

Winchester Town Meeting Communication Study Committee

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who established the Communications Study Committee?

- The 2021 Fall Town Meeting established the Committee under Article 31.

Why was the Committee established?

- “To address the dramatic changes that have taken place in the communications environment in the past 25 years. Today’s fractured media landscape has significantly changed how residents learn about the work of Town Meeting and the Town’s elected and appointed boards.” (Article 31)
- The Committee will evaluate opportunities to improve effective communication among residents, the Town’s elected and appointed boards, commissions and committees, and Town Meeting Members, especially communication about articles and motions to be considered and voted at Town Meetings.

What is required of the Committee?

- The Committee is to review *internal and external town government communications* —
 - Soliciting advice from Town Meeting members, Town boards, commissions and committees, town civic groups and businesses, and town residents
 - Considering best practices in Winchester and elsewhere, and
 - Recommending actions to improve communications.
- The Committee’s recommendations may include draft language for proposed articles or motions to be placed before Town Meeting or other Town boards.
 - Recommendations that have staffing or budgetary impacts are to include approximate cost estimates.

How is the Committee defining “town government?”

- For the purposes of this study, the term *town government* refers to *Town Meeting* and the *Town’s elected and appointed boards, commissions and committees*, which together are responsible for representing residents as policy-makers or policy advisors.

How is the Committee defining “internal” communication?

- For the purposes of this study, *internal communication* refers to intra-governmental communication —
 - Within Town Meeting (e.g., precinct and standing committee meetings, etc.);
 - Between Town Meeting and the Town’s boards, commissions and committees (e.g., reports, presentations, etc., to Town Meeting); and
 - Among the Town’s boards, commissions and committees (e.g., joint committee meetings, briefings, reports, etc.).

How is the Committee defining “external” communication?

- For the purposes of this study, *external communication* refers to public-facing communication —
 - Between town government and its constituents, including residents, voters, town businesses, civic groups and others (e.g., Town web page and social media postings, press releases, public hearings, WinCAM broadcasts, etc.).

What will the Committee consider in assessing current town-government communications and recommending improvements?

- To the extent that information is reasonably available, the Committee will consider —
 - Intended and actual audiences
 - Allocation of roles and responsibilities for communication
 - Legal and regulatory status of communications methods
 - Technology (current and emerging)
 - Staffing (Town and consultant)
 - Timeliness (in production and dissemination)
 - Costs (capital, operating, services, etc.)
 - Funding and revenue sources
 - Effectiveness (in communicating information to intended audience)
 - Efficiency (communication benefits compared to communication effort and expenditures)

When will the Committee report its findings and recommendations?

- The Committee is required to deliver —
 - Interim verbal and/or written report on the Committee’s progress to the 2022 Spring Town Meeting, and
 - Final verbal and written report on the Committee’s findings and recommendations to the 2022 Fall Town Meeting.

What are the desired outcomes of the Committee's work?

- Easy access to town government information
- Broad awareness among residents of how town government works and who is responsible for what
- Increased engagement and inclusive and respectful town-wide debate
- Better-informed Town Meeting members, Town boards, commissions and committees, town businesses, civic groups and residents, and
- Better-informed Town Meeting and Town government decisions.