



Cape Cod Civic Advocacy Guide

Understanding Your Government and How to Influence It

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What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the act of speaking on behalf of or in support of another person, place, or thing. This Guide deals with advocacy for an issue that you care about.

Lobbying is the act of talking to elected officials about the merits of your position on an issue. Your goal is to influence their position through your knowledge of and passion for the issue. Paid lobbyists and special interest groups aggressively seek to influence public policy, but the same message has a different impact coming from a student—and future voter—in the district. Students have a unique opportunity to educate our elected officials about the views of new or future voters.

Grassroots advocacy refers to common or ordinary people joining together for a specific cause. Grassroots advocacy includes organizing, mobilizing, and engaging the public to advance the cause. Students may start a grassroots movement or join grassroots organizations already in existence.

Media advocacy is a means to get your message out to the public, beyond government officials and those already engaged in the issue. Individuals, grassroots organizations, candidates, officials, etc., all use media to reach the public at large, hoping to gain broad support for their cause. You should explore different types of media that reach fellow students but also go beyond your own peer groups.

What Is Your Issue?

Your issue can be anything that is controlled by the government that you think should be changed. Before deciding on an issue, consider some practical questions, such as:

How can a change be made (e.g., enacting a constitutional amendment, passing a law, changing a policy)? Are others working on this issue (e.g., advocacy groups and individuals)?

State Government

Massachusetts Government



Massachusetts State House, Boston

The Massachusetts legislature, or General Court, is the primary author of laws enacted in Massachusetts. It is a two-chambered body; the Senate has 40 members and the House of Representatives has 160 members, all of whom are elected to concurrent two-year terms in November of even-numbered years.

The official website of the Massachusetts General Court is malegislature.gov. Here you will find listings of legislators, bills and laws, and hearings and events. Many hearings and

events are livestreamed and recorded.

Each two-year legislative session begins on the first Wednesday in January of an odd-numbered year and ends on the day before the beginning of the next session. Most of the active work on legislation, however, is completed by the last day of the formal session, July 31 of an even-numbered year.

Most legislation is submitted to the House or Senate Clerk's office on or before 5:00 p.m. on the third Friday in January. Any citizen may submit a proposal for a law to a legislator and request the legislator's support in submitting it as a bill. In the weeks prior to filing, caucuses are held in which sponsors seek other legislators to cosponsor their bills.

Bills are given House or Senate numbers, assigned to a joint committee, and sent to the non-initiating chamber for agreement and committee assignment. Once a bill is submitted to a joint committee, that committee must hold a public hearing on the bill; interested parties may attend and submit oral and/or written testimony. Most bills must be reported out of joint committees by a deadline, set by the legislature, early in the second year of the session to remain active in that session.

Following the public hearing, the committee will deliberate in Executive Session and make its recommendation to the body that initiated the bill. Their options are: 1) ought to pass; 2) ought not to pass; 3) ought to pass as changed; 4) discharge to another committee; 5) refer for a study order. (A study order authorizes the committee to create a subcommittee to study the bill during recess and file a report on its findings, but this is often a quiet way to kill a bill.) Frequently, the bill number will change during this process and subsequent deliberations.

Once a bill is out of the joint committee, a series of reviews by House and/or Senate committees occurs. Bills can be held up or die in these committees, particularly the Ways and Means Committee. With a positive vote ("passed to be engrossed"), the bill is sent to the non-initiating body. The non-initiating chamber places the bill on its calendar to be discussed and voted on. Both chambers must deliver a positive vote on the same bill. If the second chamber alters the initiating chamber's bill, a conference committee is formed to work out a bill that both branches will adopt.

Once both branches have "passed to be engrossed" the identical bill, it is sent to the Engrossing Division for the official printing. The bill is then sent first to the House and then the Senate for enactment. The engrossed bill may be debated and rejected (but not amended) in either chamber, but this is usually just a formality.

The final step is for the governor to either sign or veto the bill. A two-thirds vote of both houses of the legislature is required to override a gubernatorial veto. You can find out what [bills are on the governor's desk](#).

Developing an Advocacy Strategy

An advocacy strategy describes how you will persuade the policymakers to support your issue, ideas, or a specific course of action. The strategy should focus on identifying your key messages and how you will deliver them to your elected officials through lobbying, grassroots campaigns, and media strategies.

Advocating at the State Level

Lobbying Legislators

Lobbying involves direct contact with legislators, usually from your own district. Each resident has two state legislators—a Senator and a Representative. Attending in-person meetings at the State House, in-person meetings in the district, or remote meetings, and mailing letters, sending email, or telephoning can all be effective ways of lobbying. Legislators' staff count all communications, particularly those from constituents. However, legislators and their staff tell us that some forms of communication are more effective than others.

Common sense and practical considerations are the best guides for how best to communicate with your legislators. Each legislator's staff may also be able to give you some guidance. If you have a lot of information to share, written communication may be most effective. If time is of the essence, a phone call or email may be best. When calling your legislator's office, it is likely that you will speak to a staff member.

A first contact with a legislator or staff member can be the beginning of an ongoing, productive relationship. A thank-you note when your legislator takes the action you requested or just takes the time to meet or discuss an issue with you helps build a relationship. Even if you disagree with your legislator on one issue, you may be able to work together on another.

Contact information for legislators may be found at malegislature.gov where there is also a tool to find your two state legislators by entering your zip code. Most legislators also have their own website and social media sites.

Before Contacting Your Legislators

KNOW YOUR "ASK": Be specific about what you are asking your legislators to do. Would you like them to sponsor, cosponsor, contact committee chairs, report bill out of committee favorably, bring the bill to the floor for a vote, vote yes, etc.

- Do your research before attending a meeting, sending an email, or making a phone call.
 - Know who the lead sponsor of the bill is, if the elected official is a cosponsor or supporter, and who or what organizations endorse the proposal.
 - Determine the current status of the bill by checking malegislature.gov.
- Share your personal story/experience in the topic area.
 - Why is this important to you?
 - How would this impact you and your community?
- Be kind.
 - Thank legislators and staff for their support on other bills and for their time.
 - Staff are your friends! Ask for their contact information and follow up after the

- meeting.
- Always send a thank-you.

Lobbying by Phone, Email, or Letter

A telephone call or an email to your legislator is a quick and simple way to lobby for a bill or issue. Telephone and email contacts can be found at malegislature.gov. All you need to say is who you are, where you live, and why you are calling. It is useful to include the bill number.

Sample Phone Conversation

Receptionist: Good morning. Senator Joan Smith's office.

You: Hi. My name is Jane Q. Public, and I live at 100 Main Street in Hometown.

Receptionist: May I help you?

You: I am calling to urge Senator Smith to vote for Senate Bill [number], which [does what?] [example: requires lunch be provided free for all elementary school students].

Receptionist: I will let the senator know. You: Thank you. Good-bye.

Receptionist: Good-bye.

Sample Short Email

Dear Senator Smith,

I am writing to urge you to vote for Senate Bill [number], which [does what?] [example: requires lunch be provided free for all elementary school students].

[Write briefly about your personal reason for supporting the issue if you have one.]

Thank you, Jane Q. Public
100 Main Street, Hometown

Writing a Letter or More Detailed Email (legislators will be impressed!)

When you write to elected officials, remember to:

- Address only one issue per document.
- Include a succinct and relevant subject line.
- Add your contact information (street address, email address, and phone number).
- Refer to and describe the bill.
- Be clear about what you are asking for.
- State the reasons for your position.
- Humanize the issue.
- Thank the legislator for his or her attention to the matter.
- Use official titles in both letters and emails:
 - A letter should be addressed formally (e.g., The Honorable John Smith, title, and official address).
- Emails should start: Dear Senator, Representative, Governor, Mayor, Councilwoman, etc.
- Include or attach fact sheets or other support documentation, but don't overwhelm

them.

Form letters are online forms or suggested email text written and distributed by an advocacy group to many people. These may be the least effective form of communication, but they do save time and express your views. Most form letters offer the opportunity to alter the message to make it more personal, so take the time to do that when you can.

Lobbying by Meeting with Legislator(s) (in-person or remotely)

Arranging a Meeting

If your legislator has scheduled “office hours” in town, follow directions or arrange to meet there. For other in-person or remote meetings in the district or at the State House, call the legislator’s office to request a meeting. State your name, address, and the purpose of the meeting. Staff often ask the bill’s number so the legislator can be prepared, so be sure to have the [current number](#).

During the Meeting

- Thank the legislator(s) and staff for meeting with you and for attending your presentation.
- Be relatively brief, no more than 30 minutes.
- Share personal experiences that shed light on this issue: Why does your issue matter to you?
- State key reasons for your views.
- Refer to specific bill numbers.
- Provide a fact sheet and other support documentation (in moderation) to leave with the legislator. Include your name, business card, or other identifying material so they will remember you and your issue. Be aware that your legislator may not be familiar with your bill.
- Is the legislator a cosponsor? Does the legislator support the bill(s)?
- If YES, thank the legislator for his or her support and ask for the next step in the legislative process.
- If NO or not yet, ask the legislator for his or her support.
- Counter any arguments the opposition may use.
- If you are comfortable doing so, take a photo of you and your fellow lobbyists with your legislator. Post it on social media, and tag the legislator.
- Thank the legislator for taking the time to meet with you.

After the Meeting

- Send a thank-you via email or follow-up communication.
- Tweet a thank-you to your legislator.

Grassroots Advocacy

Grassroots advocacy refers to common or ordinary people joining together for a specific cause. Grassroots advocacy includes organizing, mobilizing, and engaging the public to advance the cause. Students may start a grassroots movement or participate through grassroots

organizations already in existence.

A grassroots organization develops a strategic advocacy plan that includes multiple actions, high visibility, and mobilizing large numbers of people.

A strategic plan of action and advocacy may include:

- Employing lobbying techniques outlined in the section above
- Attending committee hearings (wearing visible stickers or t-shirts)
- Organizing or attending lobby days together
- Creating sample letters to the editor or op-eds for local newspapers
- Planning rallies, marches, or other high-visibility events
- Maintaining a social media and web presence for members and the public
- Holding public forums to educate and/or advocate
- Joining with other grassroots organizations to advocate for specific common goals

To organize a new group, you can:

- Organize a group of students or residents to strategize about advocating for an issue
- Ask friends, neighbors, and colleagues to join your organization
- Use media opportunities to build a larger group
- Send a press release about the formation of the group to the local newspapers and local cable news stations
- Develop a logo, tagline, and mission
- Prepare your strategy for action and advocacy

Media Advocacy

Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

Opinion pieces (or op-eds) and letters to the editor are mechanisms to get your opinions printed. Generally, op-eds are longer than letters, and often (although not always) letters respond to a published article or editorial. **Check the target publication to determine the rules and word limits prior to preparing your submission.**

Op-Eds

Op-ed is an abbreviation for “opposite the editorial page” because in printed newspapers they often appeared on a page facing the editorial page. Op-eds express the opinion of the author on a particular issue and offer an excellent opportunity for you to advance your message. Even if your op-ed is not published, it can be posted on your own website or Google Drive and shared on social media.

The following are some tips for writing and submitting an op-ed that will increase your chances of getting it published:

- Determine your goal. What do you want to achieve through your op-ed? Do you want people to take a specific action?
- When drafting your op-ed, make sure that you are familiar with the types of pieces that are generally published in the paper, and be sure to focus on the topic’s significance to the community.
- Look up the rules for submitting a piece to the paper (word counts, methods of

submission, and other factors vary depending on the newspaper).

- Select one message to communicate.
- Be controversial or thought provoking.
- Illustrate how the topic or issue affects readers. Put a face on the issue by starting your essay with the story of someone who has been affected or begin with an attention-getting statistic.
- Describe the problem and why it exists. This is often where you can address the opposing viewpoint and explain your perspective.
- Offer your solution to the problem and explain why it's the best option.
- Conclude on a strong note by repeating your message or stating a call to action.
- Add one or two sentences at the end that include your name and title and describe your credentials as they relate to the topic (if any).

Letters to the Editor

You can use letters to the editor to correct or interpret facts in response to an inaccurate or biased article, to explain the connection between a news item and your priority issues, or to praise or criticize a recent article or editorial. Whatever your purpose, your letter will reach many people in your community—without exception, the letters section is one of the most highly read segments of newspapers and magazines.

In the first paragraph of your letter, refer to the article or position that you are writing about. If it is in reference to a particular article, name the reporter who wrote the article, the date, and the title of the article. State why you disagree, and then give your position on that issue.

Letters to the editor should be short and pithy. Most letters should be under 200 words. The first sentence is often the most important. Letters should be concise, informative, and personal at the same time.

For larger papers, such as *The Boston Globe* or *Boston Herald*, letters to the editor generally respond to published articles, editorials, or op-eds. The key to getting your letter published is making sure that it is timely. Ideally, you would submit a letter to the editor within 24 hours after the piece you're responding to appeared.

For smaller papers, such as *The Falmouth Enterprise* or *Cape Cod Times*, letters can be about any topic and do not have to be related to something previously published. Use the same guidance listed under op-eds, but your letter must be shorter. The *Enterprise* has a 550-word limit and the *Times* has a 250-word limit.

For examples of published Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor, see the Needham LWV Appendix which can be downloaded at <https://lwv-needham.org/nhs-civics-projects/>.

Social Media and Websites

Social media reaches a different audience than the traditional media options discussed above. Social media allows you to be creative with graphics, short videos, and political cartoons. A social media post may link to a fact sheet, a call to action, or an editorial for those wanting

more details.

A website advocating for a bill, or an issue is a good place to present longer material, such as fact sheets, links to further information, op-eds, information about supporting organizations, etc. Social media posts can lead people to your website.

Advocating at the Local Level

Forms of Local Government

Knowledge about how your local city or town government functions is key to advocating for issues that you care about. The Massachusetts State Constitution outlines how cities and towns govern. There is a distinction between the governance structures for city and town forms of government.

Cities

To adopt a city form of government you must have a population of at least 12,000 people. If you do, the local voters **can** adopt a city form of government. If a community has 12,000 or more citizens, while it can operate under a city form of government, the community does not have to call itself a city. In Massachusetts 59 cities and towns operate with this form of government. Cities generally have a town or city council with either an appointed Town Manager/Administrator or an elected Mayor. City Council members are elected.

The only example of this on Cape Cod is Barnstable. Currently, there are over 48,000 people living in Barnstable. In 1989 the voters changed the town charter and adopted a city form of government. However, Barnstable still calls itself a town.

Towns

Towns typically have an Open or Representative Town Meeting that serves as a larger legislative body and a three to five member elected Select Board that serves as its executive body with an appointed Town Manager or Administrator. Select Board members are elected. In Massachusetts 291 towns have this form of government. In an Open Town Meeting, any citizen of voting age can vote. In a Representative Town Meeting, only the elected Town Meeting Representatives can vote. Town Meeting Representatives are elected positions. On Cape Cod, only Falmouth has a Representative Town Meeting. All other towns on the Cape have an Open Town Meeting.

Differences Between Cities and Towns

The Legislative Body

- In towns with an Open Meeting or Representative Town Meeting structure, the Town Meeting is the legislative body. Voters approve or reject articles (proposals) that are placed on the Town Meeting Warrant (agenda).
- In cities with a Council structure, the Council is the legislative body. Councils pass local legislation known as ordinances.

The Executive Function

- In towns with an Open Meeting/Representative Town Meeting structure and a Select Board, the Select Boards are the Chief Executive in town. The appointed Town Administrator or Manager is responsible for the day to day administration of town services and business.
- In cities, the Mayor or Town Manager is the Chief Executive Officer.

Roles and Responsibilities in the City Form of Government

Town/City Council and Manager

This is the typical form of government in large and small cities, including those who continue to call themselves a town despite their size. The town or city council members are elected by the registered voters in the city or town. The town or city is often divided into precincts. The registered voters in each precinct elect the person who will represent them on the council. The council appoints the town manager as the chief executive officer who manages and oversees the day-to-day operations of the Town. These duties are usually outlined under the charter. Most often the administration of all town fiscal, business and municipal affairs are vested in the executive branch headed by the town manager. The town staff report to the town manager.

Cities may also have other boards or commissions that operate independently of the council. School committees are a great example as across Massachusetts they do not operate under the authority of the city or town. School committee members are elected by the registered voters in every community.

Roles and Responsibilities in the Town Form of Government

Select Board and Town Administrator (sometimes called the Town Manager)

This is the typical form of government in most towns. The select board operates as the town's executive body. They are elected by the registered voters in the town. Their major role is to set policy, authorize bylaws, set the strategic direction and recommend a budget to the voters at the town meeting. They may from time to time hear appeals that cannot be resolved at lower levels. Their legal responsibilities are identified in state laws, local bylaws, their home rule charter, and any special acts that may have been enacted by the town meeting body. The select board hires the town administrator. The day-to-day operations are delegated to the town administrator who oversees various town departments. It is important to note that other boards such as the planning board, board of health, and school committees may have more authority over certain aspects of the town than the Select Board.

Note from MA Municipal Association website: historically, most "Select Boards" were known as a "Board of Selectmen," but towns have been gravitating to the gender-neutral term over the past decade or so. Currently, about two-thirds of these boards use the term "Select Board" and about one-third use "Board of Selectmen."

Citizen Participation in City Government

In a city form of government, the Town/City Council is the legislative body and therefore

citizens who wish to influence legislation or policy should present their proposals to the Town/City Council.

City Committees and Commissions

Cities are always looking for citizens to participate in appointed committees. Look for opportunities on your town website and for information about applying to serve.

Citizen Participation in Town Government

Open Town Meeting

All registered voters of a town are eligible to vote. This body acts as the town's legislature. Typically, town meetings are held annually in the spring. This aligns with the town's fiscal year which is July 1- June 30. The meeting may be held over several evenings. Some towns hold special town meetings in the fall to take care of any new business or other business that did not need to be conducted during the annual meeting.

Select Boards must issue a town meeting warrant with all the items (known as articles) that will be voted on at the meeting. There is a specific amount of time prior to holding the meeting that the town meeting warrant must be available to the voters. In most cases these are now posted online at each town's website for easy access.

Representative Town Meeting

These meetings are very similar to open town meetings with the major difference being that not all registered voters can participate. The voters in the town elect town meeting members. The Town of Falmouth, with just over 32,500 citizens, has a Select Board and 243-member elected representative town meeting. This is the only example of a representative town meeting on Cape Cod.

Citizen's Petition

If a citizen wishes to place an article on the Town Meeting Warrant, they must obtain a specified number of signatures supporting their petition and submit it to the town Select Board well before the Town Meeting. Therefore, citizens considering a petition are advised to check with your Town Clerk's office or Town Administrator's office to be aware of deadlines and procedures for submission. It is also advisable to seek advice from the Town Council on the correct wording of the petition.

Town Committees and Commissions

Towns are always looking for citizens to participate in appointed committees. Look for opportunities on your town website and for information about applying to serve.

General Online Resources for Cities and Towns

In Massachusetts there is an organization called the Massachusetts Municipal Association. This organization provides information and training for the leadership teams of local cities and towns. This includes Select Boards, Town Councils, and Town Administrators/Managers, Mayors, etc.

“For 40 years, the Massachusetts Municipal Association has been bringing municipal officials together to articulate a clear and united municipal message, to develop and advocate for unified policies and to share information and work together to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal service delivery. The MMA’s mission is to improve the effectiveness of local government in the Commonwealth. The MMA is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of cities and towns.”

[Local Government 101 - Massachusetts Municipal Association \(MMA\)](#)

[Massachusetts Select Board Handbook - Massachusetts Municipal Association \(MMA\)](#)

<https://www.mma.org/>

Advocating on Cape Cod

Directory Information

The directory information that follows provides details about Barnstable County's government and each town's government within the county. To be successful in advocating in your Cape town you need knowledge about how your local county and town government works. Most town meetings only happen once or twice a year. Following the correct channels to make change from the start will save you precious time in moving your concerns/changes forward. The people in your town hall can be very helpful in the appropriate steps to take. You may find it helpful to make an appointment with someone in town hall to talk with them about the process you need to follow. The directory information below is key to learning about your specific town.

Barnstable County Government



The purpose of Barnstable County Government is to provide regional services that support the 15 towns on Cape Cod. Regional planning is an asset to towns because the County can provide services that individual towns themselves would not be able to afford. Services and resources focus on issues and needs that the towns face in common.

The structure of Barnstable County Government is explained in the Barnstable County Charter. The charter calls for a legislative branch called the Assembly of Delegates which consists of one elected delegate from each of the 15 towns. The Executive Branch is the board of County Commissioners of which there are three elected officials representing the entire county. Their job is to supervise and direct all regional Cape Cod entities. The Barnstable County Administrator is the chief executive officer overseeing the day-to-day operation of all county departments.

The Barnstable County Charter also provides for a municipal petition process and a citizen petition process.

The **Barnstable County Commission** is the research arm of Barnstable County Government. The Cape Cod Commission was established as a regional land use planning, economic development, and regulatory agency with regulatory powers in 1990; although it is an agency of Barnstable County regional government, it is funded separately through the [Cape Cod Environmental Protection Fund](#) and supplemented by grants. The Commission has produced research reports that identifies data about key issues and recommendations that support individual town planning efforts in areas such as wastewater planning and affordable housing.

For further information see the County website at <https://www.capecod.gov/>

Town Name: Barnstable MA

Mailing Address: 367 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-862-4956

Fax: 508-862-4956

Email Address: email@town.barnstable.ma.us

Town Website: [Town of Barnstable-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Town Council/Town Manager

All legislative powers of the town shall be exercised by the town council. The administration of all town fiscal, business and municipal affairs shall be vested in the executive branch headed by the town manager. The Barnstable Town Council is a thirteen-member elected body. Each member is elected by the registered voters in their precinct. Meetings are held bi-monthly except in the months of July and August when only one meeting is held. On most agendas for Town Council meetings there is an opportunity for Public Comment. At the end of the Public Comment period there is an agenda item called "Council Response to Public Comment". The public comment period is not intended to be a dialogue. However, it is an opportunity to receive some feedback on the issue raised. In addition, you can submit concerns in writing. It does take time to receive a response. Finally, you can speak directly to the town council member who represents your precinct. Citizens are urged to join the various committees and commissions. In Barnstable there are more than thirty commissions, subcommittees, and boards. Each of the seven villages has a civic association that you can join.

Citizen Petitions: Initiative procedures shall be started by the filing of an initiative petition with the town clerk. The petition shall be addressed to the town council or the school committee, shall contain a request for passage of a particular measure set forth in the petition and shall be signed by not less than ten percent of the total number of voters. [Town of Barnstable, MA Citizen Relief Mechanisms](#)

Town Elections: Regular town elections shall be held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November of each odd-numbered year. There shall be no preliminary town elections.

Town Council

[Town of Barnstable-Town Council](#)

Town Manager

[Town of Barnstable-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Barnstable-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Barnstable-General Bylaws \(the Code\)](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Barnstable-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Barnstable-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Barnstable-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Bourne

Mailing address: 24 Penny Ave, Buzzards Bay, MA 02532

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-759-0600

Fax: 508-759-7980

Town Website: [Town of Bourne-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The Board meets on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM at the Bourne Memorial Community Center. Frequency of meetings varies and may not be every week. Meetings include a public comment period. The meetings are aired live when scheduled Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm on BCTV channel 15. Replays for the meetings are shown Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm, Saturdays at 2:00 pm and Tuesdays at 8:30 am. The Town Administrator provides reports to the Select Board on a regular basis during their scheduled meetings.

Citizen Petitions: A petition article is an article brought to Town Meeting for discussion and possible action by a citizen rather than by a Board or Committee of the Town. Any voter may bring a petition article on any topic that is relevant to action by the Bourne voters at open town meeting. Petitions for submission of a Citizen's Article may be obtained from the Town Administrator's Office or found on the website.

Town Meeting: First Monday in May

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Bourne-Select Board](#)

[Town of Bourne-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Bourne-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Bourne-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Bourne-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Bourne-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Bourne-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Brewster MA

Mailing Address: 2198 Main Street, Brewster MA 02631

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-896-3701

Fax: 508-896-8089

Email Address: Brewster@brewster-ma.gov

Town Website: [Town of Brewster-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

In addition to any notice required by the General Laws, the select board shall: post the town meeting warrant at town hall and at least 1 location in each precinct and make available sufficient copies of the warrant at the town meeting for all registered voters in attendance.

The select board shall, at least 1 week prior to the meeting, post the warrant for the town meeting on the town website and make the same available at town hall, and as required by general by-law or select board policy, at town facilities and other common locations throughout the town; provided, however, that failure to timely post the warrant on the website or to make such copies available no later than 1 week prior to the date of the town meeting shall not invalidate or otherwise affect the legality or validity of the actions taken at the town meeting.

Citizen Petitions: Any 10 registered voters of the town may secure, by written petition to the select board, the inclusion of an article for the warrant of any duly scheduled annual town meeting and not less 100 registered voters may secure the same for any duly scheduled special town meeting.

Town Meeting: First Monday in May

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Brewster-Select Board and Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Brewster-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Brewster-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Brewster-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Brewster-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Brewster-Boards and Committees](#)

Name: Chatham MA

Mailing Address: 549 Main Street, Chatham MA 02633

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-945-5105

Fax: 508-945-3550

Town Website: [Town of Chatham-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The legislative powers of the town shall be exercised by a town meeting open to all voters.

Except for procedural matters, all subjects to be acted on by town meeting shall be placed on warrants issued by the select board. The select board shall receive all petitions addressed to it which require the submission of particular subject matter to the town meeting in accordance with the laws of the commonwealth. All such requests for the inclusion of subjects shall be in writing but they shall not be required to conform to any particular style or form except that each request for a particular subject shall be submitted as a separate petition.

In addition to any notice required by the laws of the commonwealth, the select board shall cause the annual town meeting warrant to be mailed to each residence of one or more voters. Such distribution shall occur at least fourteen (14) days prior to the town meeting. Failure of a voter to receive such warrant shall not invalidate the action of the town meeting.

Citizen Petitions: Ten signatures of Chatham voters are required to add an item to the warrant.
[Citizen Petition Form](#)

Town Meeting: Second Monday of May

Town Elections: Within eight days of Town Meeting

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Chatham-Select Board](#)
[Town of Chatham-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Chatham-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Chatham-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Chatham-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Chatham-Town Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Commissions

[Town of Chatham-Boards and Commissions](#)

Town Name: Dennis MA

Mailing Address: 685 Route 134, South Dennis, MA 02660

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-394-8300

Fax: 508-394-8309

Email Address: The form at this link can be used to ask a question of the Select Board, Town Administrator or other Town Departments. [Staff Directory • Dennis, MA • CivicEngage](#)

Town Website: [Town of Dennis-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Administrator

The Town of Dennis has a five-member Select Board. They meet on Tuesdays at 4:30 pm in the Town Hall. Agendas for their meetings are posted on the town website. There is typically a public information period. However, this will not be a dialog with the Select Board. Warrants for town meetings shall be served by posting the attested printed or written copies thereof in each of the post offices in the town. Copies may be found online.

Citizen Petitions: All petitions for Articles to be inserted in the Annual Town Meeting warrant, signed by 10 or more legal voters with proper address, shall be delivered to the Town Clerk's office not later than 4:00 p.m. seven weeks prior to an Annual Town Meeting. All petitions for Articles to be inserted in the Special Town Meeting warrant, signed by 100 or more legal voters with proper address, shall be delivered to the Town Clerk's office not later than 4:00 p.m. seven weeks prior to a Special Town Meeting.

Town Meeting: First Tuesday after the first Monday in May

Town Elections:

[Election Information | Dennis, MA](#)

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Dennis-Select Board](#)

[Town of Dennis-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

The town of Dennis does not have a Charter. They use only their Bylaws as a governance document.

General Bylaws

[Town of Dennis-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Dennis-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Dennis-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Dennis-Boards and Committees](#)

Town name: Eastham MA

Mailing Address: 2500 State Highway, Eastham MA 02642

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-240-5900

Fax: 508-540-1291

Town Website: [Town of Eastham-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

Every town meeting shall be called by a warrant issued by the select board that shall state the time and place at which the town meeting is to convene and, by separate articles, the subjects that are to be acted upon. The select board shall prepare the warrant for all town meetings and, by public notice published in a local newspaper, shall advertise the date of the opening and closing of the warrant for all town meetings.

The warrant for the annual town meeting shall remain open for no less than 30 days. A notice of the availability of the warrant shall be published on the town website and in a local newspaper at least 14 days prior to any such town meeting. All said warrants shall also be posted in every post office in the town at least 14 days prior to any such town meeting and shall remain so posted until the date of the meeting.

Citizen Petitions: By written petition to the select board, 10 voters may secure the inclusion of an article in the warrant for the annual town meeting; provided, that such petition shall be submitted in accordance with by-laws governing town meeting warrants.

Town Meeting: First Monday in May

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Eastham-Select Board](#)
[Town of Eastham-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Eastham-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Eastham-General Bylaws](#)

Zoning bylaws

[Town of Eastham-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Eastham-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Commissions

[Town of Eastham-Boards and Commissions](#)

Town Name: Falmouth MA**Mailing Address:** 59 Town Hall Square, Falmouth, MA 02540**Town Hall Phone Number:** 508-548-7611**Fax:** 508-457-2511**Email Address:** switchbd@falmouthmass.us (This address can be used to email town hall.)**Town Website:** [Town of Falmouth-Official Website](#)**Type of Local Government: Representative Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager**

Falmouth is primarily governed by state law, its town charter, and general by-laws. It has a Representative Town Meeting with the Select Board and Town Manager serving as the overseeing entities. The legislative body of Falmouth's town government is the Representative Town Meeting. There are 243 (27 from each of 9 precincts), elected to staggered three-year terms. Town Meeting makes final decisions, subject to a referendum where all voters may vote. However, the Select Board as well as other boards, committees, and departments may have the authority to make or recommend policy decisions.

The Board and Committee members are generally Falmouth residents who are appointed or sometimes elected to their positions and who volunteer their time. Departments and Services are staffed by Falmouth employees.

Citizen Petitions: In addition, a group of Falmouth voters can propose an Article for Town Meeting. Petition forms can be obtained at the Town Hall. For a regular Town Meeting, signatures of at least 10 voters are required. The petition is then generally processed through the Town Clerk's office. Also, when the Town Meeting does not have the authority to act, a citizen's petition may be used to seek Town Meeting's views on an issue. Citizens' petitions should be carefully considered and discussed with town officials in advance to have the greatest chance of success.

Town Meeting: Annual TM after the first day of April; Annual fall TM after the first day of September
Dates chosen by Board of Selectmen

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Falmouth-Select Board](#)
[Town of Falmouth-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter/General Bylaws

[Town of Falmouth-Charter and General Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Falmouth-Zoning Bylaws](#)
[Town of Falmouth-Zoning Bylaw Handbook](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Falmouth-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Falmouth-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Harwich MA

Mailing Address: 732 Main Street, Harwich MA 02645

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-430-7514

Fax: no general number

Town Website: [Town of Harwich-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Administrator

Warrants for all town meetings shall be issued by the board of selectmen and opened and closed in accordance with the by-laws, chapter 1, article 1, part 1-101.1 2-2-2. The warrants for all town meetings shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the town at least 14 days before the meeting and shall be posted in a public place in every precinct in the town at least 14 days before the meeting.

Citizen Petitions: By written petition to the Board of Selectmen, any 10 voters of the town may secure the inclusion of a subject in a warrant for the annual town meeting. All articles to be inserted in the May Town Meeting shall be submitted in final form, in writing to the Selectmen no later than 12:00 noon on the second Friday in February.

Town Meeting: First Monday in May

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Harwich-Select Board](#)
[Town of Harwich-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Harwich-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Harwich-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Harwich-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Harwich-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Harwich-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Mashpee

Mailing Address: 16 Great Neck Road North, Mashpee, MA 02649

Town Hall Phone Number: (508) 539-1400

Fax: (508) 539-1142

Town Website: [Town of Mashpee-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The Office of the Select Board and the Town Manager is the administrative hub of Mashpee's Town Government. The five member Select Board serve staggered three-year terms. The Board is the chief goal setting and policy-making agency of the Town. It makes key financial decisions and presents recommended actions to Town Meeting voters. The Selectmen are responsible for establishing the warrant (agenda) for all Town Meetings and are also responsible for making appointments of town employees and members of appointed Boards and Committees. The Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager are appointed by the Select Board to be responsible to the Board for proper administration of all Town Affairs.

Citizen Petitions: The Board of Selectmen shall receive all petitions addressed to it which request the submission of particular subject matter to the Town Meeting, and which conform to the requirements of MGL C. 39, §10. All requests for the inclusion of subject matter shall be in writing but shall not otherwise be required to conform to any particular style or form, except that each request for a particular subject shall be submitted as a separate petition. (See Mashpee Home Rule Charter, Section 2-7a). Articles for the Spring Annual Town Meeting must be submitted by the second Monday in February each year. Articles for the Fall Town Meeting must be submitted by the second Monday in July each year. [Town of Mashpee-Citizen Petition Form](#)

Town Meeting: First Monday in May
Third Monday in October

Town Elections: First Saturday in May

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Mashpee-Select Board](#)
[Town of Mashpee-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Mashpee-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Mashpee-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Mashpee-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Mashpee-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Mashpee-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Orleans MA

Mailing Address: 19 School Street, Orleans MA 02653

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-240-3700

Fax: 508-240-3703

Town Website: [Town of Orleans-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The Town Meeting shall consider and act upon all Warrant articles including proposed By-laws, all proposed operating and capital budgets, bond and borrowing issues or any other financial proposals, and all amendments to the aforesaid. The Select Board shall prepare the Warrant for all Town Meetings, and by public notice posted on the town website and published in a news outlet of general circulation within the Town, shall advertise the date of the opening and closing of the Warrant for all Town Meetings. The opening of the Warrant shall be no less than ninety days prior to the date of the Annual Town Meeting. The Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting shall remain open for no less than thirty days and shall be closed at least sixty days prior to the date of the meeting.

Citizen Petitions: By written petition to the Select Board, any ten voters of the Town may secure the inclusion of an article for the Warrant of the Annual Town Meeting, provided that such petition shall be submitted at least sixty calendar days in advance of the date of such meeting.

Town Meeting: Second Monday of May

Town Elections: Third Tuesday of May

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Orleans-Select Board](#)
[Town of Orleans-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Orleans-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Orleans-Bylaws \(Code\)](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Orleans-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Orleans-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Orleans-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Provincetown MA

Mailing address: 260 Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA 02657

Telephone: 508-487-7000 **Fax:** 508-487-9560

Town Website: [Town of Provincetown, MA - Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open town meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

An Annual Town Meeting shall be held to consider and act upon, with or without amendments, all proposed operating and capital improvement budgets, bond issues, and other financial proposals of the town. In addition, the Town Meeting shall address any other matters included in the Warrant. The Warrant is prepared by the Select Board and includes articles placed by the Select Board, the Town Manager, other Town Boards, or articles placed by citizen petition.

The Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting shall be opened at least sixty days (60) prior and closed thirty (30) days prior to the date of the Town Meeting. The Warrant shall be posted on the Town's website within two (2) business days of closing and shall be provided to the registered voters of the Town by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the Town at least fourteen (14) days prior to Town Meeting, and in printed form in the office of the Town Clerk. As an alternative to publication in a local newspaper, the Warrant may be mailed at least fourteen (14) days prior to a Town Meeting to the last known address on file the registered voters of the Town.

Citizen Petitions: Citizens may petition to place an article on the Warrant if it is signed by ten registered voters of the Town. For Special Town Meetings the threshold for a petition is higher, requiring one hundred registered voters of the Town.

Town Meeting: First Monday of April.

Town Elections: Second Tuesday of May

Select Board

[Town of Provincetown-Select Board](#)

Town Administrator

[Town of Provincetown-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Provincetown-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Provincetown-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Provincetown-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Provincetown-Town Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Provincetown-Town Boards](#)

Town Name: Sandwich

Mailing Address: 100 Rt 6A, Sandwich, 02563

Town Hall Phone Number: 508.888.4910. **Fax:** 508.888.2497

Email Address: No email. To contact, fill out online form

Town Website: [Town of Sandwich-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The municipal form of government for Sandwich consists of a Town Meeting open to all voters and is held annually the first Monday of May. The Board of Selectmen serves as the chief policy-making body and executive board of the Town. They appoint a Town Manager to carry out the day-to-day operations of the Town and appoint members of various standing committees. The Board meets at least twice a month, typically every other Tuesday at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall auditorium. The Board of Selectmen is responsible for setting guidelines for the preparation of the annual budget and to present the budget to the Town Meeting.

Citizen Petitions: The Board of Selectmen shall receive all petitions addressed to it which require the submission of a particular subject matter to the town meeting in accordance with the General Laws. Ten (10) signatures shall be required on a petition to have an article inserted in the warrant for an annual town meeting, and 100 signatures shall be required on a petition to have an article inserted in a warrant for a special town meeting.

[Town of Sandwich-Citizens Petition Form](#)

Town Meeting: First Monday of May

Town Elections: Set by Board of Selectmen

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Sandwich-Select Board](#)
[Town of Sandwich-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Sandwich-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Sandwich-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Sandwich-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Sandwich-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Sandwich-Boards and Committees](#)

Town Name: Truro MA

Mailing Address: 24 Town Hall Road, P.O. Box 2012, Truro MA 02666

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-349-7004

Fax: 508-394-5505

Town Website: [Town of Truro-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The legislative powers of the Town shall be vested in a Town Meeting which shall consider and act upon, with or without amendments, all operating budgets, capital budgets, bond issues or other financial matters, all proposed By-laws or amendments to By-laws, and any other business which may properly come before it. The warrant for the Town Meeting shall be prepared by the Select Board.

The Select Board shall ensure that the warrant is posted, and sufficient copies are available at least 14 days before the date of a Town Meeting. Posting shall be made by the Constable in Town Hall, the United States Post Offices, and two other public places in Truro and two other public places in North Truro. The warrant shall be made available to the voters at Town Hall, the Central School, the Public Library, the Transfer Station and on the Town of Truro Website and any other locations deemed appropriate by the Select Board.

Citizen Petitions: A petition on an approved form and signed by ten registered voters of the Town shall secure inclusion of an article in the warrant of the Annual Town Meeting. The warrant shall be opened for submission of articles 90 days before the date of the Annual Town Meeting and shall remain open for 30 days.

Town Meeting Date: Last Tuesday of April **Town Elections:** Second Tuesday of May

Select Board/Town Manager

[Town of Truro-Select Board](#)
[Town of Truro-Town Manager](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Truro-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Truro-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Truro-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Truro-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Truro-Boards](#)

Town Name: Wellfleet MA

Mailing Address: 300 Main Street, Wellfleet MA 02667

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-349-0300

Fax: 508-349-3005

Town Website: [Town of Wellfleet-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Manager

The Annual Town Meeting shall convene annually on the fourth Monday in April in each year, unless otherwise provided by bylaw or by action of the Selectboard, to act upon annual operating, enterprise and capital budgets, other financial matters, and to consider and act upon such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

The Warrant for each town meeting incorporating therein the appropriate recommendations, shall be prepared by the Select board and made available to residents of the Town at least fourteen days prior to the scheduled date of said town meeting.

The Annual Town Meeting shall not be held earlier than fourteen days after the date on which a constable certifies that copies of the Warrant have been posted in two or more public places in the Town including the Wellfleet Post Office and the South Wellfleet Post Office, and have deposited with the Town Administrator printed copies of the Warrant of a number not less than the number of voters of the Town.

Citizen Petitions: Any ten voters of the Town may secure the inclusion of an article in the Warrant of an annual town meeting by submitting a written petition to the Select board and filing it with the Town Clerk. The written petitions submitted under Section 2-4-1 shall be submitted at least sixty days prior to the date of an annual town meeting.

Town Meeting: Fourth Monday in April

Town Elections: First Monday after Town Meeting

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Wellfleet-Select Board](#)
[Town of Wellfleet-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Wellfleet-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Wellfleet-General Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Wellfleet-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Wellfleet-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Wellfleet-Boards](#)

Town: Yarmouth, MA

Mailing Address: 1146 Route 28, South Yarmouth, MA 02664

Town Hall Phone Number: 508-398-2231 Ext. 1270 **Fax:** 508-398-2365

Email Address: [Staff Directory • Yarmouth Town Government Directory](#)

Town Website: [Town of Yarmouth-Official Website](#)

Type of Local Government: Open Town Meeting-Select Board-Town Administrator

The Town of Yarmouth has a five-member Select Board. The members of the Board are elected at-large for three-year overlapping terms. No Selectman may hold any other elected town office. The Board of Selectmen shall hold at least two regularly scheduled meetings per month. During these meetings there is a “public information” agenda item where citizens can speak, but as with other boards, they will listen, but may not comment.

The Board of Selectman shall serve as the chief executive goal setting and policy making agency of the town, and as such shall appoint an administrator to carry out the policies of the board. Members of the Board of Selectmen shall possess no individual authority unless such authority shall have previously been granted by a vote of the said Board of Selectmen.

Citizen Petitions: By written petition to the board of selectmen, ten voters may secure the inclusion of an article in the warrant for the annual town meeting. By written petition to the board of selectmen, any 100 voters may secure the inclusion of an article for the warrant of any special town meeting. By written petition to the board of selectmen, any 200 voters may require the calling of a special town meeting. All such petitions shall be submitted in accordance with the bylaw governing town meeting warrants.

Town Meeting: Last Tuesday in April

Town Elections: Third Tuesday in May

Select Board/Town Administrator

[Town of Yarmouth-Select Board](#)
[Town of Yarmouth-Town Administrator](#)

Town Charter

[Town of Yarmouth-Charter](#)

General Bylaws

[Town of Yarmouth-Bylaws](#)

Zoning Bylaws

[Town of Yarmouth-Zoning Bylaws](#)

Annual Reports

[Town of Yarmouth-Annual Reports](#)

Links to Town Boards and Committees

[Town of Yarmouth, MA-Boards, Committees, & Commissions](#)

Acknowledgements

The information in this guide has been compiled by the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area (LWVCCA). Most of the Cape towns are represented by this branch of the League. However, Falmouth has its own branch of the LWV. The Cape Cod Area League is grateful to the Falmouth and Needham Leagues for sharing their Student Advocacy Guides and allowing the use of information that they compiled for use in this guide.

There are 45 local Leagues in Massachusetts comprised of more than 3000 women and men. The League of Women Voters is a tri-level organization working at the national, state and local levels. LWV is a non-partisan organization whose mission is to empower voters and strengthen democracy.