



Town Meeting Advisory Committee Update and Current Recommendations to the Board Of Selectmen

League of Women Voters

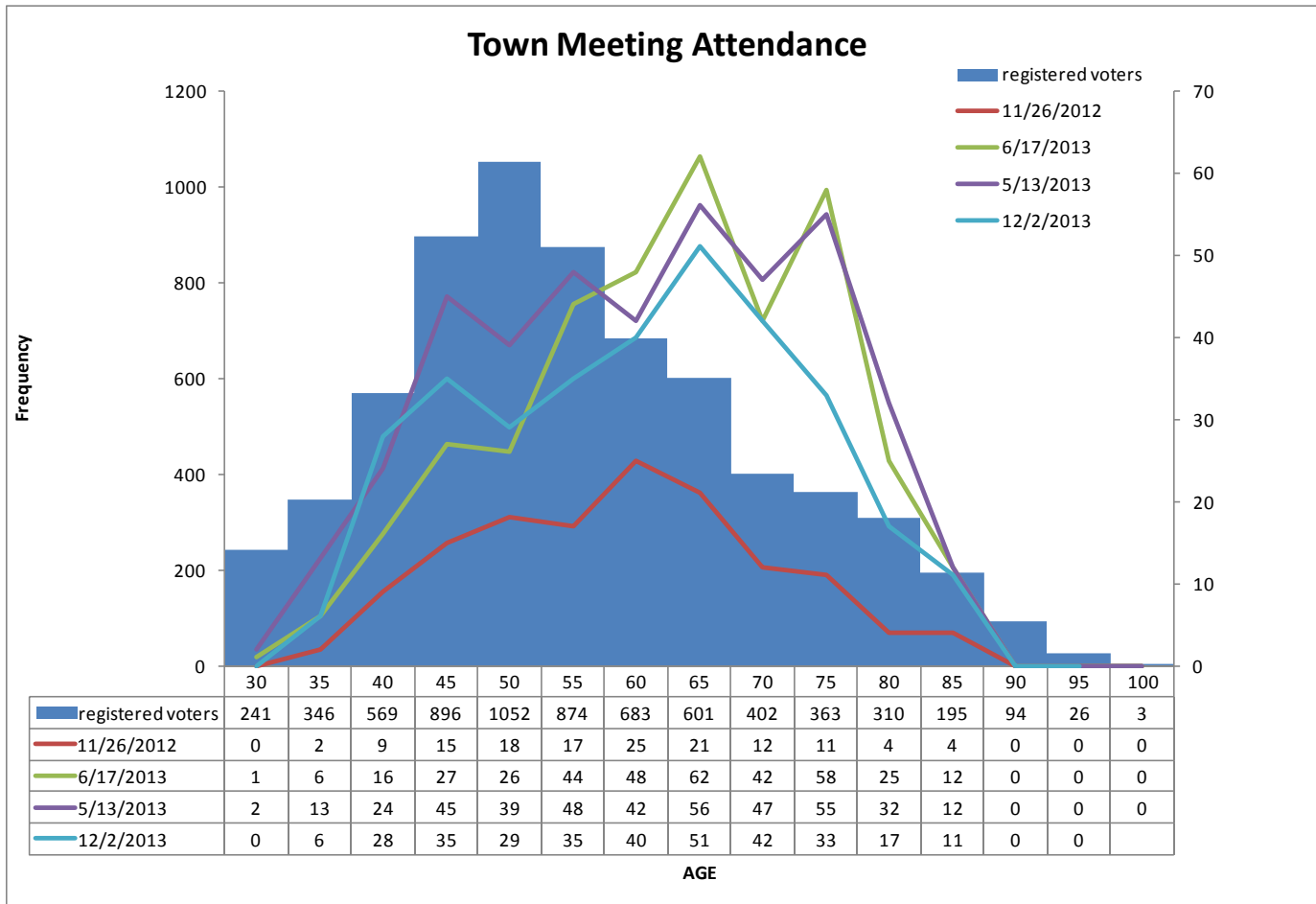
April 26, 2014

Purpose of committee

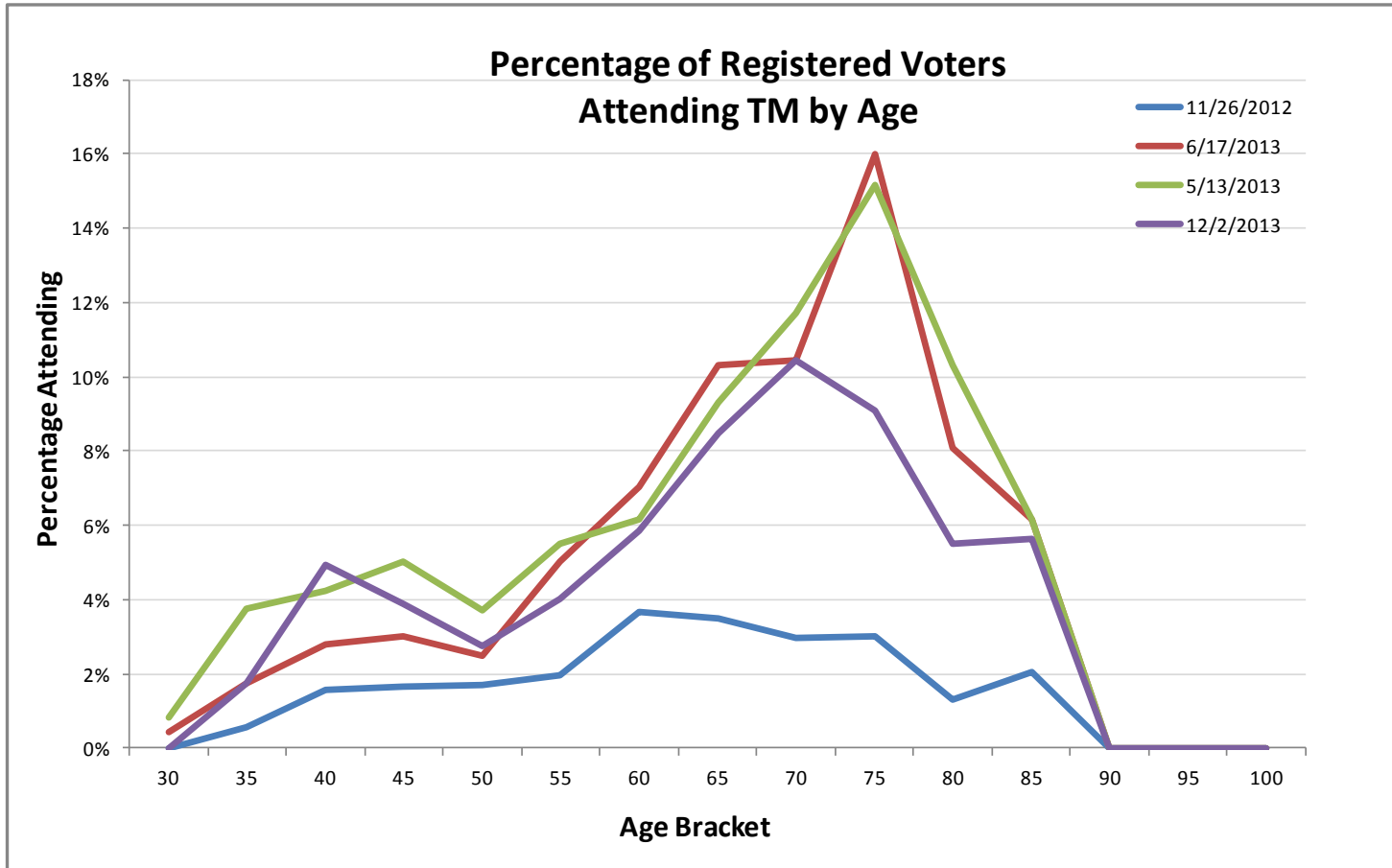
- Appointed by Selectmen in June 2013
- Membership includes 4 at-large, 5 town committee, 3 town organization, and 3 ex-officio (non-voting) members
- Purpose is to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen regarding Article 1 of the General By-Laws of the Town relating to town meeting
- This includes
 - Day of the week and time of day that Town Meeting is held
 - Notification requirements
 - Method of voting
 - Town Meeting procedures
- In addition, the Committee may make related recommendations relative to the conduct of the Town Caucus and the Town budget hearing
- The purpose of any recommendations is to improve voter participation in, and the conduct of, the Town Caucus, the Budget Hearing, the Town Election, and the Town Meeting



But First, Who Is Attending Town Meeting?



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Recommendations to the Board of Selectmen

- Use of a Consent Agenda
 - Used to handle the more routine articles at Town Meeting
 - Any 10 voters can object and remove an article
 - Examples include
 - Appropriation to Stabilization Fund
 - Appropriation to OPEB Trust Fund
 - Continue Departmental Revolving Funds
 - Accept Chapter 90 Road Improvement Funds
 - Approve Property Tax Deferral Income Limits
- Combine May Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting
 - Traditionally these meetings were held separately in order to distinguish between the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year
 - No legal requirement to do so
 - Will streamline the Town Meeting Process by eliminating the need to start and stop two meetings with a break in between
- General By-Law Change to use *Town Meeting Time* instead of *Roberts' Rules of Order*



General By-Law Change to use *Town Meeting Time* instead of *Roberts' Rules of Order*

- *Roberts' Rules of Order*
 - Based on parliamentary procedure
 - Written in 1876 (11 editions since)
- *Town Meeting Time*
 - Written by Town Moderators' from Swampscott, Brookline and Lincoln in 1962 and revised and amended in 1983 and 2001 to address the issues specific to Town Meeting that are absent or ambiguous in Roberts' Rules
 - Provides an alternate authority to Roberts' Rules
 - Takes parliamentary law and applies to Town Meeting and rules related to special circumstances
- Most of the rules are the same
 - Protects the minority vote similar to Roberts' Rule
- Examples
 - Parliamentary procedure has a Chairman whereas Town Meeting has a Moderator
 - Parliamentary procedure has an order of business whereas Town Meeting has the order of the Warrant Articles



Other Topics of Discussion

- Alternate Methods of Voting
 - Representative Town Meeting
 - 120-240 elected representatives vote at town meeting
 - Residents still allowed to participate in debate
 - Currently allowed under State law
 - Electronic Voting at Town Meeting with a hand held device
 - Allows for a quick and accurate vote count that is on the record
 - Currently allowed under State law
 - Split Debate and Vote
 - Debate occurs the week before an actual vote at Town Meeting
 - Those who cannot attend debate can watch replays on TV and online
 - Requires State statutory change
 - Split Debate and Ballot Vote
 - Debate occurs weeks before an actual ballot at Town Hall
 - Those who cannot attend debate can watch replays on TV and online
 - Requires State statutory change
 - Currently done in NH
 - Remote Online Voting
 - Voters who do not wish to participate in debate or cannot physically attend Town Meeting vote remotely while watching on TV or online
 - Requires State statutory change



Other Topics of Discussion

- Citizens Petitions
 - Developed a Guide to Citizens Petitions to provide clarity to the process to maximize chance for success
 - Reviewing the number of required signatures
 - Currently 10 for May Town Meeting and 100 for Special Town Meetings
- Town wide survey
 - After May Annual Town Meeting
 - Online
 - Notification through Town website, town-wide mailer, Town Crier, civic organization



Additional Resources

- Town website
 - Selectmen's Town Meeting Advisory Committee (2014) page
 - Know the Issues page
- Weston Media
 - Online videos of Meetings
 - Local Access Channel
 - On Demand
- A copy of Town Meeting Time is available at the Town library



Questions?

THANK YOU!

