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# Tips for a Successful Town Meeting Adoption

While it's hard to predict how Town Meeting will go in advance, there are tips that municipal staff and housing advocates can use before and during Town Meeting to help enable the successful adoption of zoning to comply with the MBTA Communities Law.

## Before Town Meeting

**Hold meetings early and often to discuss the MBTA Communities Law and the proposed zoning.**

These could be regular meetings hosted by the Planning Board or informal office hours hosted by municipal staff, such as coffee with the Town Planner. Try to provide as much information as possible and answer questions before you get to Town Meeting.

**Make sure the groups and individuals you are conducting outreach to understand the stakes and why it is important to show up for the Town Meeting vote.** Tailor your message depending on the stakeholder and explain how the MBTA Communities Law relates to their priorities. Encourage them to bring their friends and neighbors to Town Meeting and speak in favor of the zoning. This is especially relevant in towns with Open Town Meeting where any resident can vote.

**In towns with Representative Town Meeting, conduct direct outreach to the elected Town Meeting Members.** Mail them information about the MBTA Communities Law and why they should speak out and vote in support of the Section 3A zoning.

Some supporters may not feel comfortable speaking during Town Meeting. **Create pins or t-shirts in advance that Town Meeting voters can wear to show their support for the zoning.**

**Empower pro-housing advocates in your town to speak in favor of the proposed zoning** by providing scripts and other materials they can use to prepare for Town Meeting.

**Have one-on-one conversations with people who have a good standing in the community and that others are likely to listen to.** Encourage them to attend Town Meeting, invite their friends and neighbors, and speak in favor of the proposed zoning.

**Have one-on-one conversations with people who may be in opposition to the proposed zoning** in advance of Town Meeting to answer their questions and attempt to ameliorate their concerns.

**Test your presentation about the zoning that you will give at Town Meeting** to determine where the emphasis should be. Have others pretend to act as opponents so you can practice how you may respond to their comments.

**Figure out who writes the recommendations for the warrant articles** (usually the Finance Committee or Warrant Advisory Committee), attend their meetings, and explain why they should support your article.



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**Create short videos that voters can watch in advance of Town Meeting** to provide necessary background and explain why the proposed zoning is important. This can be as simple as recording yourself speaking over a PowerPoint presentation.

**To the best of your ability, try to predict what floor amendments will be so you can test different scenarios in EOHLA's compliance model** to see if those amendments would render the zoning non-compliant. For example, if you have heard in meetings or on social media that people have concerns about the proposed height limit for the zoning district, test what a lower height would do to your unit capacity and density numbers.

## During Town Meeting

**If possible, encourage supporters to speak first** to set the tone at Town Meeting.

In your presentation or testimony, **be sure to connect the proposed zoning with past planning efforts to emphasize how the MBTA Communities Law relates to already-established community goals.** Speak to topics that are most important to your community, such as climate mitigation, walkability, or economic development.

**Encourage supporters to tell stories about their housing challenges** to drive home the importance of the MBTA Communities Law and provide a personal touch.

While planning staff should be available to answer technical questions during Town Meeting, **most of the communication should come from supportive residents so that voters are speaking to voters.**

**Based on past experiences, decide if it would be helpful to have consultants present.** Having an outside entity speak, instead of someone from within the town, may backfire.

**Post maps and other visuals in the hallway or lobby** that voters can look at as they enter the Town Meeting location.

**Provide fact sheets that are graphic and succinct.** This is especially useful if your Town Meeting goes for more than one day as voters can take the fact sheets home and read before the next session.

**Invite the municipality's State Representative and/or Senator who voted to adopt the MBTA Communities Law** to explain why they voted for it and the benefits it could bring.

**Keep the discussion at a high level.** Communicate the need for more housing in transit-accessible locations without getting into the weeds and causing more confusion.

Visit MAPC's website for the [Show Your Support Toolkit](#) for helpful Town Meeting resources.

### Contact:

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