



Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Town Moderator

**JUNE 24, 2020 STATEMENT OF TOWN MODERATOR JOHN MURPHY
REGARDING UPCOMING TOWN MEETINGS**

Over the past few months, I have consulted with the Select Board, Town Administrator, Public Safety Director / Police Chief, Fire Chief, Board of Health, Director of Public Health, Town Clerk, and Town Counsel at various times regarding the date and venue for both the May 11, 2020 Special Town Meeting and the June 8, 2020 Annual Town Meeting.

In light of the expected large attendance and deliberation regarding the potential purchase of Seven Acres Poultry Farm, I have continued the May 11th Special Town Meeting on three occasions – most recently to July 27, 2020 at 7:00 PM. It is my intention to continue postponing this Special Town Meeting while the public health emergency is in effect as permitted under applicable law.

Municipal and school officials have worked collaboratively to submit only necessary business for consideration at the June 8th Annual Town Meeting, which has been continued to **June 29th at 7:00 PM**. In the interest of abbreviating June Town Meeting, the Select Board has limited warrant articles to only essential and time-sensitive matters.

While taking into account that Open Town Meeting such as North Reading's must be held in person, the intention of the Select Board to hold the June Annual Town Meeting indoors, as well as the recommendation of the Board of Health that the June Town Meeting be held in an outdoor setting, I have further considered the following:

- Information from the Public Safety Director / Police Chief and Fire Chief that a Town Meeting can be held indoors at the Middle/High School Gymnasium while meeting Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Guidance for Town Meetings to Address COVID-19" guidelines for social distancing, face coverings, and cleaning/disinfection.
- Uncertainty in summer weather, particularly the risk of high heat/humidity and thunder/lightning/high wind, which may preclude an outdoor Town Meeting from occurring.
- Information from the Town Clerk regarding the challenges associated with managing voter access and participation in an outdoor venue.
- The distance between parking and the most viable outdoor venue.
- Continued progress in Massachusetts' reopening, including the reopening of indoor dining this week.
- The importance of conducting the Town's annual business prior to the beginning of the Fiscal Year on July 1st.
- The risk of public health conditions potentially deteriorating, thereby preventing or discouraging a Town Meeting from occurring at a date in the near future.

In light of this information, it is my intention to call to order the June Annual Town Meeting on Monday, June 29th at 7:00 PM in the Middle/High School Gymnasium.