

Can a town cancel its Annual Meeting due to inclement weather?

Cancel? No. Postpone? Yes.

All municipalities are required by Vermont law to hold their annual meetings on the first Tuesday in March, unless a different date has been established by Town Charter. 17 V.S.A. § 2640(a). While the law does not make allowances for the canceling of town meeting, it does permit municipalities to adjourn their town meeting to another date. 17 VSA § 2640(a). We believe this authority would allow a town to convene briefly and then adjourn to a date and time certain. Our advice to municipalities that are faced with severe weather, which warrants rescheduling Town Meeting, is to assemble at least three voters. Ideally, one person should be the Moderator, and the two additional voters can make and second motions. The Moderator should start the meeting, one person can make a motion to adjourn the meeting to a date and time certain, and the other can second the motion.

If Town Meeting is “postponed” in this manner, it does not have to be re-warned. Fortunately, this means that municipalities would not have to wait another 30 days (the statutory minimum warning requirement) to reconvene Town Meeting. Nevertheless, municipalities should be mindful of the impact of an inadequate warning on voter turnout and strive to provide as much advance notice as is possible to their voters regarding where and when the reconvened meeting will take place.

- *Garrett Baxter, Senior Associate, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center*
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