

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

Section III – Questions with Response Boxes – To Be Completed By Petition Sponsor

Article # 28	Date Form Completed: 2019.02.23
Article Title: Establish Study Committee: Town of Natick Land Area	
Sponsor Name: Julian Munnich, et al	Email: julian.munnich@rcn.com

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	Attached Appendix 1
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	<p>At present The Town of Natick does not definitively know what its size by land area is. (15.99 sq.-mi. – 16.03 sq. mi.) Importantly, the component parts, by zoned use, are even less accurately known due to the vagaries of lakes, river, and wetlands. The actual area of land available for any zoned use is further reduced by conservation restrictions as well as ownership by federal, state, and municipal entities.</p> <p>-Broadly; knowledge of the size of these component parts is fundamental to being able to concretely consider Land-Use, zoning, and economic development.</p> <p>-There is a recurrent need for this knowledge to understand whether (and by how much) Natick may exceed the 1.5% land area test for Chapter 40B safe-harbor status.</p>
3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	The sponsors have no personal gain.
4	Describe with some specificity how the sponsor envisions how: the benefits will be realized; the problem will be solved; the community at large will gain value in the outcome through the accompanied motion?
Response	<p>Having actual (real) available acreage numbers for all the zoned uses and for conservation lands will inform future land use decisions by the Town. Natick will be facing significant decisions on how to balance its commercial and residential tax bases. This in the context of municipal services of schools and public safety being balanced with environmental preservation and water resource protection.</p> <p>Additionally; if it is determined that Natick is in Chapter 40B safe harbor status, then the Town can concentrate its housing efforts to address the needs of workforce-affordable housing instead of the “donut hole” housing created by the 40B mechanism.</p>

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5	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations
Response	It augments the data sets required to make informed decisions in all of these areas. Additionally, Natick may be in a position to utilize innovative approaches to leverage available land to enhance its tax base. There is also the need to address issues of full-spectrum housing options without triggering the detrimental skewing effects of c. 40B
6	<p>Have you considered and assessed, qualified and quantified the various impacts to the community such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town infrastructure (traffic, parking, etc.) • Neighbors (noise, traffic, etc.); • Environment and green issues (energy conservation, pollution, trash, encouraging walking and biking, etc.);
Response	There are no detrimental impacts with this Article. All of these topics would be informed by the data that is collected and confirmed.
7	<p>Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?</p> <p>To this point what efforts have been made to involve those participants who may be accountable, responsible, consulted or just advised/informed on the impacts of executing the motion?</p>
Response	<p>This initiative would rely on the work of a study committee specifically created for this purpose. The assistance of town staff in accessing and providing existing Town data is anticipated.</p> <p>The primary “default” town administrative entities have communicated that they do not have the time available to pursue this study topic on their own.</p>
8	<p>What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process, that • Appropriate town Boards & Committees were consulted • Required public hearings were held
Response	As with studies to collect information not yet elsewhere gathered; the most important outreach will occur at (or near) the conclusion of the project when those entities that would most benefit from confirmed data can seek to implement it in their areas of interest. (Open Space, Conservation Commission, Assessors, Economic Development, Planning Board, etc. would all be able to utilize this information in meaningful ways.)

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9	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	The Town is at a crucial time in having to make key decisions in the context of: -Development pressures; -Tax revenue enhancement; -School enrollment; -Demands on public safety; - Preservation of natural environment; and the upcoming 2020 census and its effect on Natick's 40B status.
10	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	The number of potential beneficiaries of the information has increased.
11	What are other towns and communities in the Metro West area, or the Commonwealth of MA doing similar to what your motion seeks to accomplish
Response	<p>Frankly, on this topic, it is difficult to find a peer-set or comparable-list of municipalities to match against Natick. It is rare for any municipality to create as much affordable housing, locate significant regional commercial activity, protect as much open space, establish bespoke zoning for an aging population; all while hosting major Federal and State land assets; all in a compact area of some plus/minus 16 square miles.</p> <p>Most other communities can contemplate the rezoning of large tracts of undeveloped land, or in the alternative, consider a master scheme of urban re-development. Due to the constraints that are inherent in the composition of Natick, these are not viable solutions on any large scale.</p> <p>For one aspect of land use; a preliminary "Proof of Concept" was completed using on-line numbers from the Assessors' data base. These are shown on attached Appendix 2 which, without benefit of proper numbers for land areas of roads, waterways, and permanently conservation restricted land, shows that Natick is essentially at the 1.5% land area target for affordable housing.</p> <p>Some municipalities have attempted to conduct such studies in an abbreviated and hurried fashion resulting in flawed work-product. This article anticipates that Natick, with a dedicated and focused project, would produce a thorough and accurate data set.</p>
12	If this Warrant Article is not approved by Town Meeting what are the consequences to the Town and to the sponsor(s)? Please be specific on both financial and other consequences.
Response	The Town will continue to be uninformed as to its options to address matters of economic development, residential housing, and environmental protection. The Town will lose an opportunity to gain important information in time to be able to explore all of its options prior to the 2020 census.