

# COVID-19 Protocol for Concord Annual Town Meeting 2021

*Note: Subject to Amendment; Check for updates at [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov)*

*Dated: May 6, 2021*

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, Concord Annual Town Meeting will maintain most of the special protocols adopted last year. Town Meeting will take place outdoors, on the Doug White Field at Concord Carlisle Regional High School, on Sunday, June 13, 2021, at 1:00 pm (rain date: Monday, June 14, 2021 at 5:00 pm). The Moderator has developed this Protocol for the Meeting, in consultation with the Select Board and Concord's Public Health and Safety Officials, to provide as nearly as possible the participatory experience to which Concord voters are accustomed, while protecting public health. This Protocol is subject to change as circumstances require. Please check the town website [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov) regularly for addenda to the Protocol and other information on 2021 Annual Town Meeting.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Although vaccination rates and successful public health precautionary measures have reduced the COVID-19 risk to the Concord community, risk does remain. Governor Baker's COVID Order No. 66, issued March 18, 2021, advanced the Commonwealth's reopening to Phase IV, Step 1, allowing large capacity venues (both indoor and outdoor) with a COVID safety plan in place to operate at 12% capacity. Pursuant to the Governor's COVID Order No. 67, issued April 29, 2021, face coverings continue to be required at all times at events and gatherings in public locations. The Concord Board of Health's order requiring social distancing and facial coverings remain in effect. Further developments in the pandemic situation are being closely watched by the Moderator, Select Board, and Concord's Public Health and Safety Officials for impact on plans for Annual Town Meeting.

## **COVID-19 ADJUSTMENTS TO MEETING LOGISTICS**

- 1. Venue.** In view of the consensus among public health experts that COVID-19 transmission risk is substantially less outdoors, Annual Town Meeting will be on the Doug White Fields located at the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. The Meeting is scheduled to begin during daylight hours, to maximize safety of attendees, minimize heat, and maximize likelihood of completing the Meeting in one session. The artificial turf surface of the Doug White Fields precludes tents secured by poles and stakes; seating will therefore be uncovered. There will be a small "pop-up" tented area(s) for respite from heat and medical emergencies. **NOTE THAT ONLY UNADULTERATED WATER IS PERMITTED TO BE CONSUMED ON THE DOUG WHITE FIELDS ARTIFICIAL TURF** – no flavored or colored drinks, no food of any kind.
- 2. Requirements of Voters.** Attendees will be required to wear facial coverings and to observe a 6-foot physical distance at all times from persons not part of their own households. Voters are asked **not to attend** if they have a confirmed or suspected case of

COVID-19, or have had a known exposure within the preceding two weeks to a person infected with COVID-19. Voters will be permitted to remove facial coverings briefly while seated in their physically/socially distanced areas of the field to drink water, and when speaking at a microphone. Voters should bring sunscreen, hats, umbrellas, sunglasses, insect repellent, and water. **Voters should plan to arrive early this year as walking distances will be longer and check-in likely slower.**

- 3. Public Health Precautions.** A limited quantity of masks, sunscreen, water, hand sanitizer, insect repellent, and umbrellas will be available for those who do not have their own. Town Meeting staff will guide the movement of voters to maintain appropriate social distance. There will also be signage and field markings to guide voters. Physical/social distancing will be maintained in restrooms by limiting occupancy. Persons who are unable to wear face coverings for medical reasons will be directed to seating in a separate section.
- 4. Accessibility Accommodations.** Accessible parking will be available immediately adjacent to the Doug White Fields. Accessible seating will be reserved in the section of the field closest to the accessible parking. The parking lot, paths, and field are accessible surfaces. Hearing assistance devices will be available. Due to the daylight venue and large seating distances, closed captioning will not be possible at 2021 Annual Town Meeting.
- 5. Check-in Procedure.** Voter check-in will be located at the rear of the high school, between the high school and the Doug White Field (same location as 2020). The location and appropriate physical/social distance markers while queuing will be identifiable by clear signage, and staff will be available to guide voters. To improve check-in flow, checkers will be using an iPad system which will not require voters to organize themselves alphabetically by name or street address. Staff will provide voters with a voting slip at check-in. Meeting Materials will be available on tables at the field. **Again, Voters should plan to arrive early as check-in likely will be slower this year than usual.**
- 6. Seating Arrangements.** Pairs of folding chairs will be pre-positioned on the field at a minimum of 6' apart; members of the same household may sit together. Aisles will be wide to allow social distancing while moving about the field.
- 7. Organization of Boards and Committees.** The Select Board and the Finance Committee will be seated together at an appropriate physical distance in designated areas, as will the School Committee and Planning Board while their articles are being addressed by the Meeting. The Moderator will make note of the locations of these boards and committees for voters.
- 8. Restrooms.** The Doug White Fields are serviced by a public restroom building. Voters will be asked to queue outside the restrooms at an appropriate physical/social distance and to limit occupancy of the restroom to a posted maximum number of persons. Voters are reminded to wash their hands for at least twenty seconds with soap and water or hand sanitizer (both provided).

9. **Water.** All voters should bring their own water. Limited quantities of water in individual serving containers will be available. On the advice of the Board of Health, there will be no ability at the Meeting to refill water bottles.
10. **Medical Emergencies.** There will be a tent without sides available for temporary rest and medical emergencies. There will be medical emergency staff on site.
11. **Parking.** In addition to the accessible parking available at the Doug White Field lot, regular parking will be available in the CCHS lots and the Beede Center lot. Overflow parking will be available at the Alcott School parking lot, with (physically/socially distant) shuttle bus transportation to CCHS available. **Voters should allow extra time to park, walk from parking to the fields, or ride the shuttle bus from overflow parking.**
12. **Childcare.** As at Annual Town Meeting 2020, there will be no childcare provided at Annual Town Meeting this year.
13. **Weather/Public Health or Safety Contingency Plans.** Rain, wind, heat, or a public health or safety threat could require postponement of the Meeting from June 13. The “rain date” for the Meeting is Monday, June 14, at 5:00 pm. The Moderator would make any postponement determination in consultation with the Select Board and town public health and safety officials. Notice of any postponement will be given to voters by posting on the town website, [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov), Concord News & Notices announcements to subscribers, automated telephone call to Code Red subscribers, announcements on the town’s Facebook and Twitter, and posting at the Meeting venue.

#### **ADJUSTMENTS TO MEETING PROCEDURE**

1. **Meeting Materials.** Daylight, distance, and WiFi/power logistics will prevent us from having video presentation screens this year. Instead, information on each article to be taken up will be printed in the Meeting Materials distributed to voters at check-in, and voters will be asked to consult their materials. Meeting Materials will be posted on the town website [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov) in advance of the Meeting. There will be no “handouts” distributed at the Meeting other than the Meeting Materials provided at check-in. Any board/committee, organization or citizen wishing to present a “handout” on an article may make advance request for the Moderator’s approval to incorporate the handout in the Meeting Materials.
2. **No Presentations on Articles. In the interests of shortening the Meeting and reducing the risk to public health, there will be no presentations on articles at this year’s Annual Town Meeting.** As we reach each article, the Moderator will refer voters to the motion under the article included in the Meeting Materials, and open the floor for questions and comments. A one-page narrative on each article written by its sponsor will be included in the Meeting Materials. **In preparation to attend Annual Town Meeting, voters are urged to watch the**

recorded public hearings on the articles which are will be available on the town website, [www.concordma.gov](http://www.concordma.gov), under the Town Meeting tab.

- 3. Consent Calendar.** As is customary in Concord, there will be a Consent Calendar consisting of articles to be taken up as a group and voted upon by the Meeting without deliberation. The Consent Calendar will be published in the FinCom Report and posted on the town’s website. The modifications to the usual practice with respect to the Consent Calendar adopted last year will again be adopted this year. First, the Consent Calendar will be more broadly inclusive than usual, incorporating not only “routine and non-controversial articles,” but also non-routine articles on which both the Select Board and the Finance Committee (if it is making a recommendation) recommend affirmative action and strong community support is expected. Second, any **ten** voters will be able to remove an article from the Consent Calendar for full debate, prior to the Meeting voting on the Consent Calendar. This temporary increase from the usual five-voter requirement is made to solicit a slightly stronger sentiment from the Meeting that the public interest in fully debating an article outweighs the public interest in keeping the Meeting shorter, and virus transmission risk lower, by voting on the article without full deliberation.
- 4. Motions to Amend.** Any motions to amend will be required to be presented to the Moderator in writing in advance of being made. There will be further direction at the Meeting on how to present a motion to amend to the Moderator. The mover of an amendment will be allowed two minutes to speak to the amendment. Those considering a motion to amend an article are strongly urged to email the Moderator in advance of the Meeting at [moderator@concordma.gov](mailto:moderator@concordma.gov). If received in time by the printing deadline, motions to amend will be included in the Meeting Materials distributed at Town Meeting; if not, they will be read to the Meeting when made.
- 5. Speaking from the Floor.** Microphones will be available for voters to speak from the floor. In light of the public health threat posed by the pandemic and the accordant advisability of limiting the length of the Meeting, speaking time from the floor will be limited to one minute per person and strictly enforced. We will return to our standard two-minute time limit when the pandemic has been resolved. The arrangements for microphone use are expected to be the same as those employed at the Annual Town Meeting held in September, 2020, with socially distant queueing, speakers permitted to remove masks while at the microphone, and staff cleaning microphones between speakers.
- 6. Voting.** The Moderator will take votes on the motions by asking voters to raise the color paper voting slip provided at check-in. If voters are holding up umbrellas for shade, the Moderator may ask for umbrellas to be lowered during the vote. Tellers will be present to take a standing vote count in the event that the Moderator cannot visually call the vote. In the event that the Meeting votes to take a vote by secret ballot, the procedure for taking the vote will be announced by the Moderator.