

Peer Town Analysis Dec 20, 2021

Prepared by Rob Carver for the December 21, 2021 meeting of the Town Meeting Subcommittee

Introduction:

Since our previous meeting, with thanks to David Wluka, I downloaded some very helpful data from the MAPC Data Common (<https://datacommon.mapc.org/>) and then reanalyzed the available data to discover attributes that accounted for voter participation in the 2018 Gubernatorial election. I've used that election as a proxy measure for citizen engagement. Among the new available variables were some factors that we had identified in our discussions, such as labor force participation, % of non-citizen residents, commuting times, and levels of education.

Interestingly, the number of housing units in a community was more informative in predicting voter turnout than the size of the population. Using the attributes that were informative for voter engagement plus a couple of factors that we expect to influence Town Meeting participation, I then performed several cluster analyses to rank all communities (except Boston) according to their similarity to Sharon.

The next few pages show the main finding of the analysis in 6 tables:

- Table 1 lists 33 towns most similar to Sharon as well as the predictor attributes for each.
- Table 2 and 3 summarize the legislative and Select Board sizes among the 33 towns
- Tables 4, 5, and 6 list the 10 towns most similar to Sharon for each of the three legislative forms

Table 1: 33 towns most like Sharon (~10% of state—arbitrary cutoff)

Legis	Charter	Name	Select Size	Reg Voters/ Pop %	Total Housing Units	FY 2018 EQ Val percap	% residents receiving assistance	non-Citzn 18+ %	Employed 16+ / labor force %	% with commute 1 hr +	% with Bachelors+ plus	White%	Cluster Distance*
OTM		Sharon	3	66.40%	6581	193548	4.7	7.3	86.80%	26.8	73.0	66.80%	0
OTM		Hopkinton	5	66.70%	6645	211613	3.7	6.8	85.70%	23.4	71.9	73.20%	0.79
OTM		Boxborough	5	60.50%	2362	184394	2.5	9.4	85.80%	21.4	66.2	67.10%	1.33
OTM		Andover	5	67.20%	13541	232212	3	7.6	86.30%	18.8	74.5	73.20%	1.54
OTM		Southborough	5	73.20%	3763	253902	2.7	5.9	86.50%	19.3	66.5	75.50%	1.64
OTM		Holliston	3	71.90%	5562	178702	3.9	5.6	87.60%	22.2	66.2	84.20%	1.71
OTM	1969	Acton	5	64.80%	9219	193695	6.8	13.6	88.70%	19.2	74.9	63.10%	1.88
OTM		Hamilton	5	74.30%	2925	199256	5.6	6.9	86.30%	24.8	69.3	88.90%	1.95
OTM		Westford	5	70.00%	9237	196511	4.2	6.3	89.10%	15.3	67.4	71.10%	1.99
OTM		Sherborn	5	74.50%	1562	304915	1.3	3.2	86.40%	30.4	83.6	81.70%	2.02
OTM	1970	Northborough	5	75.50%	5897	197475	2.8	6.7	86.40%	16.8	64.1	75.70%	2.02
RTM	1973	Walpole	5	72.10%	10042	187871	5.1	6.8	87.70%	21.4	53.2	82.90%	2.05
OTM	1972	Medfield	3	69.30%	4450	217102	2.6	3.4	82.80%	26.4	73.7	87.50%	2.07
RTM	1969	Swampscott	5	73.20%	6362	197117	6.6	4.4	86.60%	22.6	57.3	85.80%	2.09
OTM	1920	Mansfield	5	71.10%	9282	159005	4.9	3.5	88.20%	21.5	54.8	82.90%	2.11
OTM	1970	Westwood	3	70.80%	5801	292301	3.2	4.6	84.10%	17.9	71.5	82.80%	2.11
OTM		Ashland	5	66.30%	7495	158396	5	11.2	90.80%	17.4	58.6	68.50%	2.12
OTM	1994	Sudbury	5	66.00%	6556	244359	3.3	4.5	84.80%	16.1	80.5	80.90%	2.18
OTM		Norfolk	3	60.20%	3601	150638	2.2	4.2	87.30%	26.4	50.5	84.10%	2.18
OTM		Wayland	5	74.40%	5296	277157	2.5	3.7	85.10%	16.5	80.7	76.80%	2.22
OTM	1986	No Andover	5	65.00%	11914	160763	6.4	4.7	87.10%	15.7	59.7	78.70%	2.26
OTM		Foxborough	5	73.90%	7682	187298	8.4	3.5	86.70%	22.4	52.8	83.60%	2.29
OTM		Canton	5	69.70%	9930	216310	5.9	4.8	89.60%	15.8	55.1	72.90%	2.31
RTM	1975	Winchester	5	68.50%	8135	336137	2.4	7.9	89.50%	13.7	77.3	74.60%	2.31
Counc(9)	1978	Franklin		70.20%	12551	162552	4.6	4.1	85.90%	18.9	55.7	85.10%	2.36
OTM		Littleton	5	70.20%	3889	192290	6	5.3	85.20%	16.8	56.0	83.10%	2.37
OTM		Upton	3	70.90%	2995	151601	2.9	2.6	83.60%	20.8	60.1	86.60%	2.39
RTM	1927	Milton	5	77.90%	9844	218694	5.3	5.8	88.10%	14.7	61.0	71.00%	2.40
OTM		Lincoln	3	70.60%	2771	337241	6.3	2.4	82.30%	16.4	74.8	76.20%	2.42
RTM	1980	Natick	5	64.30%	15680	235341	3.7	12.5	88.30%	15.2	68.8	75.60%	2.43
OTM		Medway	5	72.10%	4826	155043	2.4	2.2	88.50%	21.2	59.0	88.30%	2.45
OTM	1957	Concord	5	70.70%	7295	342119	2.9	5.2	82.60%	15.5	74.2	81.80%	2.46
OTM		Hingham	3	73.80%	9930	309659	2.9	2	85.60%	30.8	71.2	91.50%	2.47
OTM	1987	Grafton	5	69.60%	7760	137479	6.2	4.5	88.00%	16.2	50.4	79.30%	2.48

* Cluster Distance is a constructed index of similarity to Sharon across the 9 attributes. The smaller the Cluster Distance, the more like Sharon. The absolute numbers are not very informative, but in this table, we can infer, for example, that Sharon and Hopkinton have far more in common than Sharon and Grafton.

Table 2: Legislative bodies among the top 33

Legislative Bodies	COUNT	%	Statewide %
OTM	28	82	74
RTM	5	15	9
Council	1	3	17

Table 3: Select Board sizes among the top 33

Select Board sizes	COUNT	%	Statewide %
3	8	24	50
5	25	76	50

Table 4: 10 Most similar OTM towns

Distance Rank	Charter Yr	Name	Select Size
1		Hopkinton	5
2		Boxborough	5
3		Andover	5
4		Southborough	5
5		Holliston	3
6	1969	Acton	5
7		Hamilton	5
8		Westford	5
9		Sherborn	5
10	1970	Northborough	5

Table 5: 10 Most similar RTM towns

Distance Rank	Charter Yr	Name	Select Size
11	1973	Walpole	5
13	1969	Swampscott	5
23	1975	Winchester	5
27	1927	Milton	5
29	1980	Natick	5
34	1986	Reading	5
38		Needham	5
42		Lexington	5
54		Burlington	5
56		Shrewsbury	5

Table 6: 10 Most similar with Councils

Dist Rank	Legislative	CharterYr	Name
24	Council (9)	1978	Franklin
37	Council (9)		Braintree
47	Council (11)		Melrose
63	Council (11)	1919	Newburyport
69	Council (9)		Beverly
84	Council (11)	1999	Weymouth
101	Council (9)		No. Attleborough
102	Council (9)	1980	Watertown
106	Council (9)		Bridgewater
109	Council (11)		Salem