

Comments from Bethel Town Meeting Surveys, March 2015

Question 5: If/When you DO attend Town Meeting, why do you attend? (OTHER Responses)

- To be able to comment
- Would LIKE to be able to bring up issues that matter to me, but never know quite how to do that and don't really feel comfortable with the microphone and format.
- I don't
- I don't
- To attempt to have a voice in Bethel discussions
- It is a rite of spring and a privilege
- All the above
- School work

Question 6: If/When you DO NOT attend Town Meeting, why don't you attend? (OTHER Responses)

- Weather
- Never missed
- I have always attended
- I haven't made time in the past
- I just moved here
- In the past I did not know I could have the day off from work
- I come, but I hate town meeting!
- Out of town
- No good reason
- Does not move along fast enough
- Tired of being lied to
- Other things on schedule
- I have a practice
- When it is held in town hall
- Out of town
- Didn't attend while in college - away
- Fate
- Think a lot of people have ludicrous/uneducated ideas and expectations
- Don't think it's important to me in all years. Always the same people speaking. Don't care for animosity that sometimes happens. Too much "posturing."
- Out of state
- Don't like the meeting at the school. Needs to be in the town hall, which is the overall purpose of the building.

- I hate the negativity and it does not represent our town! Only the vocal negative are heard as the majority. We need more Australian ballot!
- New resident

Question 7: What do you like about Town Meeting?

- Learning about what is going on
- Everything - especially with the additions of recent years
- To learn about important issues and voice my opinion if need be.
- Well organized; all able to talk
- People
- It is citizen democracy at work
- Like having it at school
- Democratic process - seeing community come together and decide on important issues.
- First time attendance
- The ability to have a say in the running of the town.
- The ability to vote
- To know what is going on and to vote
- Because I get to vote
- I learn about important stuff
- Citizen action in government
- Democracy in action
- Participatory Democracy
- Discussion
- The opportunity for community to have a say in what it is their money supports/the goings on of their town.
- It is the way we access our local government
- Seeing everybody
- History and resident duty
- Seeing friends and neighbors, being a part of decision making
- Feels good to see the "turn-out" - citizens interested in our Town! Great!
- Keep up on local business
- Community gets a say
- Hearing the town's voice
- Orderly
- Pure democracy
- I like it at the school. More room, more parking
- Having a vote
- Community

- Well Moderated! Recently it seems like it is moving in a more positive, community-minded direction
- Seeing old friends
- Discussion is better than just doing a ballot
- Personal interaction
- This is my first town meeting so I will find out about them today
- Seeing neighbors and PIE!
- A chance for all voices to be heard
- All the things mentioned in #5
- Participation by many, seeing democracy in action, ability to join in
- Glad to see it in the school again, better access & parking for all here
- The premise is good. The reality is less attainable to make a difference
- Tradition
- Getting more information that's not included in the town report
- The whole concept of it. Allowing people to speak. The work to create community.
- Pie and learning about town issues
- Eating pie. Seeing people you don't always see, as well as issues in town
- Seeing the people who are behind the town, listening to residents' discussions
- Civil discussion, seeing friends and acquaintances, sense of empowerment and pride in self governance
- Community, democracy
- That it is open to townspeople coming and asking questions and having discussions on important issues happening in the town
- Feeling of community - having a voice in how our tax dollars are spent.
- Chance to voice opinions
- Sense of community and discussion and decision on important issues
- That Bethel has this transition
- Transparency of town budget. Nice to see people
- Everyone being able to speak
- all circled on #5
- Being able to voice my opinion. Seeing friends and neighbors and meet new people
- Speakers so you can hear
- Keep me informed about them
- Everything
- Citizen participation
- Gets people out
- High participation
- I enjoy seeing my neighbors and discussing topics that impact our community.
- The democratic process to problem solving and budgeting
- Knowing where money is being spent

- Voicing my opinion. Hearing others' plans and strategies
- Getting to hear everyone's opinions about what is happening in town
- Resident duty
- Hear opinions
- Love the tradition of democracy and inclusion that's so unique. Like the chance to put names to faces and learn about what's happening.
- It is a gathering with a purpose
- Seeing people and discussing issues
- Everything
- Democratic process at work! Everyone may have their say
- Participatory Democracy
- That people get to discuss issues in the town
- I like the whole idea of the community coming together after a long winter. It's a wonderful tradition that seems to be important to the town.
- Traditional form of town decision-making
- Knowing what is going on in the town
- The information, chance to interact with the leaders, and a chance to both hold and express an opinion.

Question 8: What would you change or improve about Town Meeting?

- I like it at the Town Hall
- I think quarterly community meetings would be nice
- More via Australian ballot
- Nothing
- More opportunities to be involved during the year outside of Select Board Meetings and Town Meeting.
- Unknown
- I like the 10 am start time but a different time might encourage participation
- Not sure
- Have a lunch, then school meeting
- Have town and school vote at the same time
- Nothing
- There are too many town members that cannot be here to vote. Town meeting should be on Sunday, paper voting on Tuesday (people cannot afford the day off)
- More points of view
- Time
- Increase opportunities for voters to deliberate important decisions. Enhance year-round info/involvement
- More comfortable chairs
- Make it so everyone can talk
- Seems to be fine - in the gym - room better suited

- A lot of great change has already been made
- Pre-meeting to air grievances
- Bring it back to the town hall where it should be
- Make it so everyone can speak
- Bring it back to town hall
- Have town meeting in town hall
- Don't all articles need a second?
- Start on time
- More input on line items in budget. Goal of selectboard needs to be level budget or less!
- Advertise better about all the perks (child care, pie) of town meeting. Find ways to reach out to involve community - especially younger folks in their 20s and 30s. Network better with town folk and outreach to get new town residents involved.
- Hold it all at the Town Hall
- Reduce the too strong and cool breeze blowing out of ventilation system
- It is great as is
- It would be good if more information were provided about certain lone items. For example the \$5000 for police expenses was not explained anywhere in the town report.
- The sound system was not good for parts of the room and I found it insulting when I told the guy in charge of sound that we could not hear where we were sitting to "change your seat"
- Remain at the school
- Stay at the school
- Pie - great idea; some paraphrasing if the issue is complicated, or give examples that people can understand
- Either change the time to 'evening' together with school meeting
- Would like to see Town/School meetings to be done at same meeting
- Turn blowers off in gym = sound pollution
- nothing
- The first seven items goes too fast and one does not hear the nominations. The microphone needs to get to those who are nominating people.
- Combine with school meetings
- Get greater representation of our town. Ten percent of the town is not enough for voting. It is far too negative. How do we change this dying tradition and get more youth/young parents involved. It is funny how the 10% who don't pay taxes get so much air time - what about that only 10% make all of the decisions at town meeting.
- Voting should be adapted to fit all voters - longer time period for voting, electronic, in absentia. Is there really a need to meet? We have a variety of ways and means to disseminate information to people.
- Combining school and town meeting
- Maybe a potluck lunch?

- Keep it at High School
- Town hall
- I like the town hall better - if there can be childcare somehow. I would really support a time limit on individual comments
- Lunch followed by school budget meeting. Both meetings back to back. Keep the captive audience once you have them
- See more business participation. Opportunity to showcase local business
- Do the school budget first as more people attend in day light
- Back to back with school meeting with meal in between
- There seems to be people who make this an annual opportunity for negativity and personal attacks that are baseless. It is frustrating and reflects negatively in our town.
- Combining with school budget meeting
- Move to weekend and move to be right before school vote
- State-wide day/morning off work to allow attendance. Name table tents for 'upfront' persons
- Go back to town hall
- Always have at school
- I find the format frustrating and boring at times. Hard to understand what terms mean, exactly, and a lot of comments reference people or things that don't make sense to newcomers or people who aren't steeped in local politics and issues. It's not a very inviting format for people new in town. Would like to see more of an opportunity for community building - a potluck or other way for people to meet and get to know each other and talk about issues.
- Time conflict with work is always a problem
- Get more people to show up
- Nothing
- More accessible for folks who do not have paid time off to attend
- A better educated body politic so that more feel conversant with the issues and are comfortable with participating.
- I wouldn't because I don't go
- Length/boringness
- I wish that our Town meeting: 1. could be at the town hall. I feel that it's the center of the town and helps area businesses and 2. I would like to see a lunch served after the meeting. It's a time to bring the town together.
- Shorten it and make it closer to school meeting
- I would add a time limit to how long people, representatives aside, can speak each turn. Say 3-5 minutes tops, then give another person a chance to speak. No limit on turns, though.
- Discuss the careless spending of our taxes for the schools. Merge the schools, we can't support what we have.

Question 9: If Town Meeting could start at a different time of day to accommodate people's schedules, what time would you prefer? (OTHER responses)

- Current is fine
- Possibly Saturday to attract a larger group of citizens
- Early afternoon with School Meeting following
- Mid afternoon, followed by potluck, followed by school meeting
- Town Meeting and school board held one after the other with lunch break
- I think people who care will make an effort to attend regardless of time
- Like tradition
- Whose schedule?
- Whose schedule? What times? State law allows for time off so I can't picture what schedules would need to be accommodated?
- Leave alone
- The time is now. Works now
- Late afternoon with a potluck dinner in between meetings to expand attendance at school meeting
- No change
- No change
- Evening
- Have one meeting, then lunch, then the other meeting
- Back to back with school meeting. Maybe lunch break
- Same day and time as school budget
- Would like it to be the time most people can attend; would like the school meeting at the same time
- Maybe Saturday
- Would like to see town meeting day be a state holiday in order to encourage more people to come to the meeting.
- 7 pm; another time that is convenient to parents/working adults
- School meeting following regular meeting
- Saturdays
- Move town & school meetings closer together
- I like the current schedule
- After work
- Fine the way it is
- Just before school budget or Saturday
- Evening
- Closer to school meeting would be nice
- Evening
- Not sure if it would actually be effective or not, but I'd be willing to attend on a weekend day if it could dramatically improve turnout. While legally anyone can

take a day off, some are not willing to sacrifice a day's wages, and I don't think anyone should have to make that decision in order to participate.

Question 10: The Town Meeting Solutions Committee would like to identify a few issues that Bethel residents are particularly interested in discussing and addressing in 2015. Which issues interest or concern you most? (OTHER responses)

- Drug issues in our town
- Sidewalk for river street put back & maintained
- E and F (school spending and quality of school education) go hand in hand
- Increase in heroin use/sales on main street
- Speed limit enforcement (village, camp brook rd)
- Actually all these interest me.
- What are Bethel's plans for 2016 when VT Castings consolidates their two factories in Randolph and moves out of Bethel?
- Town response to drug dealing/drug abuse
- I want Australian ballot!
- Voice voters; these are hard to hear. I appreciate the work of the moderator to determine the winner but sometimes there is question with the room set-up/echo/etc. Paper ballots are better - or electronic.
- Drug Use and Sale
- Community policing plan
- All of the above
- Emphasis on dog ordinance control
- Definitely recreation and social offerings
- Getting citizens involved

Question 11: Please feel free to share any other comments or feedback about Town Meeting, the Town Report, or ways citizens can participate.

- Thanks for taking this seriously!
- Town Meeting should be in town hall
- Town Meeting NEEDS to be at the school
- As a person in my mid 30's without children in the school system I feel it is hard to learn about what is going on in Bethel. I turned to the town website and found it fairly useless concerning up to date information about events.
- It would be so much easier to hear in the Town Hall. Too much sound interference from blowers in the gym.
- Thank you for your research
- I would like to see the town support EC fiber in some way to bring the internet service to those parts of Bethel that have no broadband.
- Thank you for the work being done to create community (+ for pie!)

- Finding projects needed to be done and find a way to include the community
- I appreciate greater professionalism in town governance and long range planning. I wish the select board would share their work with the citizens a bit more. Not just that citizens should attend their meetings. Put more planning results out for us on forum or other means. The town report is much improved
Thanks.
- Like people went door to door after Irene for preparedness - people should go door to door to get this feedback.
- Pie is good! Thank you to Laura Rubenis and others. But there is not a way to get people involved more than word of mouth - townspeople sharing their good experiences of town meeting. Or can we work to make the experience of the exchange of ideas a good one and not a hostile one? Please consider a Safety Report to be included in the town budget reports. Can we know how many domestic violence reports, or methamphetamine arrests, or burglary, or speeding incidences occurred? Voice voters = these are and to hear. I appreciated the work of the moderator to determine the winner, but sometimes there is question with the room setup/echo/etc. Paper ballots are better. or electronic.
- Thank you for providing this opportunity
- Show up. Vote.
- Report is not easy to understand
- Love the innovation in town meeting and local government happening in Bethel. It's great to see Bethel in the news for positive reasons! Please keep experimenting and looking for ways to make the Town and Town Meeting more engaging and effective. It's a great tradition, but can work even better for a lot of people.
- Perhaps a time certain for the major budget votes
- I'd just like to thank the select board for all their hard work over the year as well as their terrific work at the town meeting. I think that each and every one of you spoke extremely well and presented information in a clear, concise manner that was easy for everyone to digest. Excellent job all around!
- Need to have the ability at the meeting to sign up for, join or participate in other community areas needed to pull the town forward. Things such as committees, Christmas/ Holiday improvements and activities, and the Forward Festival.