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

# Minutes of the Meeting of June 6, 2022

## Opening

Location: via Zoom

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Town Clerk, Michael Bouchard.

## Organization of the Committee

Although Mr. Bouchard advised the committee, that it was not required to do so, the committee agreed to operate under the rules of the open meeting law beginning with the next meeting. A motion to do so was made, seconded, and accepted unanimously.

The Clerk has included here the requirements for holding an open meeting via Zoom (from Mass.gov):

What other requirements apply to remote meetings?

The Open Meeting Law regulations governing remote participation, 940 CMR 29.10, remain in effect, except where the Governor’s executive order specifically suspends certain requirements. In particular, when any—or all—public body members participate in a meeting remotely, the following requirements apply:

1. At the start of the meeting, the chair must announce the name of the member or members who are participating remotely; such information must also be recorded in the meeting minutes.
2. All votes must be taken by roll call.
3. Members of the public body must be clearly audible to each other and to members of the public at all times.
4. When holding an executive session remotely, the public body must still take all required procedural steps for entering into executive session in open session. At the beginning of the executive session, each public body member participating remotely must state that no other person is present or able to hear the discussion at the remote location, unless the public body has approved the presence of that individual.

All votes, including this one, were taken via individual role call.

Mr. Bouchard reviewed the charge of the committee as stated in the April, 2022 Town Meeting warrant article:

***ARTICLE 16:                        ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE***

                To see if the Town will vote to create an Electronic Voting Study Committee appointed by the Town Moderator consisting of the Town Clerk and four (4) voters of the Town for the purpose of exploring the option of implementing electronic voting at Town Meeting;  said Committee to receive support from Town Officials as required, and, further, said Committee to provide a report to the 2022 Fall Town Meeting addressing all issues associated with such a change including but not limited to cost, bylaws and administrative procedures, or to take any other action relative thereto.

A motion was made, seconded, and accepted with one abstention (Mr. Petropoulos) to appoint Mr. Petropoulos chair of the committee.

Mr. Petropoulos at this point assumed the duties of meeting Chair.

A motion was made, seconded, and accepted unanimously to appoint Ms. Perkins Vice-chair of the committee.

A motion was made, seconded, and accepted unanimously to appoint Me. Manugian Clerk of the committee.

The committee discussed some of the results of last Electronic Voting Study committee in 2015. At that time, the committee recommended against instituting electronic voting primarily because of the cost. Other concerns at that time were inability to audit results and the town meeting time required. At that time only one town with an open town meeting (Wayland) was using EV. All other towns using EV were representative town meeting towns where town meeting votes were recorded and audited.

Mr. Bouchard stated that the Town Moderator, Jason Kauppi, is available as an advisor to this committee. He stated that the town IT Director, Michael Chiasson, had also agreed to provide technical assistance to the committee. Mr. Bouchard recommended that we reach out to other towns to look at their EV experiences.

Mr. Petropoulos felt there was a need for an individual to provide financial advice relative to costs and availability of grants.

ACTION: Mr. Bouchard agreed to provide a list of companies which provide EV services. The committee wants to investigate to see if we could share resources and costs with other towns. ACTION: Mr. Bouchard agreed to ask Mr. Kauppi if he could provide a list of towns, their EV status, and EV companies used through the Massachusetts Moderators Association.

Ms. Perkins suggested we look at the results from the previous committee and see if any changes since then make EV more worthwhile. Among other things which may have changed since then, this committee should consider cost, administration, benefits, risks, implementation, changes to bylaws, procedures.

Mr. Manugian recommended that this committee hold an open hearing near start of its deliberations to inform the public of the process and ways to keep informed.

Mr. Petropoulos felt the committee needed a reliable mechanism to keep the public aware. A number of communications channels were mentioned by various committee members including the Town of Groton website, Facebook pages, the Groton Herald, and chat groups

Mr. Anctil was in favor of an early information public hearing. Ms. Perkins felt it was important for the committee to have digested a sufficient amount of information before presenting to the public.

Mr. Petropoulos felt it was important that communications to the public reflect the position of the committee. This committee will investigate and present the pros and cons of EV. It has the previous committee’s pros and cons to use as a starting point.

ACTION: Mr. Petropoulos agreed to prepare an outline of the process this committee might use as a starting point for the process discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Bouchard felt it was important at the next meeting to discuss why are we considering electronic voting.

This committee determined that a good meeting time for all members was Thursdays at 6:30 pm. No regular meeting schedule has been set. For the time being the committee will meet via Zoom. The Commonwealth permits open meetings to be held over Zoom until July 15, 2022.

Mike Bouchard indicated that he will be retiring on July 31, 2022, but is willing to continue to serve on this committee.

## Closing

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.

The next meeting will be via Zoom, to be set up by Mr. Bouchard and posted on the Town of Groton website with the meeting agenda.