

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

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

Article # 18	Date Form Completed: 9/13/2021
Article Title: Parks & Recreation Wage Increase Subsidy	
Sponsor Name: Cody Jacobs	Email: cjacobsnatick@gmail.com

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	Move that the Town vote to appropriate the sum of \$28,932.37 ¹ from the Tax Levy for the purpose of partially paying for an increase in wages for part-time employees of the Department of Recreation & Parks beginning on January 1, 2022.
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	<p>This Article & Motion are intended to be paired with a motion on Article 17 (the pay plan) that would increase the minimum part-time pay level for non-union town employees from \$13.50 to \$15.00 per hour beginning on January 1, 2022.</p> <p>The state minimum wage will already be increasing beginning on January 1, 2022 from \$13.50 per hour to \$14.25 per hour. See M.G.L.A. 151 § 1. On January 1, 2023, the state minimum wage will increase to \$15.00 per hour. See <i>id.</i> The proposed motion on Article 17 would simply ask Natick to take that step to \$15.00 per hour one year early.</p> <p>During the 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting, I made a similar motion on the pay plan article, which was defeated. During the debate on that motion, many Town Meeting Members expressed support for the general goal of increasing the wage but also concern about the impact that such an increase might have on programs run by the Department of Recreation & Parks that operate through revolving funds. The concern was that, if the costs of running those programs increased unexpectedly, the department would have to raise the fees it charges to the users of those programs to make up the difference.</p> <p>Article 18 addresses that concern by subsidizing the proposed increase from general town funds.</p> <p>The Director of the Recreation & Parks Department indicated that the Department does not want to increase the wages of the lowest level of part time employees without increasing the wages of all part time employees in the department by the same percentage. In keeping with</p>

¹ This number is a placeholder until I receive information from the Department of Recreation & Parks about the cost of the proposed wage increase. See the response to question 2 and attachment A for details about how this number was calculated.

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

	<p>this philosophy, she explained to me that the department was already planning to increase all part-time employee wages on January 1, 2022 in response to the increase in the state minimum wage. Therefore, consistent with that policy, the proposed main motion on Article 18 would subsidize an increase for <i>all</i> part-time employee wages by the same percentage that the bottom level will go up if the motion on Article 17 were to pass (5.3%)².</p> <p>The Director has indicated to me that the department is currently calculating exactly what that amount will be and, as of the day I am submitting this questionnaire, I have not yet received that number. In order to ensure that this proposal can be reviewed by the Finance Committee, I drafted the motion above with a roughly estimated amount, however, I am planning to replace that number with the number provided by the Director once she has that information available (for an explanation of how I arrived at the estimate above, see Attachment A).</p> <p>The ultimate objective of this Article is to increase the minimum wage for all town employees, including those in the Department of Recreation & Parks, without increasing fees³ for users of the department's programs.</p>
3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	I do not believe I would gain anything from positive action on this motion.
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>I can separate my answer to this into two parts—one that concerns Article 18 and another that concerns the proposed motion on Article 17 (the Chair advised me to address both).</p> <p><u>Article 18</u></p> <p>As stated above, if the wage increase for the Recreation & Parks Department is subsidized, that will prevent the department from needing to raise fees on any users as a result of the increase. Many of those programs are used by people with limited means and it would be wrong to ask them to bear the brunt of the cost of a relatively large one-time increase to the minimum wage.</p>

² This represents the difference between the already-required increase to \$14.25/hour and \$15.00/hour.

³ This refers to any increase in fees above and beyond any increase that was already planned due to the increase in the state minimum wage.

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

	<p><u>Article 17 Motion</u></p> <p>The cost of living in Middlesex County is very high—almost 50% higher than the national average. According to a “living wage” calculator created by MIT, a single person with no children would need to make \$19.55/hour in order to earn a living wage in Middlesex County. And, while the calculator does not provide town level data, it is reasonable to expect that this number is higher in Natick than some surrounding cities with lower housing costs such as Framingham.</p> <p>Natick has an opportunity to show moral leadership by increasing the minimum pay level for town employees to a still modest \$15.00/hour. The \$15.00/hour figure, while not sufficient to provide a living wage, would be a significant step in the right direction and would allow Natick to stand in solidarity with workers across the country who have used the \$15.00/hour figure as a rallying point for higher wages. Besides the direct benefit to workers who receive an increase, Natick as a whole would benefit from the increase by: (1) increasing Natick’s ability to attract workers to do important jobs at a time when workers have been in high demand, especially at the lower end of wage scales, and (2) giving more money to a group of people that is likely to spend that money locally (for example, many of the people employed part-time seasonally by the Recreation & Parks Department are teens who live in Natick).</p>
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	<p>As discussed above, the proposed motion would move Natick into compliance with state minimum wage law one year ahead of schedule.</p> <p>The fiscal impact of the proposal is relatively small and would have no long-term effect beyond the first half of FY 23 since the minimum wage would already go up to \$15.00 at that point anyway.⁴</p>
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.);

⁴ The subsidy in Article 18 would only be for FY 22. If the motion on Article 17 passes, we would plan to offer a similar subsidy Article for FY 23 at Spring Town Meeting.

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

Response	As far as I know, this proposal would not have any impact on the community in the ways this question envisions. It is possible that, if the motion on Article 17 is adopted, that it could put some upward pressure on wages throughout Natick, which would be good for workers.
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>With respect to Article 18, the most critical participant would be the Director of the Recreation & Parks Department, who we have talked to several times about these issues in the time since Spring Town Meeting. We talked to her, among other things, about the potential impact of raising the wage on user fees, the department's plans for wage increases pre-dating this effort, and the potential impact of any increase on employee morale.</p> <p>With respect to Article 17, besides the Director of the Recreation & Parks Department, we anticipate that the Director of Finance and the Director of Human Resources may be involved. We have reached out to the former but have not received a response yet (we are still hopeful that we will get to speak before Fall Town Meeting). Although we have not talked directly with the Director of Human Resources, I know that she is aware of these efforts through discussions with the Director of Recreation & Parks.</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 mentioned above, this subject was debated extensively at Spring Annual Town Meeting. After that, I had a conversation with the Chair of the Personnel Board who referred me to the Recreation & Parks Department. I have also had conversations with the Chair of the Finance Committee and the Town Moderator regarding the appropriate procedural steps for this proposal.

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

9	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	<p>Natick must act now because the wage has been too low for too long. This has a real impact on the people who are earning these wages and their families, especially when our economy is in a precarious position as we emerge from the pandemic. Natick could simply wait for the wage to go up by state mandate in 2023, but the right thing to do for our workers is to act now.</p> <p>Because the state mandate already exists, this is not something that requires further study—for example, as discussed above, the Recreation Department already had a plan in place to deal with the wage increase that will be required on January 1, 2022.</p>
10	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	Yes. At the time we submitted the Article petition, we were not aware of the Recreation Department's plan to increase all part-time wages in response to the state minimum increasing on January 1, 2022. Although this increases the cost of this Article, we think it is a positive development and want to make sure this proposal is consistent with that plan.
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 have not done anywhere near a complete survey of communities in the Metro West area or the Commonwealth more broadly, but the few I have looked at have NOT increased their minimum wage for municipal employees to something higher than the state minimum. While this is disappointing, it does represent an opportunity for Natick to show leadership and to set us apart to prospective employees in the area.
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	<p>This is another question that is best considered in conjunction with the proposed motion on Article 17:</p> <p><u>Article 17 Motion passes, Article 18 Is not approved</u></p>

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

	<p>In this scenario, the Recreation Department would have to come up with the money to pay for the increase from a different source. Fees could be raised⁵ either across the board or only with respect to certain programs. The department could also decide to cut costs as an alternative to raising fees—for example by having fewer spots or reducing staffing in some programs. It is also possible that the revolving funds are sufficiently solvent to cover the increased costs without raising fees on programs or cutting them, but this is unclear.</p> <p>In this scenario, the town general fund would save whatever costs would have ultimately gone towards the Article 18 subsidy.</p> <p><u>Article 17 Motion fails</u></p> <p>In the event that the Article 17 motion fails, the town would save whatever the cost would be of increasing the wage town-wide, including with respect to the Recreation Department. Workers would also not receive the proposed increase in pay. In the event that the Article 17 motion fails, I would plan to move to refer Article 18 back to the sponsor since I would view it as moot since there would be no increase to subsidize.</p> <p>As far as me personally, I do not think there would be any consequences if either the Article 17 motion fails or Article 18 is not approved.</p>
--	--

⁵ Again, this is referring to increases that would result from the wage going from \$14.25 to \$15.00, not to increases that would have already happened from the wage going from \$13.50 to \$14.25 as required by state law.