

Changes to Town Meeting Laws in 2025: *A Guide for Municipalities*



UPDATED September 2025

Summary of Changes Pursuant to HB 228

[HB 228](#) establishes a process for a primary petitioner to be identified for every petitioned warrant article submitted in accordance with RSA 39:3 and guarantees the primary petitioner's right to introduce a petitioned warrant article at town meeting for at least 10 minutes. If no primary petitioner is designated or identified on the petitioned warrant article, then the first person listed on the petitioned warrant article shall default to being the primary petitioner. The primary petitioner may also appoint a designee.

Moderators will need to ensure that a primary petitioner, or a designee, is identified prior to town meeting or the introduction of each petitioned warrant article. Moderators should ensure that the primary petitioner puts in writing who their designee is if they choose to have one. Additionally, moderators will need to time the primary petitioner's introduction of the warrant article to ensure the individual is allowed to speak for at least 10 minutes. If the primary petitioner or designee concludes their introduction prior to the allotted 10 minutes, the moderator should ask if the primary petitioner or designee has completed their introduction and then carry on with the town meeting as usual.

Effective Date: September 13, 2025

Statutes Amended: RSA 39:9 and RSA 40:7

Summary of Changes Pursuant to HB 737

[HB 737](#) automatically permits Keno, unless a municipality votes to prohibit it (i.e., opt out instead of opting in), and provides local governments the option to ban games of chance within their boundaries.

Under the new Keno law, municipalities will be required to permit Keno, unless the municipality votes otherwise. The new law also updates the already established voting procedure through RSA 39:3 for municipalities to vote to prohibit Keno. If the municipality has not voted to adopt Keno or had a failed vote or multiple failed votes, the municipality still needs to vote to opt-out of permitting Keno. Otherwise, Keno is allowed by default. **Municipalities have until June 1, 2027, to vote to opt out.** If a municipality does not vote to opt out by that date, Keno will be permitted by right.

HB 737 also establishes a new law, RSA 287-D:32, VIII, allowing municipalities to opt out of allowing games of chance and a voting procedure for such through RSA 39:3. This means

municipalities can vote to prohibit games of chance and establish a local prohibition on operator licenses from being issued within the municipality's boundaries by the lottery commission. However, existing games of chance licensed by the lottery commission are exempt from any vote to prohibit games of chance. If a town does vote to ban games of chance, it can then vote by local ordinance to limit the number of charitable gaming events and regulate how charitable organizations register for a gaming event. This new law is effective July 1, 2025.

New Keno Law Effective: June 1, 2027

New Opt-Out of Games of Chance Law Effective: July 1, 2025

Statutes Adopted: RSA 287-D:32 and RSA 284:51-a

Statutes Amended: RSA 284:42, RSA 284:45, VI (a) (10) and (b), RSA 284:51, RSA 287-D:7, III, RSA 287-D:8, VI, RSA 287-D:9, VI, RSA 287-D:10, III, RSA 287-D:13, II-V

Summary of Changes Pursuant to HB 200

[HB 200](#) eliminates the ability of the legislative body (town meeting) to approve spending in excess of an adopted tax cap and requires any override to be approved by town meeting by a 3/5 ballot vote. Prior to the enactment of HB 200, a tax cap did not limit the amount the voters could actually appropriate at the annual town meeting; it was only a limit on the budget submitted to the voters by the governing body or budget committee.

In a traditional town meeting, the voters were allowed to amend the proposed budget up or down even if a tax cap had been previously adopted. In a town using the SB 2 form of town meeting, the adoption of a cap also did not prevent the voters at the deliberative session from amending one or more warrant articles (or all of them) to increase the amount of a proposed appropriation or the total amount of all proposed appropriations. Of course, in any town with an official budget committee, the 10 percent limitation still applied, effectively capping the total amount that may be appropriated.

HB 200 amends paragraph III of RSA 32:5-b to provide that to override an adopted tax cap, the business meeting of a traditional town meeting shall vote by secret ballot to exceed the tax cap, and the vote to override shall be approved by a 3/5 majority. Presumably, the need to conduct a ballot vote to exceed a tax cap would arise anytime a motion to amend an appropriation warrant article would have the effect of exceeding an adopted tax cap.

For a town using the SB 2 form of government, HB 200 provides that if the warrant article for the operating budget results in appropriations exceeding the tax cap and receives less than 3/5 majority in favor, "the adopted operating budget shall be reduced by appropriations already raised to remain compliant with the tax cap under this section." The statute does not clearly define "appropriations already raised." If the proposed operating budget in an SB 2 town with a tax cap is amended at the deliberative session to exceed the tax cap, and the operating budget is nevertheless approved by a 3/5 majority, it is unclear how this affects the votes on subsequent warrant articles also containing appropriations. The statute also does not state whether all such additional warrant article appropriations amended at the deliberative session to exceed the tax cap, either individually or collectively, be approved at the ballot session by a 3/5 majority.

Significantly, this amendment controlling the override of a town tax cap applies to towns with tax caps adopted prior to the effective date of HB 200.

Effective date: September 13, 2025.

Statute Amended: RSA 32:5-b.

Summary of Changes Pursuant to HB 374

[HB 374](#) amends RSA 32:5-b clarifying how a tax cap using inflation and changes in population or attendance at school districts will be calculated. New definitions of “Attendance,” “Base Amount,” and “Population” are provided along with a clarification that official inflation figures (from either the Bureau of Labor Statistics or American City and County) shall be as of October 1st preceding the date of the budget hearing held under RSA 32:5, I. HB 374 also amended RSA 32:5-c concerning the phrasing of the questions for the adoption of a tax cap specifying the ballot language for a tax cap using a multiplication factor. In addition, HB 374 amends RSA 32:5-e, School District Budget Cap, and RSA 32:5-f, Adoption of School District Budget Cap. Finally, HB 374 makes clear that the ability to increase the base calculation of taxes raised in the prior year by the amount raised from fund balance is applicable to all three forms of tax cap calculation methods, fixed dollar amount, fixed percentage or multiplication factor.

Effective: September 13, 2025

Statutes Amended: RSA 32:5-b, RSA 32:5-c, RSA 32:5-e, RSA 32:5-f.

Summary of Changes Pursuant to SB 105

[SB 105](#) has been adopted introducing new options for Town Budget Caps, RSA 32:5-g and RSA 32:5-h, effective August 23, 2025. A budget cap adopted under this provision would limit a proposed budget so as not to exceed the dollars spent per resident in the prior fiscal year times the current town population plus a fixed percentage, or percent annual increase for inflation based upon data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics or American City or County.

This new budget cap option also contains the restriction imposed by HB 200 that any override of a budget cap must be approved by a 3/5 ballot vote in favor by the annual meeting. Furthermore, this legislation also introduces a new limit on the authority of town meeting to amend warrant articles. Any question to adopt a budget cap under RSA 32:5-g shall not be subject to amendment by the legislative body. RSA 32:5-h, V.

Effective Date: August 23, 2025

Statutes Adopted: RSA 32:5-g, RSA 32:5-h.