

Town of Rockport

2018 -Town Meeting Voter's Guide

Town meeting is a fact of New England life! But, for many residents it can be a bit confusing and intimidating, to say the least. What follows is a very brief explanation about how the meeting works (for first timers) and each of the articles on the warrant.

Technically, Town Meeting is divided into two parts. The first part being the referendum or ballot part of the meeting, where we elect officers to serve the town and the school, as well as vote (by secret ballot) on all issues that require a secret ballot (referendum) vote. In most cases these are ordinance revisions and land use questions that are required to be voted on by referendum. Meaning you walk in get a ballot(s) and cast your vote(s) and leave. This is always the second Tuesday in June, in this case June 12th at the Town Office. **The polls are open from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.**

The second meeting is called the “open town meeting”. This is where people gather at the Rockport Opera House on the day following the referendum vote, which is **June 13th at 7 p.m.** and discuss each of the articles on the rest of the warrant and vote on them. This is the meeting where people hold up their voting cards to vote. These articles are generally considered the “budget” articles, but also include a number of housekeeping and other articles for voters to decide on. Depending on questions this meeting can take as little as an hour or as long as several hours.

What follows is a very brief explanation of each of the articles on the warrant. For many of them, there is much more detailed information available in other places like the budget, but hopefully this will answer most of your questions.

Meeting opening and secret ballot questions

Article 1. To elect a moderator to preside at said meeting.

Explanation: This is a standard article that appears every year, so that a moderator can be elected for the elections and open town meeting held on June 13th at the Opera House. The moderator is elected by the people in the room when the meeting is called to order when the polls open.

Article 2. To elect:

- a. Two Select Board members and overseers of the poor for three-year terms.
- b. One Select Board member and overseers of the poor for a one-year term.
- c. Three Budget Committee members for three-year terms.
- d. Two Library Committee members for three-year terms.
- e. One Director of SAD #28 and to also serve concurrently on the Five Town CSD School Board for a three-year term.
- f. One Director of SAD #28 and to also serve concurrently on the Five Town CSD School Board for a one-year term.

Explanation: This is the open elected position to be filled in the upcoming fiscal year, this article is the same every year however the positions may change. Don't be thrown off by the “Overseers of the poor” language this is the standard language for the election of the Select Board. The law has not caught up to be politically correct.

Articles 3 -9 are all amendments to the land use ordinance, article 10 is a change to the Harbor Ordinance.

Article 3. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance at Section 200 to update the Zoning Map, including clarifications of building footprint limitations in the 906 and 907 Mixed Business/Residential zoning districts,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This proposed amendment consists of striking the current 2013 Town of Rockport Zoning Map and replacing it with a new 2018 edition; and includes clarifications of building footprint limitations in the Section 906 and 907 Mixed Business/Residential zoning districts.

Article 4. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance at Section 300 to revise the definitions of Industrial, Medical Office, Tradesman’s Shop, and other uses,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: Some definitions are amended including Industrial, Medical Office, Tradesman Shops, Health Practitioners, and Light Industrial.

Article 5. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance at Section 917 to revise the uses for which a Special Exception is required in various zoning districts,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: The Deletion of “SE “Special Exception” and replacement with “P” Permitted for several uses in various zoning districts.

Article 6. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance at Sections 300 and 918 to revise the definition of Congregate Housing and to reduce the minimum lot area required per bedroom for this type of housing in various zoning districts,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: A revised definition of Congregate Housing strikes the word “elderly” so that all such housing is treated equally and a decrease in the minimum lot area required per bedroom, in Section 918-Dimensional table to increase the maximum density for congregate housing in various zoning districts.

Article 7. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance at Section 918 reducing the minimum lot area per dwelling unit for Multifamily uses connected to public sewer in various zoning districts,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: A reduction of the minimum lot area per multi family dwelling units which are connected to public sewer, to allow maximum density in various zoning districts.

Article 8. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance deleting and replacing Section 703.3 ‘Special Exceptions,’ with a new Section 919 ‘Conditional Uses,’ removing jurisdiction from the Zoning Board of Appeals to the Planning Board; simplifying criteria for approval, and making minor revisions for consistency with these changes throughout the Ordinance,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: The existing Special Exception category currently administrated by the Board of Appeals is deleted and replaced by a new section “Conditional Uses” administered by the Planning Board. The Table of permitted uses is amended to reflect this change.

Article 9. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Land Use Ordinance, making minor corrections and clarifications throughout,” be enacted?

Planning Board Votes: 6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This article includes minor clean-up editing throughout the land use ordinance.

Article 10. Shall an Ordinance entitled, “Ordinance amending the Town of Rockport Coastal Waters and Harbor Ordinance allowing ‘Special Exceptions’ from certain requirements upon a recommendation from the Harbor Committee and approval by the Select Board, and making minor revisions throughout,” be enacted.

Harbor Committee Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: A number of minor revisions area included throughout the ordinance. Section 506 Special Exceptions to the requirements of this chapter is added that would allow the Select Board to approve (upon recommendation of the harbor committee) a special exception to the boat length limit for mooring holders, allowing larger boats on moorings in the inner harbor.

Open Town Meeting Articles

These are the articles that are to be voted on at the meeting the day following the election at an open town meeting at the Rockport Opera House. For those interested the whole municipal budget it can be found at the Town’s website www.town.rockport.me.us, go to the Department’s tab, then to Finance, then current proposed budget and finally Select Board adopted budget. The page numbers for each article are listed at the bottom of the explanation of each article.

Article 11. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for General Government for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:

A.	Administration	\$40,725
B.	Town Manager	\$321,760
C.	Town Clerk	\$232,980
D.	Planning & Community Development	\$213,710
E.	Finance	\$146,096
F.	Assessing	\$228,102
G.	Town Office Building	\$159,302
H.	Insurance	\$72,128

Total.....\$1,414,803

Budget Committee Votes: 6 For, 1 Against, 1 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 3 For, 1 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This article contains all the budgets for the basic administrative functions of the Town. There were a few changes made in the upcoming budget. In the Town Manager’s budget, the biggest increase was because of the need to increase the deposit to the Employees Accrued Benefits Reserve. This reserve is used to fund accrued vacation time and sick time to an employee that leaves the town. We have several employees who are getting ready to retire and we needed to increase this for that reason. A big change made to the Planning and Community Development Department, is the Select Board decided to remove the position of a full-time Planner and Community Development Director and contract those services out instead, this resulted in a net reduction in this department. Other notable changes are in the Assessing Department, which increased based on the need for a new server to house the assessing software and an increase in the Town Office Budget to fund a generator for the building so that we are able to still provide services, should we lose power.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 83 to 134.

Article 12. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Public Assistance for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:

A. General Assistance\$27,145

Total.....\$27,145

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This department provides service to those in need in our town, sometimes also referred to as welfare. General Assistance is down by 0.7% which is based on changes in staff. The state reimburses the Town for 70% of the general assistance it awards.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 135 to 142.

Article 13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Public Safety for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:

A. Police Department\$631,563

B. Fire Department\$500,728

C. West Rockport Fire Station\$5,519

D. Other Public Safety Services\$318,567

E. Animal Control\$5,349

F. Harbormaster\$173,760

G. Public Safety Building\$34,755

H. Emergency Management\$3,060

Total.....\$1,673,301

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: The public safety portion of the budget is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all residents and visitors to Rockport. It includes the Police, Fire and other safety services. The overall public safety budget is up by 12.5% which can be attributed to the following factors: Police Department saw a 4% increase largely due to the additional costs of the two new police officers, which both come with training expenses that need to be paid, this increase is to pay for those training expense. These are not additional officers, we have the same number as last year.

The Fire Department saw an overall 11% increase in the budget and this is because of the need to purchase new hose for the department and also to start a radio reserve which will help us fund the purchase of new digital radios when the county decides they will require everyone to move to a digital model (currently use an analog type radio). Other Public Safety Services saw a substantial increase of 23.9%, the majority of this increase is because a new contract with North East Mobile Health Services (ambulance). The other departments did not experience much change this year.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 143 to 196.

Article 14.	To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Public Works for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:		
A.	Public Works	\$1,739,231	
B.	Sanitation	\$161,141	
	Total	\$1,900,372	
Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain		RECOMMEND	
Select Board Votes: 3 For, 1 Against, 0 Abstain		RECOMMEND	

Explanation: The Public Works budget is the largest single budget of all municipal budgets and covers all snow plowing and road maintenance and our obligations to the Mid-Coast Solid Waste facility. Overall the Public Works Department saw very little change in their annual budget, there is \$20,000 in the budget for sidewalk repair and replacement, a decrease in road construction of just over \$20,000 and an increase of just under \$50,000 so that we can repair the Oshkosh, which is the Town's only large 4WD plow truck, which is needed to plow many of the steep mountain roads the town owns.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 197 to 212.

Article 15.	To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Culture and Recreation for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:		
A.	Library	\$436,852	
B.	Conservation Commission.....	\$9,041	
C.	Parks	\$55,810	
D.	Opera House	\$115,325	
E.	Library Building (1 Limerock)	\$2,851	
F.	Recreation.....	\$54,950	
	Total	\$674,829	
Budget Committee Votes: 7 For, 1 Against, 0 Abstain		RECOMMEND	
Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain		RECOMMEND	

Explanation: Overall culture and recreation saw a decrease of 5.7%. New this year, we separated out Parks and Recreation, they each now have their own individual budgets. We did this for several reason but the main reason was to ensure that they money was being spent in the way in which it was intended. About 20% of the expenses for the Library are reimbursed to the Town from the Library Committee, the town is responsible for wages and benefits of the Library employees as well as some other contractual items.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 213 to 244.

Article 16.	To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Long Term Debt (Debt Payments) for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:	
A.	Debt	\$172,905
	Total.....	\$172,905
	Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain	RECOMMEND
	Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain	RECOMMEND

Explanation: In this article the debt is for items that have been previously approved by town voters. There are two projects that this debt payment funds and that is the work that was done to the Opera House in 2015 and the Infrastructure Bond that was approved in 2016.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 245 to 252.

Article 17.	To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for County Fees for the 2018/2019fiscal year:	
A.	County Service, E-911	\$65,984
B.	County Service, Dispatch	\$32,512
	Total.....	\$98,496
	Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain	RECOMMEND
	Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain	RECOMMEND

Explanation: These are for services that we pay for that are in addition to the annual county assessment. This covers the cost of dispatching for our Public Safety Providers and for E911 services.

If you would like more information on the individual departments, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 253 to 258.

Article 18. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Cemeteries and Special Assessments for the 2018/2019fiscal year:

A.	Cemeteries	\$75,708
B.	Special Assessments.....	\$6,800
	Total.....	\$82,508

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This article has changed slightly, when we separated Parks and Recreation and created a stand-alone recreation budget, we also moved the old RES budget which was in this article to the recreation budget, so now all recreation related expenses are in one budget. Also new this year, we removed Provider Agencies from this article and put that expense in its own stand-alone article to be voted on.

If you would like more information on the individual departments, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 261 to 266 (Cemeteries) and 271 to 272 (Special Assessments).

Article 19. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following for Provider Agencies for the 2018/2019fiscal year:

A.	Provider Agencies	\$3,500
	Total.....	\$3,500

Budget Committee Votes: 6 For, 2 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: The Select Board felt it would be good practice to have Provider Agencies be in their own warrant article, which has been done this year. This money is used to help support local non-profits with their efforts to provide services to the people of our community. The provider agencies that will be funded with this article include Broadreach Family & Community Services, New Hope for Woman, Penquis C.A.P, Inc. and Homeless Coalition.

If you would like more information on this article, you can find that in the Municipal budget on pages 267 to 268.

Article 20. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the following as Revenue from the following sources to be used in reducing the property tax assessment for the 2018/2019 fiscal year:

A.	General Government	\$1,105,191
B.	Public Assistance	\$12,880
C.	Public Safety	\$279,753
D.	Public Works	\$81,450
E.	Culture and Recreation.....	\$114,859
F.	All Other – Cemeteries.....	\$5,350
G.	Unassigned Fund Balance	\$345,765
H.	Special Assessments.....	\$127,000
Total		\$2,072,248

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This article is to approve all non-property tax expected revenues we collect. These revenues are used to reduce the amount in property taxes that property owners will need to pay.

For more information you can go to the Municipal budget and review each section.

Article 21. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the transfer of all unexpended balances to fund balance and to authorize the overdrafts that may occur in the Town operations in the 2018/2019 budget to be taken from fund balance?

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article and is voted on every year. It moves unexpended balances to the Unassigned Fund Balance and authorizes the Select Board to use monies from the Unassigned Fund Balance to pay for deficits in the upcoming fiscal year, if needed.

Article 22. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the payment of tax abatements and applicable interest from the property tax overlay account?

Budget Committee Votes: 8 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article and is voted on every year. It authorizes the Select Board to fund property tax abatements from the tax overlay account established as part of the tax committeemen process.

The tax overlay account is an amount of money set aside for property tax abatements, granted during the year, to residents for any error or changes in their assessment.

Article 23. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board, on behalf of the Town to sell and dispose of any real estate acquired by the Town for non-payment of taxes thereon, on such terms as they deem advisable, and to execute quit claim deeds for the property. The sale or disposal shall be made only after consultation with the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission, except for the purpose of clearing title or of reconveyance of real estate to the original owner or in the case of time-share units, reconveyance back to the original owner or the time-share estates association of unit owners; property to be disposed of by written policy and on terms the Select Board deem advisable.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that allows the Select Board to sell any property that becomes owned by the town because of non-payment of taxes.

Article 24. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board, on behalf of the Town to sell and dispose of any real estate acquired by the Town for non-payment of wastewater thereon, on such terms as they deem advisable, and to execute quit claim deeds for the property. The sale or disposal shall be made only after consultation with the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission, except for the purpose of clearing title or of reconveyance of real estate to the original owner. Property to be disposed of by written policy and on terms the Select Board deem advisable.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that allows the Select Board to sell any property that becomes owned by the town because of non-payment of wastewater fees.

Article 25. To see if the Town will vote to set October 15, 2018 and April 16, 2019 as the tax installment due dates.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that sets the dates in which property taxes are due.

Article 26. To see if the Town will vote to set October 16, 2018 and April 17, 2019 as the tax delinquency dates and to fix the rate of interest on delinquent taxes at 7.00% interest per year.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that sets the dates in which interest will start to accrue on unpaid property taxes.

Article 27. To see if the Town will vote to fix the rate of interest on delinquent wastewater charges at 7.00% interest per year.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that sets the dates in which interest will start to accrue on unpaid wastewater fees.

Article 28. To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board and Treasurer, on behalf of the Town, to accept gifts, real estate, and certain funds, including trust funds, that may be given or left to the Town.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that allows the Select Board to accept donations that are given or left to the Town.

Article 29. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to accept those conservation easements which the Select Board deem appropriate in the name of the Town of Rockport, provided however, said conservation easements are first considered by the Rockport Conservation Commission and Planning Board.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that allows the Select Board to accept conservation easements that are given or left to the Town.

Article 30. To see if the Town will authorize the Treasurer to waive the foreclosure of tax lien mortgages pursuant to 36 M.R.S.A. sec. 944 upon a finding by the Select Board that ownership of the property subject to the lien would be contrary to the Town's best interest.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is an annual “housekeeping” article that allows the Select Board to waive the foreclosure fees if it is deemed to not be in her best interest of the Town.

Article 31. To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board to enter into boundary line agreements with abutting property owners to establish the boundary line of any property of the Town, including the boundary lines of the rights-of-way of roads.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

RECOMMEND

Explanation: This is another annual "housekeeping" article that allows the Town to adjust boundary lines between town owned properties and private property when it is in the town's interest to do so.

Article 32. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Tax Collector to enter into a standard agreement with taxpayers establishing a "tax club" payment plan for commercial and/or residential real estate property taxes, whereby:

- (1) The taxpayer agrees to pay specified monthly payments to the Town based on his/her estimated and actual tax obligation for current year real estate property taxes;
- (2) The Town agrees not to charge interest on timely payments made pursuant to the tax club agreement;
- (3) The Town authorizes the collector to accept tax club payments for current year taxes which may be due prior to the commitment of those taxes;
- (4) The agreement is automatically terminated if a scheduled payment is late, and the taxpayer then becomes subject to the same due date(s) and interest date(s) and rate as other taxpayers who are not participating in the tax club;
- (5) Only taxpayers who do not have outstanding tax obligations for prior tax years are eligible to participate in the tax club program; and
- (6) Taxpayers wishing to participate in the tax club for a particular property tax year shall enter an agreement with the Town by a publicly-advertised deadline determined by the Tax Collector.

Select Board Votes: 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain

Explanation: This is an annual "housekeeping" article that allows the Tax Collector to enter into standard payment agreements for taxes.