

THE TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS OF ILLINOIS

township

Perspective

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PREPARING FOR 2026 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK MARCH 2 - 6
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Navigating the 2026 Annual Town Meeting: A Guide for Township Officials

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The ITAA: Your Strategic Partners in Governance

The Illinois Township Attorney's Association (ITAA) is dedicated to supporting the unique legal needs of township government across the Prairie State. As township officials, you carry the heavy mantle of grassroots democracy; the ITAA serves as your strategic advisor, problem solver, and guardian of the public interest. By providing a steady legal hand, we empower you to serve your residents effectively, ethically, and with the transparency they deserve. We hope that the addition of a regular Perspectives article from our organization proves helpful to you in your mission.

Shared Authority: The "Corporate Authorities"

A unique aspect of township governance is the sharing of "corporate authority." Unlike municipalities, where the board typically holds sole authority, a township's electors are considered the corporate authorities of the township. However, the Township Board carries out the legislative and administrative functions required to implement the electors' decisions.

Statutorily, the duly assembled electors have the power to take all necessary measures and "give direction" to the Township Board for the exercise of the township's corporate powers. This dynamic requires a collaborative relationship between the residents and their elected officials to ensure the township's strategic direction is fulfilled. This process most commonly happens at the "Annual Town Meeting (ATM)."

Preparing for the 2026 Annual Town Meeting

The ATM is the "purest form of democracy" remaining in the United States, where the electors—the registered voters of the township—exercise direct legislative authority. As we approach the April 14, 2026, ATM, proper preparation is essential.

Key 2026 Deadlines

- **March 1, 2026:** Deadline for electors to submit agenda items. Any group of 15 or more registered voters may request that an item be placed on the ATM agenda by providing written notice to the Township Clerk.
- **March 30, 2026 (15 days prior):** The Township Board must adopt the agenda, and the Township Clerk must publish (if applicable) and post notice of the meeting in three of the most public places in the township, including the adopted agenda.
- **April 12, 2026:** The Supervisor must file the Supervisor's Annual Financial Statement with the Township Clerk, who must post a copy of at the meeting room two (2) days before the ATM.
- **April 13, 2026:** The Supervisor's Annual Accounting and Highway Commissioner's Annual Report is due to the Township Board.
- **April 14, 2026:** The Annual Town Meeting. The meeting cannot begin before 6:00 PM.

Statutory Procedures for the Electors' Meeting (60 ILCS 1/40-5, et seq.)

When conducting the ATM (or any special town meeting), officials must strictly follow the requirements laid out in Article 40 of the Township Code:

- **Calling to Order:** The meeting is called to order by the Township Clerk at the hour fixed (not before 6:00 PM). If the Clerk is absent,

the electors may elect a chairman by acclamation to start the proceedings.

- **Election of the Moderator:** The electors must choose one of their number to preside as Moderator. The Moderator must take an official oath—administered by the Clerk or Chairperson—to faithfully discharge their duties before taking the floor.
- **Presiding Officer:** The Moderator is responsible for announcing the business, preserving order, and deciding all questions of order.
- **Voting Mechanics:** All questions are determined by a majority of electors present and voting. If a vote is questioned, the Moderator must "make the vote certain" by a division of the voters or a hand count.
- **The Meeting Record:** The Township Clerk acts as the clerk of the meeting and must keep "faithful minutes" in the township record. These entries, including every order or direction made by the meeting, must be signed by both the Clerk and the Moderator.

Powers of the Electors: What Can and Cannot Be Done?

The powers of the electors are specific and limited to those enumerated in the Illinois Township Code (60 ILCS 1/30-20). Some examples of what they *can* and *cannot* do are:

Examples What Electors CAN Do	Examples of What Electors CANNOT Do
Give Direction to the Board: Take measures and direct the Board in the exercise of corporate powers.	Set the Budget: Electors do <i>not</i> have the power to approve or reject the Township or Road District budget.
Direct Property Sales: Authorize the purchase, sale, or regulation of township real property.	Manage Personnel: Electors cannot hire, fire, or set the compensation of township employees.
Authorize Specific Services: Authorize mental health, police, or fire protection services.	Enact General Ordinances: Aside from specific statutory grants, electors cannot pass general laws (e.g., zoning, unless authorized).
Advisory Questions: Authorize advisory questions of public policy to be placed on a ballot.	Override the Board: Electors cannot "veto" actions taken by the Board that fall within the Board's exclusive legal powers.

Conclusion

The Annual Town Meeting is a celebration of local self-governance, but it requires adherence to statutory procedure. When in doubt, consult with your township attorney early. The ITAA is here to ensure that your 2026 ATM is not only legally sound but also a shining example of community engagement.