Facts about Annual Town Meetings in Massachusetts

The selectmen-town meeting form of government, established in colonial times and reaffirmed in various statutes throughout the Commonwealth's history, remains the form of government in 296 of the state's municipalities.

Believed to be the oldest form of democracy in the United States, town meetings predate the American Revolution by more than a century.

The primary responsibility of the annual town meeting, held in the spring, is to approve a municipal budget for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1. Town meetings also take up a number additional "articles," such as zoning amendments, other bylaws, expenditures for specific projects, and the establishment of various study and other committees. Town meetings also receive reports from a number of town officials and boards.

The vast majority of town meetings are still "open," meaning that any town resident may attend and speak. In 1926, state laws were changed to allow towns with a population of more than 6,000 to elect representatives to cast votes at town meetings.

Open town meetings: 260 Representative town meetings: 36

Town meetings by month

March: 8 (2.7%) April: 54 (18.2%) May: 204 (69%) June: 30 (10.1%)

Earliest Annual Town Meeting of 2013: Duxbury, March 9 Latest Annual Town Meeting of 2013: Monroe, June 24

Most popular town meeting date: May 6 Number of town meetings held on May 6: 60 (20.3%)

Number of communities that hold their town meetings on a Saturday: 39 (13.2%)

Compiled by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, spring 2013