



# Town of Natick

## Town Administrator's Office

**TO:** BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
**FROM:** MARTHA WHITE, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR  
**SUBJECT:** ARTICLE 1 OF THE 2017 FALL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
**DATE:** 10/12/2017  
**CC:** OPIOID TASK FORCE  
FINANCE COMMITTEE

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The Board of Selectmen has voted a favorable recommendation under Article 1 of the upcoming Fall Annual Town Meeting as follows:

### ARTICLE 1: FY 2018 OMNIBUS BUDGET

#### Board of Selectmen

Salaries	\$30,000
Expenses	14,150
Other Charges	5,000
Recruitment	25,000
Facilities Mgmt. Salaries	125,253
Police Dept Salaries (Dispatchers)	63,787
Fire Dept. Salaries (Firefighters & Deputies)	446,608
DPW Salaries (Supervisors & Administrators)	34,699
Sealer of Weights & Measures Salaries	8,448
Community & Economic Dev. Expenses	30,000
Employee Fringe/Other Personnel Services	50,851
Pension Assessment	4,815
Finance Committee request	20,000
Selectmen Contract Settlements	<u>(670,347)</u>
Requested Tax Levy Appropriation	188,264

The Finance Committee discussed Article 1 at their meeting of October 5th but neither of the two motions for Favorable Action - one consistent with the Administration's

requested appropriation of \$188,264 and the second for an appropriation of \$158,264 - received the necessary eight votes required to make a recommendation to Town Meeting.

Some Finance Committee members expressed reservations regarding the Finance Committee's \$20,000 funding request in support of timely development of Committee and/or Sub-Committee meeting minutes. However, most of the discussion regarding Article 1 was with respect to the Administration's request to increase the Board of Selectmen's salaries line item by \$30,000, which proposal was submitted in support of the Town's initiatives in response to the opioid crisis our community is facing.

To date, through the efforts of the Opioid Task Force, Ms. Sugarman and others, over 140 Town employees have received training regarding addiction and opioid overdose detection and prevention; protocols have been developed and implemented for follow-up visits to victims of overdose and their families - if willing - to offer information regarding access to recovery coaches and outreach workers; a bereavement group - The Journey - has been established to support those who have lost a loved one to substance use; a monthly workshop series and resource center has been launched to provide educational opportunities related to addiction and recovery as well as access to critical services such as treatment navigation, Narcan training, and recovery coaching; collaborations with community and regional agencies and organizations have been established and/or strengthened; grant funds have been obtained to expand residents' access to Narcan; and much, much more.

Despite such comprehensive and robust initiatives, the opioid crisis continues - in one recent week, there were four overdoses in Natick, one of which was fatal. While the Administration acknowledges that no amount of funding and associated staff can fully eradicate this scourge on our community, our initiatives can and have made a difference. But now, having close to one year of experience in the development and implementation of a broad range of recommended "best practice" initiatives and programs, it is clear that our successful execution of such efforts far exceeds one person's capacity.

Accordingly, under Article 1, the Administration requested \$30,000 to fund one-half year's salary for the position of Prevention Coordinator, which position would support the efforts of the Prevention and Outreach Program Manager, and which position would unquestionably be included in subsequent years' budgets. Note that the requested \$14,150 increase in the Selectmen's Expense budget is also intended to support our initiatives in response to the opioid crisis; generally, Finance Committee members did not express concerns regarding this request.

As noted, Finance Committee members extensively discussed the \$30,000 request to fund the Prevention Coordinator position. Members expressed concern that the responsibilities of this position were not adequately detailed, and that a long-range plan regarding the program and staffing needs should have been better developed.

Such concerns may not have been misplaced; the Administration acknowledges that we may have taken for granted that the urgency associated with this crisis would engender support for this proposal, and our initial presentations may have been lacking in details. The Finance Committee kindly agreed to further discuss Article 1 at their October 12th meeting, and the Administration developed and presented a more comprehensive proposal responsive to the input we had received from Finance Committee members.

At the Finance Committee's meeting of October 12th, after further discussion and debate with respect to the Administration's proposal, two motions were put forward, one of which was to support the Administration's request for \$30,000 in salaries and \$14,150 in expenses.

The other motion proposed to increase the Selectmen's expense budget in the amount of \$54,150. The objective under this motion was to provide the requested staff support through consulting or contract services, rather than hiring a full-time employee. The reasoning behind this proposal was that critical support for our opioid initiatives would be provided, while also providing the opportunity to evaluate and determine if the scope and responsibilities of this new position - as identified and prioritized by the Administration - are those that best meet our needs, without incurring the obligations associated with adding new personnel. During this discussion, there appeared to be consensus among Finance Committee members that such consulting or contract services would be relatively short-term; presuming that said evaluation clarified the most effective scope of responsibilities for a new full-time position, members would support funding for such position at the 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

The Administration's preference is to fund our initial request - \$30,000 for the new position of Prevention Coordinator and \$14,150 in expenses. Our subject-matter experts - Ms. Sugarman, the Director of Public Health, the Police Chief, and others - have researched best practices in other communities and assessed the needs and challenges unique to Natick, and developed a well thought-out evaluation that (1) concluded unequivocally that additional staff support is needed and (2) identified the role and responsibilities of a new position that would best facilitate an enhanced response to Natick's opioid crisis. However, we appreciate the Finance Committee's recognition of the importance of these programs and, in the interest of compromise and respect for the concerns and reservations expressed by Finance Committee members and others, the Administration supports the Finance Committee's recommendation to increase the Selectmen's expense budget in the amount of \$54,150.

Note also, regarding the Finance Committee's funding request regarding timely development of meeting minutes, the Committee approved the amount of \$10,000, rather than \$20,000 as initially requested. The resulting request under Article 1, as recommended by the Finance Committee and Administration, is as follows:

Board of Selectmen	
Expenses	\$54,150
Other Charges	5,000
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It should be noted that consensus between the Finance Committee and Administration regarding this recommendation under Article 1 was reached subsequent to the Board of Selectmen's consideration and vote on this Article; that is, the Selectmen's favorable recommendation was based on the Administration's initial proposal. The Board of Selectmen may wish to reconsider their vote under Article 1 at their October 16th meeting.

The materials that were provided to the Finance Committee for their October 12th meeting are attached.