

TOWN OF YORK
SELECTMEN'S POLICY
Timing of Referendum-Related Requests

All municipal matters put to the voters at a General (November) or Special General (May) referendum are put on the ballot by the Board of Selectmen (the Board). Good practice calls for ample opportunity for public consideration and input, and ample time for Board discussion and deliberation. With these objectives in mind, all requests to place matters on a referendum ballot shall be submitted to the Board in accordance with the following:

1. External requests shall be submitted to the Board a minimum of 6 months prior to the anticipated date of voting. A lead time of a year or more is not unreasonable for larger, more complex or more controversial proposals.
2. All topics shall first be discussed by the Board at a meeting in advance of a public hearing. There does not need to be a completed draft or document as long as the subject matter is well presented to the Board. The purpose of this requirement is twofold: to ensure familiarity of the Board with the topic at hand; and to give the Board the opportunity to have policy input prior to the hearing. If the matter involves a lengthy or complex document, the Board may require the opportunity to workshop a complete draft before deciding whether to bring the matter forward for a hearing.
3. The Board shall decide what to send forward for one or more public hearings. Nothing gets a public hearing without an affirmative vote of the Board. However, to ensure protection of minority rights, any ordinance brought forth by any member of the Board shall be forwarded to one or more public hearings.
4. Every proposal that would enact, amend or repeal an ordinance shall have 2 public hearings by the Board of Selectmen prior to submittal to the Town Clerk for inclusion on a ballot. This is in addition to the discussion meetings referenced above. Further, if such code proposals are forwarded by another Town board, committee or commission, that body shall conduct at least one hearing of its own prior to forwarding the proposal to the Board.
5. Because there may be unusual circumstances that would justify exceptions to this rule. The Board may vote to vary from compliance with the standards of this Policy if it finds this is necessary to best serve the public interest.
6. To help community officials and the public schedule their work and make requests in accordance with this schedule, the Board should adopt and publish a timeline for the next 3 future referenda. As these are easy to prepare in advance, adoption of timelines should occur at the annual meeting.