

About this Brochure

There are two editions of this guide: the summary edition and the detailed edition. The summary edition is intended for all to read even if they are not interested in bringing anything to Town Meeting. The detailed version is intended for people who are going to bring something to Town Meeting and for teachers using this guide as a teaching tool. This is the detailed edition of the guide.

In the 3rd quarter of my senior year I formed a committee, the Town Meeting Improvement Committee, to revitalize Town Meeting, as my last effort to help H-B before I graduated. The committee did not work due to lack of interest. I was very disappointed, but I still tried to figure out what I could do to greatly strengthen Town Meeting during the transition period. I tried writing a report about how to improve Town Meeting but it became such a big project that I realized that no one could write it on their own, including myself. Then I tried writing this Town Meeting Leadership Guide. I hope that the guide will teach students to participate in Town Meeting and the governance and operation of H-B Woodlawn. I know this guide is far from perfect and I think that many people could write a much better guide. In addition, the guide will need to change and evolve with the time to continue to be effective. I would be delighted if this guide is improved, updated, revised, and/or rewritten by others as long as each version mentions where the original version is located for historical purposes. Also, feel free to e-mail me at anytime at rossmtmic@fastmail.fm if you have any ideas, thoughts, or questions. Thanks.

Dedication

This guide is dedicated to Ray Anderson whose vision created the H-B Woodlawn Program and whose wonderful leadership and energy have touched the lives of so many and caused this experiment in participatory democracy to grow.

By Michael Ross, Class of 2004

DETAILED EDITION

Decide What Courses to Offer and Allocate Funding to Departments

Hire Teachers and Other Staff

Decide How to Spend Fundraised Money

Decide General School Rules

Required Fulltime Teachers to Teach Six Classes

And what will be next...

INTRODUCT

The H-B Woodlawn Program is the result of the ideas, efforts, initiatives, discussions, etc. of its community. This means the ideas, efforts, initiatives, discussions, etc. of the community are the same as those of the program, not a higher, controlling power. No one person created it and no one runs it. It is run by, maintained, controlled, and directed by its community. Therefore, the community is responsible for the existence, continuation, survival, and direction of H-B.

How does the community do this? By governing the program through Town Meeting, the governing body of the program for all noncurricular issues.

Town Meeting is like a suggestion box for the school. It also functions as a problem-solver for the school and a consensus-builder. It also acts as the final approver for just about anything, Town Meeting also informs the community. It also acts as an ombudsman. Additionally, it acts as a think tank for the school. Lastly, it does anything else noncurricular.

Since you are part of the H-B Woodlawn Community, YOU are responsible for the future of the program! Furthermore, YOUR leadership in Town Meeting will determine the direction of the program. YOU and the community control this program for YOU and the community. Members of the H-B community cannot separate their involvement or lack of involvement in the school and Town Meeting with how the program operates. Also, you are required to attend Town Meeting regularly and be aware of issues facing the program.

So how do you be a good and effective leader in Town Meeting? This brochure is written to show you how!

SO, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Some things you should bring to Town Meeting and other times you should bring things to Town Meeting:

- Anything you think of something that you would like the school to do or change
- Ideas about how to improve something
- When you are aware of or can foresee any problem affecting H-B even in the smallest way, even if you do not have a solution.
- If there is something that you or others would benefit from
- If there is something H-B might want to tryout

- Anything else.

WHAT EXACTLY DO I WANT TO DO?

The first step in bringing anything to Town Meeting is deciding exactly what you want to do. Think about how to phrase your motion according to the following guidelines:

- Make your motion concrete. Do not just make be a general idea because they tend to be ignored. Make it be a specific action the needs to be taken. For example, "I move to post a sign up sheet in the main office for students to volunteer to be computer lab monitors and assign John Doe to schedule the students who sign up." is better than "I move that computer lab should be monitored."
- Make your motion specific. You know how your motion should be interpreted but others may not know. Details open to interpretation tend to be interpreted in the most convenient way, not in the way that achieves the purpose of the motion. For instance, "I move that students be permitted to see documents about the allocation process as soon as they are available to teachers." is better than "I move that students be permitted to see documents about the allocation process."

IS THIS A BIG THING OR A SMALL THING?

The next step is determining whether your motion requires research and preparation before bringing it to Town Meeting. If your motion is routine, practically affects only the person who makes the motion, does not make systemic changes, and will be implemented by yourself and you can safely assume that there will not be opposition, you are probably ready to take it to Town Meeting and then go to the after your motion has passed section. Check with a person who frequently attends Town Meeting or an administrator if you are unsure. Otherwise, go to the Big Things section.

BIG THINGS

So you want to do sometime big? Wow! Go for it, but be sure to think things through! You need to think about things from all sides, angles, and perspectives. Consider any unintended consequences. Think about practical issues. Additionally, following these guidelines:

- Talk to every person, group, and entity that is affected by or has anything to do with your motion even in the slightest way. Springing something on people makes the chances of your motion passing infinitesimal and antagonizes people who might have otherwise supported you.

- Consider implementation and enforcement and make concrete provisions for this specifying the entities involved. Just be sure to talk to the entities that you list ahead of time. Do not forget that administrators may be willing or even eager to do this. Administrators can be delegated powers, such as implementing and enforcing motions, which are not granted in the merger report. Keep in mind that even though you are used taking the steps to get done what you see needs to get done, community members and other entities usually do not see things that need to get done beyond their personal responsibilities, so to be effective, they must be assigned responsibilities. Do not assume that relevant entities will take responsibility. Many motions are forgotten because they are not implemented and/or enforced. Don't let yours be one!

- Find out relevant information about what your motion concerns, such as school policy, laws, and possible reasons for opposition ahead of time. If your motion deals with an issue that has been addressed before, find out the history of the issue including what worked, what didn't, and why. Use this information to improve your motion.

- Prepare how you will respond to opposition in advance.

- Think about your motion from the perspective of as many different people as possible to make the motion more agreeable.

- If you see things from a different perspective from most other people and/or you are making a motion because you have an unusual take on something, think long and hard about how to show people how you see things. Otherwise, people will probably have no appreciation for your motion.

- Prepare visual aids when appropriate, especially if you have a lot of information you need to convey.

- – If there is discussion regarding your motion, let people get their to voice heard to make the motion more mutually agreeable. If there is opposition to some aspects of your motion, modify your motion during the discussion to make it more agreeable. Generally disliked motions tend to be forgotten.

- If you do not like another person's idea of how to change your motion, propose an alternative solution.

- Do not let discussion be so long that your motion is not or cannot be voted on. Prevent the discussion from losing sight