

# [***In images: New England's 'Town Meeting' tradition gives people a direct role in local democracy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BK8-49X1-JC5B-G0MH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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WHAT: Town Meeting is a [*New England tradition*](https://apnews.com/article/democracy-town-meeting-vermont-elections-civility-elmore-11d7d1b63037d054506e77e261aff87c) that dates back more than 250 years. It offers people a chance to get directly involved in local democracy. One day each year, townsfolk gather to hash out local issues, such as whether to buy a new firetruck or donate some money to the local food pantry.

WHY: Town meetings give residents a chance to talk, listen, debate and vote. Many people who attend town meetings say the tone is refreshingly civil when compared with the nastiness of national ***politics*** because people are debating issues with their neighbors face-to-face.

HOW: In Vermont, town meetings are traditionally held on the first Tuesday in March and in some towns, like Elmore, people sit down together afterwards for a potluck lunch.

WHAT’S NEW: The tradition is under threat, with many people feeling they don’t have the time or ability to attend. Many towns in Vermont have elected to move to a secret ballot system similar to the system used in national elections.

IN IMAGES: Here’s an Associated Press photo gallery from two town meetings in Vermont.

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