



Citizen Petition for Town Meeting and Special Town Meetings Articles | Best Practices

To assist Orleans voters interested in petitioning the Select Board to place an article on the Town Meeting Warrant, please refer to the following guide for helpful explanations, procedures, and best practices.

1. A citizen's petition article is an article brought to Town Meeting for discussion and possible action by a citizen rather than by the Select Board (or another multimember body). Any voter may submit a citizen's petition, provided the petition is relevant to action by the Orleans voters at open Town Meeting.
2. Before initiating the citizen petition process, petitioners are strongly encouraged to meet with the Select Board, or the board or committee with jurisdiction over the subject matter, to seek feedback, advice, and support. In some instances, the applicable multi-member body may determine the issue warrants action and may choose to initiate and support the proposal itself, thereby making a citizen's petition unnecessary. If the body elects not to advance the proposal, the option to submit a citizen's petition remains available.
3. To submit a petition for consideration:
 - Annual Town Meeting: A written request signed by ten (10) registered voters of the Town is required.
 - Scheduled Special Town Meeting: A written request signed by one hundred (100) registered voters is required to insert an article into the warrant for an already scheduled Special Town Meeting.
 - Calling a Special Town Meeting: A written request signed by two hundred (200) registered voters is required to request that a Special Town Meeting be called for the purpose of considering a citizen's petition.
4. Appropriate subjects for Town Meeting action through a citizen petition may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Adopting, amending, or repealing Town bylaws.
 - Authorizing the filing of Home Rule legislation.
 - Accepting, rejecting, or revoking the acceptance of local option legislation.
 - Making or amending budgetary and other financial appropriations.
 - Authorizing the acquisition, disposition, or other conveyance of interests in land.
 - Adopting non-binding resolutions or expressions of policy.
5. Careful drafting of petitions is essential. Petitioned articles must contain the exact wording proposed for inclusion in the Town Meeting Warrant. Petitioners should ensure the proposed action complies with applicable state law, Town bylaws, and falls within the legal authority of Town Meeting. Articles should be clearly and precisely worded to accomplish their intended purpose. Depending on the subject matter, a petitioned article may require review by the appropriate board or committee, and in some cases may be subject to a required public hearing. Articles must be initiated sufficiently in advance to allow all legal, procedural, and review requirements to be completed prior to inclusion on the Town Meeting Warrant. Petitioners are strongly encouraged to consult with the Select Board early in the process to establish a reasonable timeline for consideration.



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6. Further, careful drafting of the accompanying motion is also important. The wording of the motion must not be identical to the wording of the warrant article. But the motion must be within the scope of the article as printed in the warrant. If the intent is for the motion to mirror the article exactly, the motion may properly be made to adopt the article. “as printed in the warrant.”
7. Submission Method: All citizen petitions must be submitted to the Select Board in electronic format to: town.orleans.ma.us/FormCenter/Town-Manager-24/Town-Managers-Office-Comment-Portal-160 by the established deadline for the submission of warrant articles.
8. Warrant Language: Once a citizen petition is submitted, the article language and any accompanying summaries will appear on the Town Meeting Warrant as submitted. Petitioners are therefore responsible for ensuring accuracy, clarity, spelling, and punctuation, as substantive edits are not made.
9. Order of Articles: The Select Board is responsible for determining the order in which articles appear on the Town Meeting Warrant.
10. At Town Meeting, the petitioner should approach the microphone when the article number is announced by the Moderator and move that the article be adopted. No discussion on the article may occur until a motion has been made and seconded. If the petitioner intends to amend the language printed in the warrant, the revised language must be stated clearly in the motion, and a written copy of the proposed amendment must be provided to the Town Clerk. Once a proper motion is before the body, the Moderator will recognize the petitioner or designee to present the article for consideration.

Other Considerations:

- *Petitioners are encouraged to obtain more than the minimum number of required signatures, as some signatures may be disqualified if they cannot be verified as registered voters.*
- *Citizen petition articles must be submitted by the deadline established by the Select Board for warrant articles.*
- *Citizen petition forms and related materials may be obtained at any time from town.orleans.ma.us/894.*
- *Audio-visual materials may be used at Town Meeting to assist in the presentation and explanation of an article and motion.*
- *Any use of audio-visual presentations at Town Meeting is subject to the advance approval of the Town Moderator and must comply with applicable Town Meeting rules.*