

“Drive-in” Annual Town Meeting Set for Monday, June 22 at 6 p.m., at MMRHS

Bring a blanket, a picnic, the kids and your wheels: Great Barrington’s Annual Town Meeting is set for Monday, June 22 at 6 p.m., in the Monument Mountain Regional High School parking lot.

In order to conduct the annual business of the town during COVID-19-- when large groups can’t gather because of virus risks—town officials in the region are coming up with creative solutions for conducting their must-do annual business. Voters must act on the town operating budget, school budget and capital expenditures in the spring, to approve spending for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Great Barrington Selectboard, Cutting Edge AV Inc. in Lee and MMRHS staff are busy this week arranging for an outdoor sound system and an FM radio broadcast of the meeting, which voters can follow in their cars. Parking lot microphones and other details are being arranged to ensure full participation.

“Everyone needs to stay in or near their vehicle, kids must be supervised—there’s no childcare this year -- and the usual social distancing rules apply,” said Town Manager Mark Pruhenski. “ We believe this will be a successful way to conduct our town's annual business.”

Alcohol use and smoking are prohibited on school property.

Initially—before the COVID-19 crisis—the town had planned to conduct its annual meeting on two nights, June 22 and 25. The two-night format was adopted due to the increasing length of recent annual meetings.

Now, to accommodate social distancing rules, the Selectboard have returned to the one-night meeting to conduct essential business only. To reduce the meeting duration, voters will be asked to table several citizen petition items and zoning amendments until a special town meeting later this summer.

Voters planning to attend must enter the MMRHS driveway on Route 7 and proceed to the main high school entrance area. There, they will be checked in and given their Annual Town Meeting warrant, supporting documentation and colored voting cards.

“The good news is, there are no PowerPoint presentations,” said Pruhenski. “Any presentation will be handed out in paper format”.

Non-residents of Great Barrington may not attend the June 22 meeting unless they seek permission, in writing and in advance, from Town Moderator Michael Wise, michaelwise@earthlink.net.