# Town of Groton, MA Electronic Voting (EV) Study Committee (EVSC)

# Minutes of the Meeting of October 13, 2022

## Opening

Location: Community Room at the Groton Center, 163 West Main Street, Groton, mA 01450

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mr. Petropoulos.

Present: Rob Anctil, Michael Bouchard, Michael Manugian, Carolyn Perkins, Jack Petropoulos

Guests: Guy Alberghini; Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk; John Reilly, Select Board Member; John Sopka

## Public Hearing

Mr. Bouchard began the presentation which will also be used at Town Meeting. Article 10 of the Fall Town Meeting warrant covers the recommendation to adopt Electronic Voting and its request for funds for Electronic Voting at Town Meeting recommended by this Committee.

Mr. Alberghini, guest, expressed the opinion that Electronic Voting did away with transparency in that voters would not be able to see the yes and no votes being cast.

All responses to questions made by Committee members assume that Committee Policy and Procedural recommendations are adopted by Town government.

Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Petropoulos explained that individual clickers would be tested at the start of each day of Town Meeting, and the test would be repeated if a voter requested it later in the meeting.

Mr. Reilly asked how long votes would be stored. Mr. Bouchard responded that the individual yes, no votes would be deleted after each vote, but totals would be retained. Mr. Reilly then asked if the length of the voting window could be changed. The voting window is the time period during which votes can be cast on a particular motion. Mr. Bouchard responded that the length of the voting window for each vote is up to the Moderator.

Mr. Petropoulos asked Mr. Bouchard to summarize the comments the Committee received talking to other towns. Mr. Bouchard responded that feedback was universally positive, particularly on the topic of the appreciation of voting anonymity. He also stated that very few clickers are lost even though most towns typically do not keep track of which voter receives a clicker.

Mr. Sopka asked what would be done if there were a serious question about whether the system was operating properly. Mr. Bouchard responded that if the Town Moderator felt the system wasn’t operating properly, the meeting would go back to hand voting.

Mr. Petropoulos asked how the contacted towns felt about the reliability of their systems. Mr. Bouchard responded that the towns felt that the system was very reliable. The one case of system failure occurred because the system was not set up properly.

Mr. Sopka asked how long electronic voting had been in use. Mr. Bouchard responded that Wayland, an Electronic Voting pioneer in Massachusetts, began using it at their town meetings in 2014.

Mr. Bouchard then completed the presentation.

The length of the presentation with the question and answer time was 16 minutes.

Mr. Bouchard explained that when the presentation was given at Town Meeting, questions would be deferred to the discussion period for the Electronic Voting warrant article. This should reduce the presentation time to seven minutes, the duration agreed to with the Town Moderator.

The Committee then ended the public hearing at 7:30 pm. The regular meeting of the Committee then began.

## Public Comment

There were no public comments.

## Approval of Minutes

The Committee unanimously approved motions to accept the minutes of September 22, 2022 as submitted and the minutes of October 6 as amended.

## Review Documents for inclusion in Town Meeting Packet

The documents in the Town Meeting Packet will consist of:

* The demo orientation card
* The Slides of the Presentation
* Frequently Asked Questions
* Recommended Policies

## Review outline and details of Town Meeting EV Demo

This was discussed in conjunction with preparation presentation topic.

## Prepare for Town Meeting presentation

Clickers will be handed out by volunteers after voters are checked in. ACTION: Mr. Petropoulos: Identify volunteers to hand out clickers.

ACTION: Mr. Petropoulos: Ask Town Manager if we can post a slide on the display screen at Town Meeting explaining the use of clickers in the demo.

Dawn Dunbar, Town Clerk, offered to have the checkers collect the clickers as voters leave the meeting. This will be pointed out in the demo and on the demo orientation card.

ACTION: Mr. Bouchard: Contact the school to get permission to set up for the demo at 3 pm on Friday, October 21. ACTION: Mr. Bouchard: Ask Mike Chiasson, IT Manager if he can be present with the necessary equipment so that we can test the connection from the voting computer to the display.

All Committee members except Mr. Anctil will be present for the Friday setup and test. All Committee will be present at Town Meeting on Saturday.

Mr. Manugian and Ms. Perkins were concerned that a demo with 250 untrained users might run into problems and give a negative impression of electronic voting. Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Petropoulos were comfortable that the demo could be performed successfully.

The Committee had voted to do the demo in its last meeting. However, because only three of five members had been present, Mr. Petropoulos asked again for a motion to approve the demo. A motion was made to approve the demo with up to 250 users. The vote passed three to two, with Mr. Anctil and Mr. Manugian voting no.

Mr. Anctil felt it was important to make the point in the presentation that no Committee members were convinced of the value of electronic voting at the start of this study, but that all were now convinced of the benefit as a result of what was learned.

Mr. Petropoulos agreed to do the presentation and lead the demo.

ACTION: Mr. Bouchard: Update the Frequently Asked Questions document to remove duplicates.

## Closing

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 pm.

The next meeting of this Committee will be held in person at the Groton Middle School PAC on Friday. October 20, 2022 at 3:00 pm to be posted with the agenda by Mr. Bouchard on the Town of Groton website.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Manugian, Clerk