



"Did you bring parliamentary procedure to a knife fight again?"

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY FOR TOWN MEETING

(Priority Order)

More Formal

- Massachusetts General Laws
 - Official Interpreters*
 - a) SJC/Appeals Court opinions
 - b) Attorney General opinions
- Town Charter
- Town Bylaw
- Procedural Motions TM Adopts
- Handbook or Procedural Guide approved by TM (*Town Meeting Time or Robert's Rules*)

Less Formal

- Handbook or Procedural Guide published by Moderator
- Moderator's own good judgment, reputation, and "command of the room"
- Town traditions and habits



Longtime moderator likened his role at town meetings to the captain of a whaleship. *Mark Alan Lovewell*

Straight Talk, No Chaser: Everett Poole Tells Town Meeting Tales

Noah Asimow *Monday, April 22, 2019 - 10:55am*

<https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2019/04/22/straight-talk-no-chaser-everett-poole-tells-town-meeting-tales>

Ev Poole on the similarity of a Town Moderator with the Captain of a Whaleship

“It’s pretty simple,” Mr. Poole said. “When whaleships left the country, when they got outside the three-mile limit, the skipper would call everybody aft, and he would instruct the mates on their duty. And he would tell the crew, there’s one more thing to remember boys: when you see me in town, I’m [just] Mr. So-and-So. But when we’re on this ship and out here beyond this three-mile limit, I’m God almighty.”

Being in Command

- Rules & Standards
- Venue
- Preparation
- Expectation
- Style
- Opening Remarks
- Managing speakers
 - Time limits
 - Off-topic remarks
 - Uncivil remarks
- Manage disruptive behavior

**Fair, Open and Efficient
v.
Lies, Misinformation and Disharmony**

- Set standards of acceptable CONTENT from authoritative sources
- Expectation of honesty and civility
- Stick to stated goals and process
- Manage the conversation
- Be genuine

MGL c. 39, Sec. 17

Powers of moderator; preservation of order

No person shall address a town meeting without leave of the moderator, and all persons shall, at the request of the moderator, be silent. If a person, after warning from the moderator, persists in disorderly behavior, the moderator may order him to withdraw from the meeting, and, if he does not withdraw, may order a constable or any other person to remove him and confine him in some convenient place until the meeting is adjourned.

See also Town Meeting Time, Sec. 6.2 (pp. 24-26)