

COVID-19 School District Meeting Information 2021

- Town Meeting Day is Tuesday, March 2, 2021.
- The last day to post warnings is Sunday, January 31, 2021.

School Board May Vote to Use Australian Ballot in 2021

Under Vermont law, only a vote of a municipality's voters allows the municipality to switch to an Australian ballot system. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vermont Legislature passed [Act 162](#) which allows school districts that normally vote from the floor at their annual and special meetings to instead use Australian ballot **by vote of the school board**. The temporary legislation allows any or all school district meetings to be conducted via Australian ballot in the year 2021.

Sample Motion: "Pursuant to Act 162 of 2020, I move to conduct the _____ school district's 2021 annual meeting using the Australian Ballot voting method for all articles."

Please note: when using the Australian Ballot system, an in-person polling place is required on the day of the election. The polling place must open between the hours of 5:00-10:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m. The warning must identify the polling place, date and time. The polling place must operate in accordance with all current [COVID-19 Polling Place Health Guidelines](#).

Informational Hearing Required If Using Australian Ballot

If the school board votes to use Australian ballot, an informational hearing is required pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(g). The informational hearing can be held remotely per [Act 92](#).

Waiver of Statutory Deadlines or Provisions in Articles of Agreement

Act 162 allows the Secretary of State to waive statutory deadlines, statutory provisions, or other provisions in a school district's articles of agreement, related to a municipal election in order for the school district to apply the Australian ballot system to its meeting. This is typically necessary for waivers of statutory deadlines.

The school board must request this waiver. We strongly recommend that school boards consult legal counsel for review of their district's articles of agreement to

determine whether a waiver request is necessary. Please direct waiver requests to Will Senning, Director of Elections, via email: Will.Senning@vermont.gov

Floor Meetings Must Comply With Health and Safety Guidance

Any school district that continues with a floor meeting must do so in compliance with the relevant health and safety guidance from the CDC, VT Department of Health, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Secretary of State's office.

Collection of Voter Signatures Not Required

Act 162 removes the requirement that a person needs to collect voter signatures to have their name placed on the ballot as a candidate for a local election that is held at a 2021 municipal meeting. Signatures are still required for petitioned articles.

Resources

[Secretary of State's Town Meeting Reminders and Warnings](#)

[Model Australian Ballot Informational Hearing Notice \(VLCT\)](#)

[Model Meeting Warnings \(VLCT\)](#)

Please contact Will Senning or J.P. Isabelle, Elections Division, Secretary of State's Office, if you have any questions about adapting the above resources for 2021 school district elections: Will.Senning@vermont.gov JP.Isabelle@vermont.gov

If you are looking for general information on elections, election results, or running for local office, please call 802-828-2363 or visit the [Vermont Secretary of State's Office, Elections Division's](#) website.