

# Warrant Article Questionnaire

## Non-Standard Town Agency Articles

Article #14	Date Form Completed: 9/13/2021
Article Title: Amend Bylaws: Dates of Spring Annual Town Meeting & Submission of Fiscal Documents	
Sponsor Name: Town Administrator	Email: jerrickson@natickma.org

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it will appear in the Finance Committee Recommendation Book and presented to Town Meeting for action.
Response	See attached Motions
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is the proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the accompanying Motion?
Response	<p>Town Administration seeks to provide the Finance Committee and the Natick community with the most accurate and well-informed annual budget at the time of submission, supporting an efficient and transparent review process. We also recognize the need to ensure the Finance Committee and community has the time and resources necessary to review the budget (and all Town Meeting articles) in advance of Town Meeting, per the requirements of the Town's charter and bylaws. The balance between these demands, and other competing timelines and processes, leads to the proposed town bylaw adjustments to both the timing of Spring Annual Town Meeting as well as the timing of the budget submission by Town Administration.</p> <p>With this in mind, the two motions of this article work together and seek the following:</p> <p>A) Motion A proposes to adjust the start date of the Spring Annual Town Meeting from 2 weeks to 4 weeks following the local election. This seeks to accommodate an adjustment to the budget submission timeline as proposed in Motion B, while also ensuring Spring Annual Town Meeting is completed before the end of May as required by Town Charter. This motion has the added benefit of allowing more time for the Town Clerk to complete post-election follow up with (among others) town meeting members in advance of Town Meeting, and moving town meeting to just after the April vacation week for Natick public schools.</p> <p>B) In concert with Motion A, Motion B seeks to adjust the submission deadline for the Town Administrator's budget from January 1 to February 1 (NOTE this also impacts the submission of the Capital Improvement Program from December 1 to January 1). As currently experienced with a January 1 submission deadline, the Town Administrator's budget limits the ability to incorporate the detail of several key revenue and expense drivers. This leads to a challenging and often repetitive review process by the community and the Finance Committee, often including the need to reconsider several components of the budget</p>

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	<p>leading into the Spring Town Meeting, thereby adding meetings to the Finance Committee schedule.</p> <p>Though not all revenue and expense information is in hand by February 1, the additional time will allow for greater detail to be incorporated into the budget, in an effort to ensure a more accurate budget at the time of submission. This seeks to support a more efficient review process, limiting the need for significant reconsideration meetings before the Finance Committee. This has the added benefit of supporting a timelier and thoughtful budget creation process by town and school staff, who have more time to review actual expenses of a fiscal year prior to creating the next fiscal year's budget.</p> <p>Please note, that there are several revenue/expense items still outstanding with a February 1 budget submission. However, the additional time will provide for the production of more transparent and accurate budget for both the School and Town.</p>
3	Has this article or one of a very similar scope and substance been on a previous Warrant Article and what have been the actions taken by the Finance Committee, other Boards or Committees and Town Meeting?
Response	Yes –several years ago, a prior town administration proposed a similar, but very different, article. The details included an adjustment to the budget submission deadline without a similar adjustment to the start of Spring Annual Town Meeting. This was not adopted by Town Meeting.
4	Why is it required for the Town of Natick and for the Town Agency sponsor(s)?
Response	This is not required for the Town of Natick of the Town Agency.
5	Does this article require funding, how much, from what source of funds and under whose authority will the appropriation be managed and spent?
Response	No funding is required.
6	<p>Does this article act in any way in concert with, in support of, or to extend any prior action of Natick Town Meeting, Massachusetts General Laws or CMR's or other such legislation or actions?</p> <p>Does this article seek to amend, rescind or otherwise change any prior action of Natick Town Meeting?</p>

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Response	This article would amend two parts of Natick's Bylaws – as noted in the motions.
7	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive Master Plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations?
Response	The proposed motions seek to amend two sections of Natick's Bylaws. These motions can be independent of each other, but are designed to work together in order to improve the annual budget creation, submission, and review processes of Town Administration (including School Department) as well as the Finance Committee in advance of the Spring Annual Town Meeting.
8	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?
Response	The primary participants who will need to execute the motions include the Town Clerk, Town Administration, School Department, and Finance Committee, among others.
9	<p>What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process</li> <li>• Appropriate Town Boards &amp; Committees were consulted</li> <li>• Required public hearings were held</li> </ul>
Response	<p>The concept of this article was formulated through discussions and in partnership between Town and School administrations. Town Administration also engaged with the Town Clerk, the Town Moderator, the Select Board, the Finance Committee and others in advance of formulating the proposed motions in order to ensure the proposal balanced the needs and desires of all parties involved.</p> <p>There were no required public hearings for this article/motion in advance of Finance Committee.</p>
10	Since submitting the article have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	No, though through outreach and engagement with the various parties noted in #9, the proposed motion was adjusted. Initial draft motions sought to adjust the timing of the budget submission to March 1 (or even later), which would have allowed for greater detail on revenue and expense drivers to be obtained and incorporated into the overall draft budget. However, such a timeline would have had a detrimental impact on the ability of the Finance Committee

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	and others to review the budget in advance of Spring Annual Town Meeting. Balancing the desire to obtain more accurate budget numbers with the timelines of review in advance of Town Meeting, February 1 is currently proposed in the motion.
<b>11</b>	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 follow the current process and timeline for the annual budgeting process.