Warrant Article Questionnaire
Citizen Petitions Articles

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

Articles # 28	Date Form Completed: March 16, 2021
Article Title: Amend Historic Preservation Bylaw	
Sponsor Name: George Richards	Email: grichards@southnaticklaw.com

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	See attached Motions A and B.
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	In addition to residential (currently the only use allowed under the Historic Preservation Bylaw), this Article would also allow indoor amusement and recreational uses, performing arts training, education and/or live performances but only in former houses of worship. The current owners of the property are seeking to convert the church into a circus, acrobatic and dance school.
3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	The sponsor's client and owner of the property would be able to operate a circus, acrobatic and dance school which they currently are unable to do.
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	See Answer #'s 2 & 3 above. By allowing these uses, the community at large will benefit from have a performing arts school and possibly live performances which could add to the cultural and educational resources in the area.
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	The performing arts in Natick have become a staple of the community since TCAN renovated and occupied the old downtown fire house in 1997 - and historic preservation has been a goal of the community as set forth in Natick 360 and supported by Town Meeting when the existing historic preservation bylaw was adopted in 2014 (aimed at repurposing historic structures for

	multi-family housing). By allowing this type of use at former houses of worship, historic structures can be preserved and completely renovated while bringing the performing arts to the neighborhood and the community.
6	Have you considered and assessed, qualified and quantified the various impacts to the community such as: • Town infrastructure (traffic, parking, etc.) • Neighbors (noise, traffic, etc.); • Environment and green issues (energy conservation, pollution, trash, encouraging walking and biking, etc.);
Response	The impact to the infrastructure should be minimal as the current parking (10 spaces) will limit the number of students and staff of the proposed circus, acrobatic and dance school. We have held several "neighborhood meetings" to discuss our use, traffic, parking etc. and have received almost unanimous support for our project. We are optimistic that many neighbors will appear at both the Planning Board and Finance Committee zoom meetings to support the zoning changes and to express any concerns they have as we are committed to addressing the neighbor's concerns to the best of our ability.
7	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion? 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?
Response	I had several phone calls with James Freas and later held a zoom meeting with James Freas and David Gusmini to discuss the zoning changes, different options, zoning classification of proposed use, site plan review and historic district commission approvals required and protections for neighbors and/or getting neighbor's support. As discussed in # 6 above, we then had several meetings with the neighborhood at the property. Lastly, we appeared informally before the Planning Board on January 20, 2021 and will appear before them formally this Wednesday March 17th.
8	What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that: • 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	Please see answers # 6 and 7 above. In addition, my client sent the attached "postcard" advertising the Planning Board with the zoom link to neighbors via email on March 8th and I followed up with an email on March 16 with the Motions, the "postcard", copy of James Freas' memo to the Planning Board (also attached) and notifying them of the Finance Committee meeting on the 18th. My clients and I have also been working with Historic District Commission to keep them informed of the process.
9	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	My client has already purchased the building is in the process of renovating it so if the zoning is not changed to allow their proposed use, they would need to leave it vacant until such time as the zoning can be changed and/or it can be sold for a residential housing use (which has not materialized ever since the church closed its doors).
10	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	No.
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	I was unable to find any other Town bylaws aimed at preserving and repurposing former houses of worship.
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	See answer # 9 above – and if the Article is NOT approved, tax revenue to the Town will remain around $10,000+ (rather than potentially $20,000+ when fully restored and renovated) In addition, the Town and neighborhood would watch the building and property continue to deteriorate rather restoring it to a productive and viable use that the neighborhood supports.

2021 Spring Town Meeting

ARTICLE 28

Motion A:

Move to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by inserting in the Definitions Section 200 immediately after the definition of "Hotel" and immediately before the definition of "Housing Trust Fund Contribution", a new definition as follows:

"Houses of Worship: a church, temple, mosque, temple or other building where people go for religious services and/or to perform acts of devotion, veneration or religious study."

Motion B:

Move to amend the Historic Preservation Bylaw Section III-J (3) of the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by adding a new Permitted Use #4 immediately after the existing Permitted Use # 3 in Section 3 as follows:

4. Only if located within a former house of worship, indoor amusement and recreation uses, performing arts training, education and/or live performances.