

ARTICLE 18

Higher wages for town employees without higher
prices for Recreation & Parks users

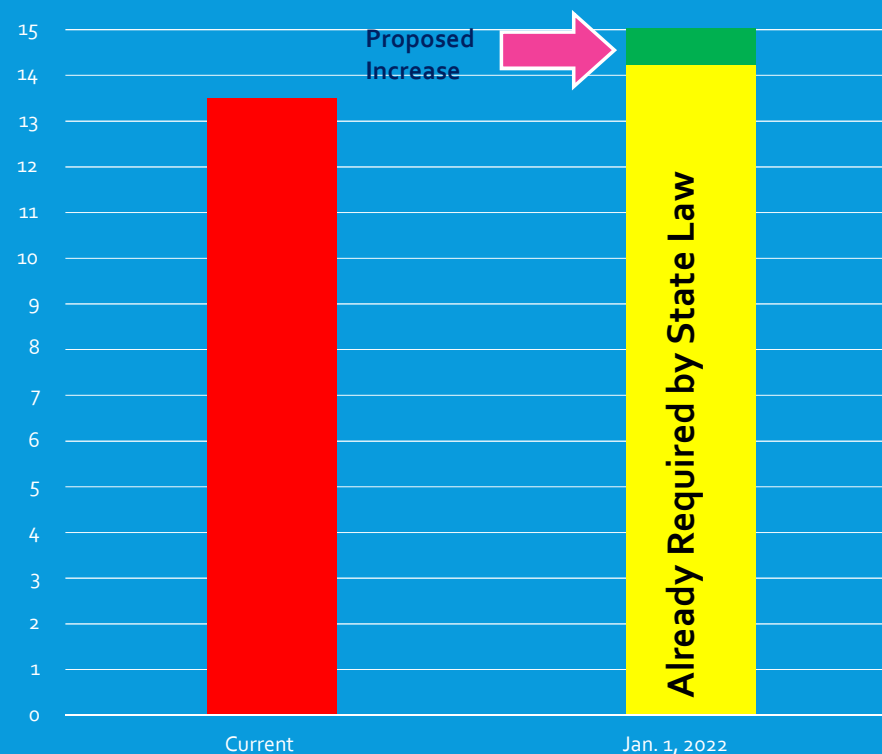
THE MINIMUM WAGE IS TOO LOW

- The minimum wage is only \$13.50/hour but a living wage for a single person with no children in Middlesex County is \$19.55/hour. A “living wage” is an amount needed to pay for basic necessities like housing, food, transportation, and healthcare.
- This disparity has been worsened by the pandemic and is part of a general pattern across the economy of stagnating wages even while the wealthy continue to get wealthier.
- Workers across the country have organized around the need to raise the minimum wage with the specific target of \$15.00/hour as a rallying point.



NATICK CAN TAKE THE LEAD BY RAISING WAGES NOW

- The pay plan for Natick part-time employees passed by Spring Annual Town Meeting sets the minimum pay for part-time town employees as \$13.50/hour, which is the same as the state minimum wage.
- The state minimum wage is set to increase to \$14.25/hour on January 1, 2022, and then to \$15.00/hour on January 1, 2023.
- Our proposal is to **increase the minimum pay level for Natick employees beginning on January 1, 2022 to 15.00/hour** (this would be a motion on Article 17).



BENEFITS OF RAISING THE WAGE FOR NATICK

- Showing moral leadership by giving workers the compensation they deserve for their labor.
- Making it easier to attract workers and decreasing the likelihood of worker shortages.
- Putting money in the pockets of people who are likely to spend it locally.

BUT THEY AREN'T THEY “JUST TEENAGERS?”

- We can't make assumptions about anyone's personal situation. Some people may be using that money to supplement family incomes or to support themselves going through school or engaging in important extracurricular activities.
- More importantly, we shouldn't be determining the pay level of employees based on our personal judgments about whether what they might spend the money on is “important enough.” Everyone deserves a fair wage—even teenagers.
- Having a class of workers paid low wages, no matter who they are, puts downward pressure on wages of all workers across the local economy.

BUT WHAT ABOUT OTHER TOWN WORKERS?

- Raising wages for the lowest paid workers would not decrease the wages of other town workers.
- Nothing about raising the wage for the lowest level prevents raising the wage for other employees as well.
- Conversely, keeping the lowest paid workers wages at the lowest possible level does nothing to improve the situation of other higher paid workers at all.

ARTICLE 18'S ROLE: PREVENTING REC FEE INCREASES

- Most part-time workers who would be impacted by this increase work for the Recreation & Parks Department in seasonal capacities connected with department programming like camps.
- Although the cost of the wage increase is “de minimis” in the grand scheme of the budget, there is a concern that raising these wages could force the Recreation & Parks Department to raise the costs of its programs to users or reduce the staffing for those programs since they are funded through revolving funds where the fees are meant to cover program costs.

ARTICLE 18'S ROLE: PREVENTING REC FEE INCREASES

- Article 18 would fix this problem by “funding” the increase from general town funds.
- The Recreation & Parks Department is planning to increase wages for all part-time employees by the same percentage as the lowest level if the increase passes (5.3%), so Article 18 would pay for that increase.
- This is somewhat analogous to the school bus subsidy that the town regularly pays to the schools to subsidize bus fees.

IMPORTANT CAVEATS

- Article 18 is ONLY meant to pay for the proposed additional increase in the minimum pay level from 14.25 to 15.00. It would NOT pay for the increase that would happen in any event from \$13.50 to \$14.25.
- Article 18 will ONLY cover FY 22. If the increase is enacted, we would plan to offer a similar subsidy article at Spring Annual Town Meeting to cover the first half of FY 23 (the wage will be \$15.00 in the second half of FY 22 in any event).