How to Vote Electronically

Town Meeting, Wayland Middle School, Monday April 9th at 7:30 pm

At last year's Annual Town Meeting, Wayland's citizens pioneered the use of wireless electronic voting. Instead of shouting out *Aye* or *No*, raising our hands, or standing to be counted, we used electronic handsets to register our votes quickly, accurately, and privately.

Over the course of two sessions, we voted 37 times; 10 of those votes were so close that without electronic voting, we'd likely have spent hours in standing counts. Instead, we averaged slightly more than one minute per vote. Just about everyone loved the combination of speed, accuracy, and privacy that electronic voting provided, so once again we'll be voting electronically at our spring Town Meeting.

The handsets look a bit like a TV remote control, but instead of pushing buttons to change channels, we push buttons to vote: the 1 button for *Aye*, or the 2 button for *No*. Your vote is displayed on your handset's screen and wirelessly transmitted to a computer that counts votes and displays results for the Moderator to announce. Nothing but these totals is permanently recorded, so your vote will remain private.

Because the new High School's parking capacity is still limited, this year's Annual town Meeting will be held in the Middle School's Gymnasium and Auditorium. We'll be using the north end of the Gym as a check-in area; as in past Town Meetings, check-in will be organized alphabetically by last name. As you're checking in, you'll be issued a handset for your use during that session.

Before each vote, the Moderator will summarize the motion or amendment being decided. He'll then announce the beginning of a 30 second interval during which you can convey your vote, and a "voting light" near the Moderator will be illuminated. To vote *Aye*, push your handset's 1 button. To vote *No*, push your handset's 2 button. If you accidentally push the wrong button, you can change your vote by pushing the correct button. If you don't want to participate in a particular vote, don't push any buttons during the 30 second voting interval; if you accidentally push the 1 button or the 2 button, you can change your vote to *Abstain* by pushing the 3 button. When the 30 second interval is over, the "voting lamp" will be extinguished, and the Moderator will announce that the vote is complete; shortly thereafter, the Moderator will announce the results.

If you inadvertently turn your handset off by pushing the power button in its lower-right corner; push this button again to turn your handset back on. Pushing any of your handset's other buttons during the voting interval will not change your vote, but for peace of mind, your handset will encourage you to *Re-Vote*; push the 1 button for *Aye* or the 2 button for *No*.

If you leave your seat during the meeting, please keep your handset with you. When you leave the Middle School – either during a session or at the close of a session – please place your handset in one of the boxes at each building exit. If you forget to turn in your handset, we'll give you a call the next day and ask you to return it.

Every handset will be tested before each session of Town Meeting, so the probability of a handset failing is very low. That said, if pushing your handset's 1 button or 2 button during a vote does not produce an *Aye* or *No* on its display, please go to the Help desk at the back of the room; you'll be provided with a paper ballot to record your vote, and you'll be issued a new handset. We don't expect this to happen, but like the Boy Scouts, we'll be prepared.

If we have a good turnout, then arriving voters will be seated in the Auditorium after the Gym is full. The colored dot on the front of your handset will indicate the room in which you're seated: a red dot for the Gym and a green dot for the Auditorium. You'll only be able to vote if you are seated in the correct room. To be sure you can sit together with family or friends, plan to check-in around the same time.

If you're physically unable to use a handset to vote, inform the person who checks you in, and you'll be seated in an area where your votes will be manually counted by Tellers. If you're wondering how much radio energy is used by a handset to convey your vote wirelessly, it's less than 1% that of a typical cell phone and only for brief instants, employing the same frequencies used for Wi-Fi wireless internet access.

ELVIS: Wayland's Electronic Voting Implementation Subcommittee