to explain the article and answer questions. These meetings are informal public meetings and allow open discussion.
- g) Several boards and committees will review petition articles and take positions whether or not to support them. Petitioners are expected to attend these meetings to explain their article.

How is the article presented at Town Meeting?



The Moderator conducts Town Meeting. He will answer all your procedural questions and can smooth the way for the article's presentation. Inform him well ahead of time: who will present the article; who will make the motion (must be a Town meeting member); and the wording of the motion. While it is not possible to change the wording of the article once signatures have been obtained, it is possible to adjust the motion, (consult the Moderator ahead of time), as long as it is 'within the scope of the original'. Once the article is displayed on the screen, the Moderator will ask for the motion and a second. You will then have five minutes to present the article unless you first ask for and receive a time extension. Visual technology and light pointer are available. Rehearse the presentation and keep track of time.

More information is available in the TOWN MEETING HANDBOOK prepared by the League of Women Voters available on line at:

www.lwvamherst.org/node/952