



## How Wilton Works: What is a “Town Meeting”?

**It’s That Time Again...** for our Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, May 2 at 7p at the Clune Center.

The “Town Meeting” is the oldest form of local governance in the nation, and traditional to small New England towns. It is a form of direct democracy in which the whole community comes together to determine local policy and budgets.

### What happens at a Town Meeting?

Citizens are legislators. Neighbors sit side by side and work out what we think is best for the community we share. The volunteers serving on our town boards present their recommended **school budget, town budget, bonding proposals** and other critical issues facing our town. We pose questions, get real information, and debate merits and concerns. Then we **vote** on the budgets and particular resolutions the boards have submitted for our consideration.

### Who can come, and who can vote at the Annual Town Meeting?

All Wilton residents can attend. All residents registered to vote in Wilton can vote; and in addition, citizens who have real property and/or vehicles valued at \$1000 or more on Wilton’s last-completed **Grand List** can vote.

### Will the Annual Town Meeting represent the wishes of town residents?

Yes, if we show up. According to our **Town Charter**:

- Participants at the meeting can move to **decrease** a budget line item but **not to increase** it.
- Voters at the Annual Town Meeting have **three ballot options**: 1) Yes; 2) No (because the budget is too high); and 3) No (because the budget is too low).
- Unless a **minimum of 15%** of eligible Wilton voters show up, the budget is **automatically passed as proposed**. In recent years, our turnout has sometimes missed this threshold.

If at least 15% of registered voters cast votes at the Annual Meeting (or at the adjourned vote the following Saturday), then the voters determine the outcome. According to our town charter, if that 15% threshold is not met, then the recommendations of our elected boards are enacted and will take effect. That is: **if too few of us attend the Annual Town Meeting, we are allowing others to speak for us.**

### Do folks actually go?

Voter turnout at our Town Meeting waxes and wanes. In high-constituent-interest years, debate is quite lively, and residents make budget motions from the floor to decrease the budget, which are then voted on. In low-constituent-interest years, fewer than 15% of eligible voters turn up to cast their votes and the budget passes by default.

Our last Town Meeting in 2022 was a low-interest year; fewer than 150 residents showed up for the meeting and – for the first time since 2014—no floor motions were made. When interest is high, turnout is greater: the last time we exceeded the 15% benchmark was 2017, when the ballot included a change in our liquor ordinance.

### **When is our next Town Meeting & Budget Vote?**

The Annual Town Meeting is generally held on the first Tuesday evening in May with an adjourned vote on the following Saturday for those unable to attend the meeting in person. This year the **Annual Town Meeting** has been set for **Tuesday, May 2, 2023, at 7 p.m.** The Adjourned Vote will be **Saturday, May 7, 2023, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.** Voting on machine ballots will begin as soon as the meeting is adjourned. *All* eligible voters will vote at the Wilton High School Clune Center.

### **What's on our Annual Town Meeting ballot?**

Our elected representatives on our town boards — particularly the **Boards of Selectmen, Education, and Finance** — have worked assiduously to determine the proposed town budget. (Wiltonians will vote on the mill rate derived from this proposed budget, in essence voting on the taxes needed to cover what the town will have to spend to provide the operations and services outlined in the budget.) As well, voters will vote on five bonding referendum questions totaling \$4.1M, including \$1.9M to enable the construction of a new turf field.

Prior to our Town Meeting, our **registrars of voters** will display a **Sample Ballot** [on the town website](#), which will also be available on the [Wilton League of Women Voters website](#), and on **GOOD Morning Wilton**. The Wilton Board of Education budget will also be publicly available [on the Wilton School District website's Board of Education page](#).

The Board of Selectmen's town budget information is available on the [Town of Wilton website](#). In the meantime, you can [check the town calendar](#) for the schedule of board meetings and hearings open to the public.

### **I'm eligible to vote in Wilton, but... I haven't registered yet. Is there still time?**

Yes. If you have a valid Connecticut driver's license, you can register online or on your phone through the [CT Secretary of State's website](#) :



You can also register in person to vote at **Wilton Town Hall (283 Danbury Rd.)** Monday through Friday, from **8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**; or download a voter registration application from the [Town of Wilton website](#).