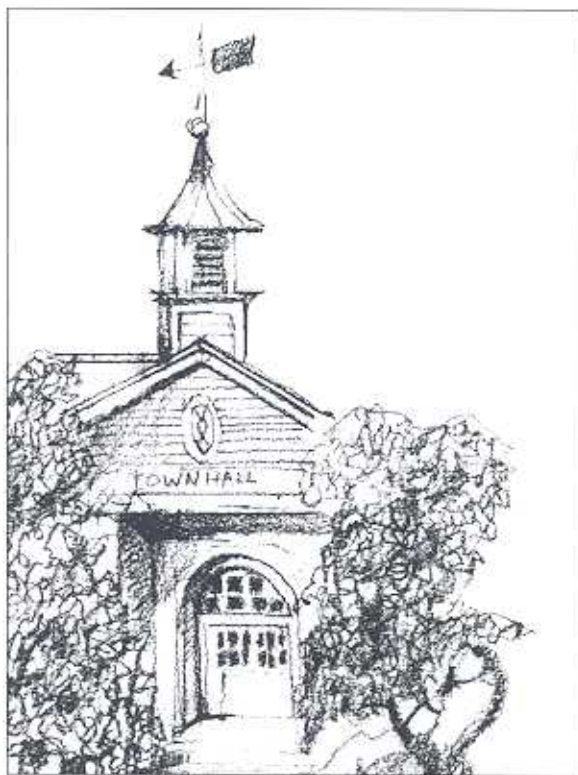




Incorporated 1787

TOWN of WESTON
GUIDE to GOVERNMENT





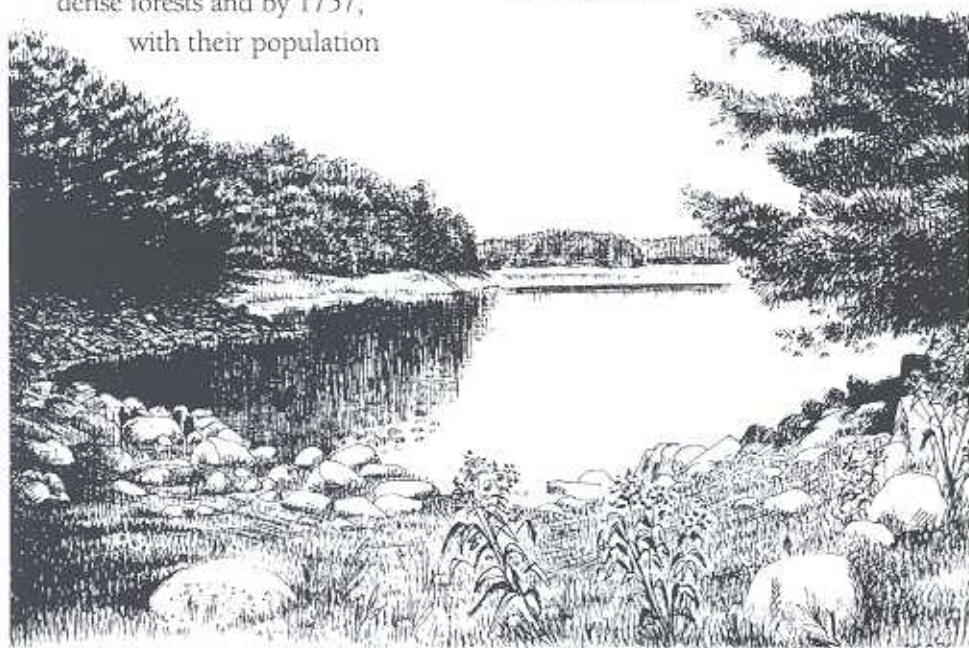
H U M B L E *beginnings...*

The town of Weston was settled as early as 1671, by mostly second sons, who broke away from the town of Fairfield to make their own way in the "back country." Once there, they joined the farmers, hunters, trappers and others who could not afford the more fertile soil of the coast. Instead, these "outliers" made do by cultivating crops that did well in Weston's glacial soil, such as onions, potatoes, corn, oats and rye. They hunted game in Weston's dense forests and by 1757,

with their population

growing, the group officially separated from Fairfield to become the town of Weston.

This spirit of independence is alive and well in Weston today. The town is governed in much the same way it was in those earlier, simpler days. Weston still uses the "Town Meeting" form of government, a "one person, one vote" system determined by majority rule, and founded on the belief that every eligible voter is a legislator.



Saugatuck Reservoir



How does WESTON TOWN GOVERNMENT work?

Weston is organized under a charter. This document, along with the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, guides how all the business of the town is conducted.

While most legislative power rests with the voters through Town Meetings, the remaining power is vested in an elected Board of Selectmen. The First Selectman is the chief executive and administrative officer of the town who presides at Board of Selectmen meetings and initiates the Annual Town Budget Meeting (ATBM) process.

The Board of Selectmen enacts and amends ordinances; creates, changes or abolishes agencies; makes official appointments; oversees the operation of town government; and, at the direction of the First Selectman, is responsible for periodic reviews of town needs. The Board has limited financial powers and the town charter provides a method by which actions of the Board of Selectmen may be overruled by citizens at a Town Meeting.

Selectmen and other town officials holding elective office are elected for two, four or six-year terms at the November general election held in odd-numbered years. An exception is the election of the Registrars of Voters, who are elected for two-year terms during the biennial state elections held in even numbered years.

On all boards and commissions, no more than a bare majority (a majority of one) may be of the same political party.

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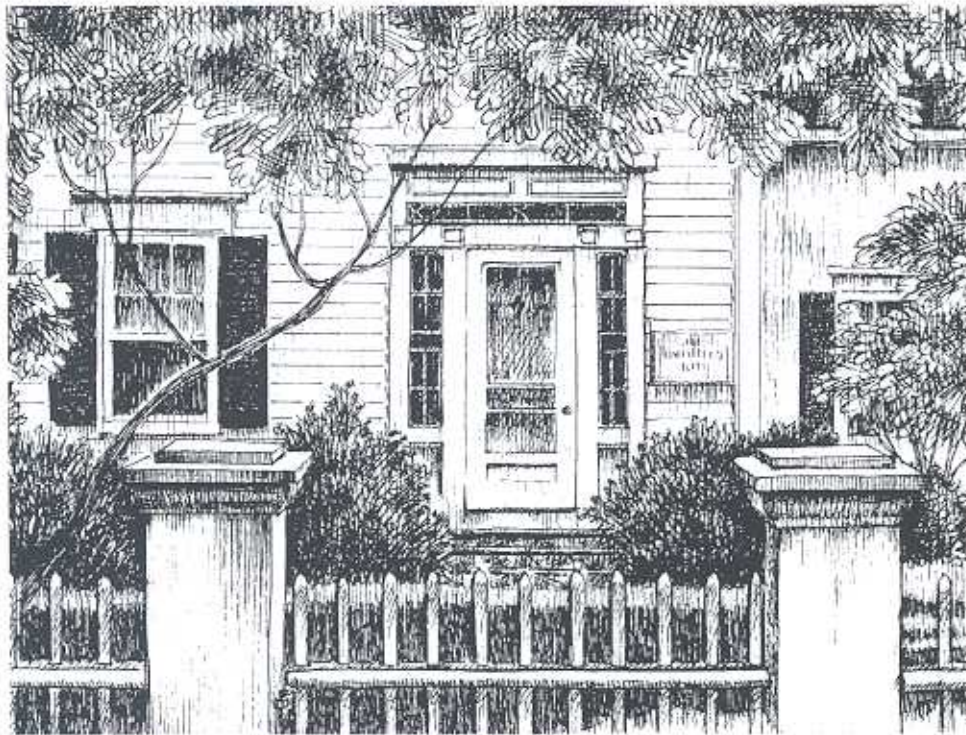


Town Party Committees

The Democratic and Republican political parties in Weston each have a Town Committee traditionally comprised of 25 members. Members are elected every two years (even-numbered years) by party membership at a party caucus called for that specific purpose. Copies of each party's rules are available in the Weston Town Clerk's office.

Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees may be created by the Board of Selectmen for specific purposes. Members have no formal term of office and the make-up of ad hoc committees need not satisfy charter requirements concerning minority party representation. These committees disband when their work has been completed.



Jarvis Military Academy, c. 1835



How does the TOWN MEETING form of GOVERNMENT work?

There are two types of Town Meetings. The most important is the Annual Town Budget Meeting or ATBM. This meeting determines the town budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Board of Selectmen can also call for a "Special Town Meeting." Typical items that would require a Special Town Meeting include:

- The issuance of bonds, notes or borrowing.
- Extraordinary supplemental appropriations by a town agency or the Board of Education.
- The purchase, sale or lease of real estate for the town.

- The approval of certain contracts between the town and state and federal agencies.
- Any matter deemed to be of sufficient importance by the Board of Selectmen.

Who Can Vote?

*All registered
Weston voters
are members
of the Town Meeting.*

*In addition,
U.S. citizens
who own property
in Weston assessed
at \$1,000 or more,
who are at least
18 years of age
may also vote,
even if they are
registered to vote
elsewhere.*

In addition, as outlined in the charter and Connecticut General Statutes, a percentage of eligible voters in Weston can petition the Selectmen to call a Special Town Meeting for any reason.



Incorporated 1787



What's "THE CALL"?

...and other Rules for Town Meeting.

The community is notified of the date and time of the Town Meeting through a legal notice known as "the Call", printed in a newspaper with general circulation within the town. When a Town Meeting is called, the first order of business is the selection of a "Moderator", who conducts the meeting. In general, town meetings are called to "consider and act upon" items listed in the Call. During the Annual Town Budget Meeting (ATBM), the Call consists of three separate budgets: The Selectmen's Budget, voted on as line items for each town agency and service; The Board of Education Budget, voted on as one line item; and the Capital Budget, items from all agencies and the Board of Education costing over \$25,000 each that have a life expectancy of 10 years or more.

After a motion has been made and seconded, but before the vote (or action) is taken, the matter is put to the body for discussion and debate, pro and con. Questions concerning details of the

proposal are in order as are statements to influence the vote of other participants. The meeting itself may set a time limit on debate through motion, second and a 2/3 majority vote.

Action (voting) is generally taken by voice vote. In addition, the Moderator may call for a counted or "standing" vote on any item where he cannot clearly discern the outcome. If seven or more voters present at a meeting challenge the Moderator's determination of the outcome of a voice vote, a standing vote on the same issue is taken immediately. A Town Meeting may elect to take the vote on any question before it by paper ballot. Action of a Special Town Meeting may be decided by machine vote at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen or pursuant to a petition filed under 7-7 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Parliamentary rules for conduct of Weston Town Meetings are set forth in the "Weston Town Moderators Handbook", adopted in 1981. Copies of this handbook are available in town hall.



TIMETABLE for the ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING

Late November

The Board of Education reviews budget assumptions and enrollment projections.

Early January

The Board of Education reviews and votes on the school budget (usually several meetings).

By January 14th

Each town agency except the Board of Education submits preliminary budget estimates to the First Selectman. Proposed Capital Budgets items are also submitted.

By February 3rd

The Board of Education presents the school budget to the First Selectman.

By February 10th

The First Selectman presents proposed town budget to Board of Selectmen.

By February 25th

The Board of Selectmen presents proposed preliminary Town Budget and the Board of Education budget to the Board of Finance.

Early March

The Board of Finance reviews all budgets.

Late March to Early April

The Board of Finance holds a public hearing on the Board of Education, the Board of Selectmen's and the Capital Budgets. The Board of Finance then sets the budget to be voted on at the ATBM.

At Least five Days Prior to ATBM

Notice and Call of the ATBM is published in a local newspaper and copies of proposed Town Budget and tax rate are made available in the Town Clerk's office.

No later than April 22nd

ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING.

8:00 - 11:00 P.M.

If business is not completed, meeting reconvenes on following nights until completed.

After ten days, budget deemed adopted unless challenged.



Annual TOWN BUDGET MEETING rules

The ATBM has special rules of its own, outlined in the town charter, to ensure full and fair community participation:

- The ATBM "shall be convened no later than April 22nd of each year."
- The Meeting must begin at 8:00 p.m.
- If the first session of the Meeting has not completed its business by 11:00 p.m. it must adjourn to the following evening at 8:00 p.m., except on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.
- Items listed in the Call are voted upon by the Meeting in sequence. The Meeting may reduce any item on the Call, but may not vote to increase any item beyond the amount specified in the Call. After all items have been voted upon, the Meeting votes upon a single grand total of all items approved. If the final total is not approved, all items on the Call are reopened for further discussion and voting until a final budget total is approved.
- Any budget item of the ATBM may be challenged by petition to a machine vote, if the petition is presented 24 hours or more before the ATBM

and has the required number of signatures (5% of qualified voters). The ATBM would then vote on items not petitioned and reconvenes within 7-10 days and votes on petitioned items for a final decision and a final town budget.

- The Budget may still be challenged after the ATBM if 5% of eligible voters petition the selectmen for a referendum on specific appropriations or the total budget. If the petition succeeds, a machine referendum must be held within 7-14 days. If the referendum is defeated, the Budget is adopted as voted on at the ATBM. If the referendum succeeds on any item, another town meeting is held within 7-10 days and acts only on modified items from the referendum and the final total budget number. The budget is then deemed adopted.
- If any challenge to the ATBM delays the budget beyond July 1, the previous year's budget is used on a month to month basis. In such an event, state statutes provide that tax bills in the amount of the preceding year will be issued.



If a TOWN AGENCY needs more FUNDS...

If a town agency requires more funding during the fiscal year after the budget has been set, there are three levels of appropriations that can be applied for:

Additional and Supplemental Appropriations

Any agency may be granted an additional \$5,000 in a fiscal year by the Selectmen. Beyond that level, the Board of Finance may grant an additional amount if the total does not exceed 2% of the current tax levy in any fiscal year.

Extraordinary Appropriation

May be applied for by any town agency to both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance.

If not approved by either board, the agency may request a Special Town Meeting. At such a Town Meeting, a minimum of 10% of qualified town voters must be present to take action. A majority of that 10% is required to pass the extraordinary appropriation. This town meeting is also subject to the aforementioned Section 7.7 of the Connecticut General Statutes which allows for a machine vote.

What if I WANT to RUN for OFFICE?

The process for selecting candidates to run for office usually begins within the Democratic and Republican town committees, and follows the procedures outlined below:

Democrats

- Advertisements or notices describing the position are placed in local newspapers by the Town Committee's Nominating Committee.
- Potential candidates are interviewed and screened.
- Qualified candidates are recommended by the Nominating Committee to the Town Committee.
- The Town Committee endorses each candidate, creating a "slate."

Republicans

- Advertisements or notices describing the position are placed in local newspapers by the Town Committee.
- Qualified candidates are interviewed by the Town Committee.
- The Town Committee endorses each candidate, creating a slate.

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Both town committees then present their slates at the party caucuses. Challengers (those not endorsed by town committee) may be nominated as follows:

Democrats

- Nominations may be made from the floor.

Republicans

- Challenge petition submitted to the Town Committee before the caucus, in accordance with party rules.
- Name is then presented to the caucus as a "challenge" candidate.

Persons interested in becoming candidates with party endorsement who are not selected at the party caucus for inclusion on their party's slate may petition for a challenge primary. The winner of this primary becomes the candidate on the November ballot.

Unaffiliated CANDIDATES

Persons interested in being candidates for local office who are unaffiliated with a party may petition to have their name placed on the November ballot. An unaffiliated voter can also be endorsed by either party as a candidate through each party's normal selection process.



Toll House and Cobbler Shop, c.1844

The KEY to VOTER CHOICE in WESTON

Join a political party. Unaffiliated voters cannot exercise their full voter choice in local elections because candidates are selected at party caucus, where unaffiliated voters have no vote, and therefore no voice.

Attend your party's caucus and get your vote counted when candidates are being selected.

Become a candidate. Get involved in town committee. Run for an elected office. Join an appointed board or committee. **GET INVOLVED!**



Elected OFFICIALS

- Board of Selectmen-comprised of a First Selectman and two additional Selectmen for a two-year term.
- Tax Collector
- Registrars of Voters (1 Democrat, 1 Republican)
- Town Clerk
- Board of Education (7)
- Planning and Zoning Commission (7)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (5, 3 alternates)
- Police Commission (7)
- Justices of the Peace (10)
- Board of Finance (7)
- Board of Assessment Appeals (3)



Mill Pond and Dam

Appointed and AD HOC OFFICIALS/COMMITTEES

- Animal Control Officer
- Assessor
- Municipal Agent for the Elderly
- Code Enforcement Officer
- Tree Warden
- Building Inspector
- Board of Ethics (5)
- Library Board (9)
- Treasurer
- Parks and Recreation Commission (7)
- Emergency Management Director
- Conservation Commission (7)
- Town Attorney
- Panel of Moderators (4)
- Assistant Town Clerk
- Building Board of Appeals (5)
- Historic District Commission (5, 3 alternates)
- Commission for the Elderly (7)
- Deputy Registrars of Voters (2)
- Southwestern Regional Mental Health Board
- Fire Marshall
- Commission for the Arts
- Area 9 Cable Council
- Beautification Committee
- Southwest Regional
- Planning Agency (SWRPA) (2)
- Westport-Weston Health District
- Building Committee (7)
- Commission for Children and Youth
- Cemetery Committee
- Heady House
- Insurance Advisory Committee
- Devil's Den Preserve Committee
- Ivy Moore Cottage Administrator
- Jarvis Military Advisory Committee
- Nature Center Building Committee
- Southwestern Connecticut (SWCT) EMS Council
- Tower Committee
- Town Historian
- Transport Choices Coalition
- Veterans Affairs



NOTES

Town Hall

56 Norfield Road

Monday - Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 203.222.2500

Fax: 203.222.8871

Web Site: www.weston-ct.com

Board and Commission Meeting Schedules*

Board of Selectmen: 1st and 3rd Thursday of the Month

Board of Education: 3rd Monday of the Month

Board of Finance: 2nd Thursday of the Month

Planning and Zoning Commission: 1st and 3rd Monday of the Month

Conservation Commission: 1st Tuesday of the Month

School Building Committee: Every Wednesday of the Month

Most other boards, commissions, and committees also meet on a regular schedule.

Meetings are usually listed on the town's web site and must be posted in the town clerk's office.

- *Schedules vary to accomodate holidays, school vacations, etc.
Meetings may be added or cancelled with 24 hour notice.*



The LWV Mission Statment

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages active and informed participation of citizens in government, seeks to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

To find out more about The League of Women Voters of Weston visit our website:
<http://members.aol.com/lwweston>

Donations to the League of Women Voters of Weston Education Fund make publications like this one possible. Donations may be sent to:
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P.O. Box 1081, Weston, CT 06883.

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