

4-Why didn't the Charter Commission choose RTM?

It may seem intuitive that the next logical step for Norton is to move to Representative Town Meeting (RTM) but, once we began to look into this option, it became clear that it is not the appropriate solution to address the concerns raised under Open Town Meeting (OTM). It does nothing to address our lack of efficiency, effectiveness, communication, or accountability.

Like OTM, RTM only meets twice a year. So, we would continue to be slow to respond to issues and opportunities alike. And because of this, RTM members don't have the opportunity to table a discussion in order to conduct additional research or the time to give an argument raised in the meeting further due consideration. Town Meeting is simply not compatible with the type of deliberative discussions that are needed to make well-informed and appropriate decisions for this Town.

And RTM may actually serve to compound existing issues like lack of participation, susceptibility to special interest groups and accountability. In our research, we found that other towns with RTM consistently have trouble filling seats and have multiple uncontested seats, making it easy to infiltrate RTM with members for the purposes of voting on one controversial issue—many of whom make little or no effort to serve thereafter. Without a challenger to a seat, it's impossible to hold an RTM member accountable by voting them out. It doesn't just diminish your voice—it takes your voice away entirely.

For these reasons, we unanimously concluded that there was little, if anything, for Norton to gain by choosing RTM.