

# Guidelines for Effective Presentations at Town Meeting

## from the Town Meeting Coordinating Committee

Here is some advice on how to make a visual presentation that all 200+ people in the auditorium and the at-home television audience can see.

**Preparation:** Visuals may include maps, charts, graphs, drawings, photos, and short pieces of text. If you need to show a great deal of text, use a handout instead.



- Wait to start speaking until **after** all the preparations below are completed. The time limit – 3 minutes for comment, 5 minutes for making or amending a motion – begins when you start speaking. You may want to have an assistant to put the visuals on the screen for you while you speak to save time. If you start to speak and experience technical problems, it could adversely affect your time allotment.
- **Make the text easy to read in a large font size.** Use bullet points rather than prose. Color shows up well. **Contrasting elements can be more visible.**
- Do not read what's also written on the screen. The screen should illustrate the points you make.
- A computer presentation format like PowerPoint works well or a shareware equivalent, like Impress, which is available from [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) for free. A computer projector and an overhead projector are available, plus a laser pointer, adaptors for a Mac computers, iPads, and iPhones, and a remote slide advancer if the presentation is loaded ahead of time onto the available staff computer.

The **overhead projector** (also called a digital imager) is useful for showing material on paper or cardboard, or small three-dimensional objects. It will take any kind of paper. Transparencies are not recommended.



- Try to keep the document either square-shaped or in a landscape 3 by 4 ratio so that at full size the entire document is visible on the screen. Place the document face **up** in the center of the 14" x 14" glass plate. The projector has a zoom feature to adjust the size displayed on the big screen.
- Text, drawings, photographs, and maps work well. Poor photos do little to support your point. Use photos taken at a high resolution. Dense text from a book or newspaper is likely to be too small. Juggling images during a presentation can be difficult and distracting. Ask a colleague for help with the overhead.
- There's a switch on the table in front of the podium that can be used to switch between the overhead projector and the computer projector. A seated committee member will help.

A **computer projector** is also available to show visual materials prepared as a set of electronic slides or a power point (PPT). You may bring a flash drive or a CD/DVD to run on the available computer, or you may bring in your own laptop, either a PC or a Mac; if it is a Mac you can use the available adaptor. You can also use your iPad 2 (or newer) or an iPhone 4 (or newer).

- If you have questions about the equipment you may contact the Town's Director of Information Technology (IT), Kris Pacunas, at 259-3222 or <[pacunask@amherstma.gov](mailto:pacunask@amherstma.gov)>.

You can send the presentation ahead of time to Kris, Debra Roussel at 259-3001 <[rousseld@amherstmas.gov](mailto:rousseld@amherstmas.gov)> and to Debbie Gordon <[gordond@samherstma.gov](mailto:gordond@samherstma.gov)>, since they operate the computers at Town Meeting.

- Come early to Town Meeting and let the IT staff know you have a presentation and they will help you set it up; they arrive at 6:45 PM. You can request the chance to practice your presentation.
- If you want to show a video, remember the time limits and consult the IT staff first. No sound will be available unless your video is on a DVD playable **on** a DVD player.

Remember, when using the laser pointer don't aim it at any person.



## Rules for Speaking at Town Meeting

**Who May Speak:** Anyone can ask to speak at Town Meeting, not just Town Meeting members.

a) **Amherst residents who are not Town Meeting members** can come early and get a visitor sticker at the check-in desk and then can ask the Moderator to be recognized. The Moderator <[moderator@amherstma.gov](mailto:moderator@amherstma.gov)> can be contacted in advance of the Town Meeting during which the resident wishes to speak or they can come at 6:45 pm on that night to speak to the Moderator. The visitors who wish to speak are normally asked to line up at the rear of the aisle furthest from the check-in table.

b) **People who are not from Amherst** who have a particular interest or information to share on a specific article can also speak if Town Meeting, after a vote called by the Moderator, approves allowing them time to speak. Such people should also contact the Moderator in advance of that Town Meeting.



**Getting Called On:** You must be recognized by the Moderator before you can make any remarks, motions, or amendments. There is no guarantee you will be recognized. When the Moderator calls on you, stand up and announce your name and precinct number. If speaking from your seat, wait till you receive the portable microphone.

- **Speaking to a Motion:** You have **only three minutes** if you are commenting on an article or advocating for or against it.
- **Making or Amending a Motion:** If you are making a motion, you will have **five minutes** to address your motion. Be aware that you must make your motion first, and then the five minutes begins once you address your motion. If you start speaking first you lose your chance to make the motion. It is helpful to provide 4 copies of your motion.
- If possible, time your remarks before you come. If you feel you need more time, you have to request it of the Moderator before you begin speaking. He will ask permission of the assembled members to grant an extension. Don't count on getting the extension! Have a shorter version ready.
- A timer will start when you begin to speak, and you will be able to see how much time you have remaining on the podium's timer as you talk. Make sure the microphone is adjusted so you can speak directly into it. If you have a visual presentation you will need to speak from the podium. Remember to speak into the microphone with a sustained volume throughout your presentation.

