TOWN MEETING CLICKERS

## What are Town Meeting clickers?

Town Meeting clickers are simple, secure, wireless, TV-remote style devices used to transmit each Town Meeting member's vote anonymously to a computer for tabulation and display. Each clicker has buttons for voting Yes, No, and Abstain, as well as buttons for additional inputs if needed. When each voter checks in at the registration table they are given their own unique clicker.

When the Moderator opens voting on a motion, each member submits their vote by pressing a button on their clicker during the timed voting period following a motion.

The signals are securely transmitted to a central computer that automatically calculates vote margins for a simple, 2⁄3, or any other majority. The computer can be connected to a projector to display the results after the voting period has closed.

The total time to launch and tabulate a vote by clicker can be as little as one minute.
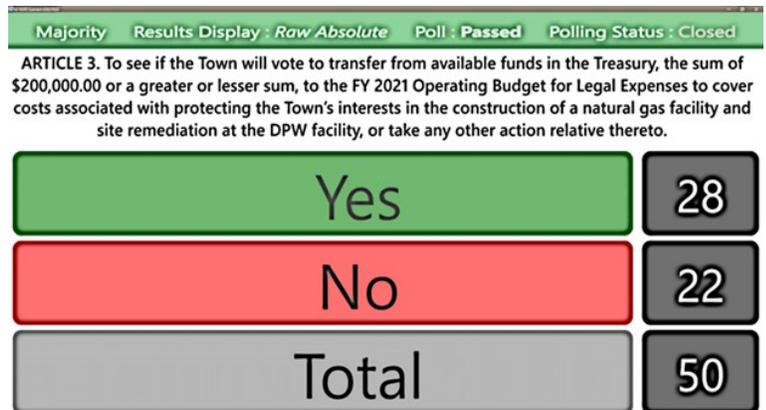
Why do towns decide to use clickers?

- **Accuracy.** Tabulating votes by computer reduces the possibility of erroneous vote counts and produces an auditable and transparent record of vote outcomes.
- **Privacy.** Votes by clicker are secret, reducing the chance someone might vote a certain way out of intimidation or embarrassment, producing results that better reflect the will of all voters. After each vote, the totals are stored in the computer but votes attributable to each clicker are cleared.
- **Efficiency.** Votes that require a count of hands can take 10 minutes or more and votes that require a paper ballot can take 30 minutes or more. A vote by clicker takes 1 minute.
- **Engagement.** Most towns that use clickers report that their voters enjoy using them and have seen an increase in turn-out for Town Meetings after regularly adopting the technology.

Why do towns decide not to use clickers?

- **New technology.** Adopting new technologies can be confusing for some voters and might cause them to avoid Town Meeting or avoid voting.
- **Cost.** Some towns have decided not to pursue the use of clickers because of the cost of purchasing or renting the system.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much will it cost?
Amherst has gifted 250 Option Technologies Inc. (OTI) clickers to Shutesbury. Using these means Shutesbury would only need to hire OTI for technical support, which would cost **$2,984 for the first year and $495 each subsequent year** with a Town employee or volunteer trained to run the system. OTI has also offered to let the Town trade in the older clickers (photo below) for a credit to buy newer models (photo above), which are covered by warranty and have a lifespan of at least 10 years; with the trade-in credit, this would be a **one-time cost of $2,750**. For comparison, buying 250 new OTI clickers without the credit would cost $7,300. For further comparison, another company, Echo360, provided a competing quote for 250 clickers at $18,620. The amount of the trade-in credit from OTI will reduce significantly every additional year if the Town decides to wait and instead trade in the units in a future year. There are also ways to generate revenue from owning clickers to offset these costs by renting them to neighboring towns to use for their Town Meetings.

Are clickers secure?
Clicker systems are closed, offline systems that use one-to-one radio frequency broadcasting to communicate encrypted data between the clicker and the receiving computer. Neither the clickers nor the central computer is connected to the internet or cellular signals, so they cannot be hacked, and data is not stored in the individual devices. This is the same technology used by the U. S. House of Representatives and Senate and the Massachusetts legislature.

Do other towns currently use Town Meeting clickers?
At least 80 other Massachusetts towns currently use clickers for voting at Town Meeting, including neaby communities such as Belchertown, Conway, Erving, Longmeadow, North Brookfield, Orange, South Hadley, Ware, and Winchendon.

How would I know if my vote was recorded correctly?
With most systems, the computer transmits a confirmation of the vote back to the clicker for visual confirmation. You can see on your clicker what your vote is, and you can change your vote up until the moment voting officially closes on a question. In addition, you can see on the display screen that your device number's signal was received by the computer.

How are results displayed?
With most systems, the total number of votes cast can be displayed live during the vote, but the breakdown of the Yes, No, and Abstain votes is typically not shown until after the vote closes. After voting closes, the vote breakdown can be displayed as either total numbers or by individual clicker number (a number known only to that individual voter).

What happens if a clicker stops working?
All the clickers undergo an accuracy diagnostic prior to the meeting's start and a test vote can also be held at any time to ensure all units are functioning normally. If a clicker fails during the meeting, it can quickly be replaced with a new device at the registration table.

Are clickers dangerous?
The radio energy emitted by a clicker is less than 1% that of a cell phone and is similar to the amount put out by a TV remote control. The clickers present no health risks to users.