

Committee on Electronic Voting for Town Meeting  
February 5, 2013

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA.

7:05 pm Meeting Convened in Town Hall Conference Room 1

Members Present : Michael Widmer, Maryann Scali, Anne Marie Mahoney, David Petto, Ellen O'Brien, Cushman

Members Not Present: Mark Paolillo

Guest: Sandy Gadsby, Moderator – Town of Brookline

Review of the Town of Brookline Electronic Voting Study and Implementation, November 2012 - Sandy Gadsby

- Criteria: handheld devices, instant tally & display
- Goals: accountability of Town Meeting Members, accuracy of the vote
- Selected vendor: Options Technology Inc of Florida, same vendor contracted by Chelmsford, Wayland, Framingham
- Price of system: \$19K hardware
- Employed for 3 types of electronic vote: Moderator doubts vote, Challenged vote (by at least 7 Town Meeting Members) and Roll Call vote (by at least 35 Town Meeting Members)
- Voting: 1= Yes, 2=No, 3= Abstain
- Display: must have clock showing time remaining/available for voting; continuous scrolling of the individual votes by precinct showing at least 2 precincts at one time for 5 seconds each; the total tally shows and changes as votes are recorded; must scroll through all the precincts twice
- Voting time: 40 seconds total (37 seconds for voting where change is permitted, followed by 3 seconds where votes are frozen)
- As votes are recorded and show on the screen, Town Meeting Members check their own votes for accuracy; if the Member believes the vote is incorrectly recorded, the Member calls the attention of the Moderator to switch vote. Self-policing by Town Meeting Members keeps people using devices for Members not present.
- Problems: vendor-imposed standards for display that did not show the precincts as desired (showed At Large first, then partial precincts); the 40 seconds should be entirely open for voting and changing votes, plus the 3 second vote freeze; the display is not easily displayed as Excel spreadsheet and easily loaded onto the Town's website for public view (this took weeks). Working with the vendor and the Town of Chelmsford's IT person to solve these issues for spring Town Meeting.
- Procedures: Town Clerk pre-assigns the handheld devices in numeric order to Members alphabetically by precinct and checks the batteries; Town Clerk staff is assigned one person per precinct for sign-in (Town Meeting Members sign in and accept the numerically assigned handheld device with the same signature); Town Clerk staff stays to handle and assign any late arrivers; when Members leave they just place the devices in a recycle bin; next morning Town Clerk staff returns the devices to the numeric order and contacts members whose devices were not received. In the event that there is a caucus to elect a new Town Meeting Member just prior to Town Meeting, that device/person must be able to be incorporated into the voting and display.
- Implementation : Moderator sent open invitation to Town Meeting Members for a dry-run to learn to use the devices and to develop confidence in the process and the technology; 50 Members attended. Also, at the start of each session of Town Meeting, the Moderator conducts a practice run for a couple of easy/light questions such as "Will the Red Sox win the World Series?" . Members test the batteries and accuracy at that time. An IT person at each session of Town Meeting called the Electronic Voting Coordinator. Sandy indicated that he will continue these practices at all future sessions.

Committee Activities:

- Next meeting February 12<sup>th</sup> will focus:
- Procedures – summary from working group
- IT criteria for selection – RFPs
- By-Law changes required

8:20 pm Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted  
Ellen O'Brien Cushman