Credo: I believe that we meet here today with a shared respect for the process of civil discourse and decision making inherent in a democratic society. I believe that we value the traditions of history and community that guide us. I believe that one should treat others as one would like to be treated by others. --Susan E. Norlander, Moderator

The Deliberative Session “shall consist of explanation, discussion, and debate of each warrant article, including warrant articles pertaining to the operating budget and the default budget.” (RSA 40:13-IV) Voters at the Deliberative Session prepare the official ballot which will be voted on at the Second Session of the Town Meeting on the second Tuesday in March.

The Moderator will use the following rules of procedure. Any rule or decision the Moderator makes may be overruled by a majority vote of the meeting. A voter can request such a vote by raising a Point of Order at any time.

1. Voters have registered and been given a 3x5 voting card. Only registered voters will be permitted to vote. The Moderator will conduct votes by a show of hands holding the voting cards.

2. The Moderator will take the Articles in the order they appear on the Warrant unless she announces the intent to take Articles out of order.

3. The Moderator will introduce each warrant article and secure a motion and a second in support of the article. Voters moving and seconding an article or an amendment shall identify themselves so that the Clerk may record their names. The Moderator will invite the Selectmen, the appropriate town employee(s) or the Petitioner to explain the article. Voters will then be invited to discuss the article.

4. All discussion shall be through the Moderator. A person wishing to address an issue shall stand to be recognized by the Moderator. Once recognized and given the microphone the individual speaking will give his/her name and then will have 3 minutes to address the topic with a question or comment. Remarks shall be civil and focused on the topic. Attacks on individuals or groups and inappropriate language will not be tolerated. In the case of questions requiring response, the Moderator will recognize the appropriate town official or employee. Each speaker may only speak once until everyone has spoken. No one may speak unless he/she has the floor as recognized by the Moderator, except for calling a Point of Order.

5. Non-voters may not speak at the Meeting without the permission of the voters except that the Moderator may allow non-resident town employees or consultants to provide information about an Article.

6. Amendments to the Article: must refer to the same subject matter; may change dollar figures; may change intent; must be presented in writing to the Clerk if it does not track the original wording (i.e. varies by 10 words); shall be presented in the format of “I move the article be amended to read...” After being seconded, the Meeting may enter discussion. Amendments require a majority vote for passage. If the amendment passes, discussion on the amended article shall take place. At the conclusion of discussion the Moderator shall call for a vote on the article.

6a. Only one amendment at a time will be allowed for discussion. The Moderator will recognize two exceptions: (1) a voter may raise a Point of Order at any time; (2) a
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voter who has the floor may make a motion to amend the pending motion or make a motion to Call the Question.

6b. Wording prescribed by law cannot be changed. (Examples: Zoning amendments, Special Revenue Funds, Land Use Change Tax Fund.)

6c. The Moderator will not accept negative motions, such as the introduction of the words “not” or “no.” No warrant article shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article (RSA 40:13, IV)

7. All warrant articles shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote, including articles as amended at the first session… (RSA 40:13 VI) If no motion is made, or if no motion receives an affirmative vote, the Moderator will instruct the Clerk to prepare the ballot question as the article is printed in the Warrant. Following discussion, the motion will be restated by the Moderator only if it differs from the printed warrant article. The Moderator will ask for a vote only if the final form of the question differs from the printed warrant article.

8. Voters may not amend the default budget at the deliberative session but the governing body may follow procedures to revise the default budget before ballots are printed. (RSA 40:13-XI(b))

9. Five or more voters present at the meeting may submit a written request for a secret ballot vote, after discussion of an article and prior to a show-of-cards vote, on a proposed amendment or on a motion that is different from a printed warrant article (RSA 40:4-a). Seven or more voters may question a vote immediately after it is declared and ask for a secret ballot vote. (RSA 40:4-b)

10. Any vote may be reconsidered until the deliberative session adjourns, unless reconsideration has been restricted by majority vote of the meeting. (RSA 40:10-I and RSA 40:13-IV). Any vote previously taken during the meeting may be restricted, including all votes taken to that point.

11. A voter wishing to Call the Question must stand to be recognized by the Moderator. As “Calling the Question” limits discussion, the Moderator reserves the right to postpone that request until those standing to speak have had an opportunity to speak and/or in her judgment voters have had an opportunity to hear a representation of opinions on the article. However, bear in mind that the Moderator may be overruled by a majority of the voters by raising a Point of Order. A majority vote is required to stop debate on a motion.

12. The Moderator may vote on all Articles. However, the Moderator plans to vote in only two instances: to break a tie, and to make a vote a tie vote if a motion the Moderator opposes would otherwise carry by one vote.

13. In the event that any person behaves in a disorderly manner, disturbs the meeting or willfully violates any rules of proceeding, and persists despite a warning from the Moderator, the Moderator may have a police officer, or any legal voter of the town, remove such person from the meeting. (RSA 40:8)

Susan E. Norlander, Alstead Town Moderator

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