What this is:

- The Government and By-Laws Committee is a committee of Town Meeting, the town’s legislative branch. Among other things it is responsible for:
- “The committee shall also be responsible for the five year review of the by-laws and for the review of proposed changes in the charter.”
How the Five Year Review works:

• The G&BL committee during its five year review *proposes* changes to the town by-laws. After that they have to be:
  • Approved by Town Meeting.
  • Approved by the Town Counsel.
  • Approved by the Municipal Law Unit of the State Attorney General’s Office (https://www.mass.gov/municipal-law-review)
What the G&BL Committee cannot do

• Change anything that is governed by state law. For instance:
  • Public/Private roads
  • Board of Library Trustees (https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter78/Section11)
  • Property along the coast
What we *did* do for this Town Meeting.

• In order:
• What we have done for the whole code of by-laws.
• Then chapter by chapter highlights for changes the committee has made. In general we have approved most of the recommendations of the Town Counsel, which largely had to do with citations, eliminations of no longer relevant material, and some clarification of language.
Recommendations for the whole code of By-laws:

Recommend that be renamed Select Board. This is the term the AG’s office has approved. Over 100 Massachusetts communities have adopted this term. “Town of Rockport” has been standardized as “Town.”

Added numbers in parentheses after spelling out the number.

Eliminated gender specific language (his, her) used for specific individuals in the code. Now referred to by title (“the Director”) or as “person.”

Updated state and federal agency names.

Standardized state law abbreviations using M.G.L.

Edited and corrected all citations to state and federal law into their proper format.

In general tried to edit complicated language into simple statements.
Chapter 1 : General Provisions

- C1 § 2 (a) Standardizes citations to MA general laws to M.G.L. Allows direct access to online text of state laws.
- C1 § 2 (b) Makes all references to Town Officers gender neutral.
- C1 § 2 (c) Cleans up definitions and adds new ones to explain abbreviations for Spring Town Meeting (ATM), Special Town Meeting (STM), and Fall Town Meeting (FTM), and “cause” for removal, Town Bulletin Boards now include the Town Website.
- C1 § 6 Updated to add subsection (b) that makes posting of meeting notices on the Town Website usable for downloading into a calendar program and making sure old postings are available on the Website for 18 months before they are archived. Address the handling of paper postings as well.
- C1 § 7 Meeting of Minutes will now be filed with the Town Clerk and done on the timetable required by the Open Meeting Law.
Chapter 2: Town Meetings

- Added a new section 1, specifying that Town Meeting is the legislative branch of town government.
- Eliminated the word “church” from § 1 c, ringing of bells
- Eliminated the chair of Finance Committee from the committee that appoints members of the By-laws committee, substituting the Town Clerk instead. That way the appointing committee is all elected officials.
- Specify that Town Meeting warrants will be posted on the Town website.
- Clarify that all resolutions, by state law, are non-binding and are only advisory in nature. A subsequent warrant article would be required to change the by-laws.
- Finance Committee meeting minutes will be filed with the Town Clerk rather than the Town Administrator.
- By-laws committee members may be removed for cause.
Chapter 3: Elected Officers

• Made it clear that electronic copies of the by-laws, the zoning by-law, and all town rules and regulations shall be available for free on the town website. Paper copies, as always, are available at the Town Clerk’s office, although copying charges may apply.

• Gave the Town Clerk power to edit town documents so that links (URLs), and citations, are current, likewise names of federal and state agencies that change as Presidents and Governors rearrange executive agencies.
Chapter 7: Finances and Fiscal Procedures I

• In C7A § 2 (a), now specifies that the School Committee will post a summary of the school budget on the Town Website, makes paper copies available in the offices of the Town Clerk and Superintendent of Schools and in any other way the Committee deems appropriate. Town Counsel suggested this change from the simple requirement of newspaper publication as this is the route most towns are taking now.

• To C7a § 2b we added a provision that School Committee meetings are governed by the state Open Meeting Law and that votes be by roll call. These changes were suggested by Town Counsel.

• C7A § 3 now states that the due date for the Board of Selectmen to submit a proposed town budget to the Finance Committee will be February 15 in order to allow time for consideration after January 31. This has been recommended by the Town Administrator and Finance Committee.
Chapter 7: Finances and Fiscal Procedures II

- C7A § 14a now requires that tax delinquents may now be reported “periodically” as well as annually. This change was suggested by Town Counsel.

- C7A § 14 e removes obsolete exceptions from licensing and permit rules relating to bicycle and child work permits that no longer are issued.

- C7B § 1 now requires all town officials, boards, commissions and committees to keep records “consistent with the requirements of the Public Records Law MGL 2.66” and post them on the Town Website. This will include meeting minutes.
Additional authority for G&BL

• During the continuing process of the current review the G&BL committee requests authority to make editorial changes to names of agencies, URLs, citations to state and federal laws and regulations, grammar, capitalization, punctuation, typographical errors, as well as to write conforming numerals and written numbers.
The End!