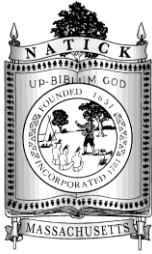


FIRST DRAFT



**Natick Finance Committee**

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

**Town of Natick Finance Committee**

**Meeting Date: September 14, 2021**

The minutes were approved through the following action:

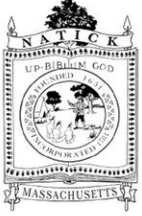
Motion: xxx  
Made by: xxx  
Seconded by: xxx  
Vote: 0 – 0 – 0  
Date: <date>, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Evans

Secretary

Natick Finance Committee



**TOWN OF NATICK**

Meeting Notice

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A, Sections 18-25

**Natick Finance Committee**

**DAY, DATE AND TIME**

September 14, 2021 at 7:00 PM

**PLACE OF MEETING**

Virtual Meeting accessed via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7949362580>  
Meeting ID: 794 936 2580  
Passcode: 220129  
One tap mobile +19292056099,,7949362580# US (New York)  
Dial by your location +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Notice to the Public: 1) Finance Committee meetings may be broadcast/recorded by Natick Pegasus. 2) The meeting is an open public meeting and interested parties can attend the meeting. 3) Those seeking to make public comments (for topics not on the agenda or for specific agenda items) are requested to submit their comments in advance, by 2:00 PM on the day of the meeting, to [fincom@natickma.org](mailto:fincom@natickma.org). Comments will be posted on NovusAgenda and read aloud for the proper agenda item. Please keep comments to 350-400 words. 4) The Chat function on Zoom Conferencing will be disabled.

## **MEETING AGENDA**

Posted: September 9, 2021 9:22 AM

1. Call to Order
  - a. Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence
  - b. Advisement of Pegasus Live Broadcast and Recording for On-Demand Viewing
  - c. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Announcements
3. Public Comments
  - a. [Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location](#)
4. 2021 Fall Town Meeting Warrant Articles - Public Hearing
  - a. [Article 14: Amend By-Laws: Dates of Spring Annual Town Meeting & Submission of Fiscal Documents](#)
  - b. [Article 17: Personnel Board Classification and Pay Plan](#)
  - c. [Article 18: Parks & Recreation Wage Increase Subsidy](#)
  - d. [Article 20: Street Acceptance – Collins Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Fern Street, Green Street, Lakeview Avenue, Moore Street, Whitcomb Street, Windsor Avenue](#)
  - e. [Article 21: Easement at 21 Overbrook Terrace](#)
  - f. [Article 35: Hybrid Town Meeting](#)
5. Meeting Minutes
  - a. Review & Approve Meeting Minutes for August 24, 2021, September 2, 2021, and September 9, 2021
6. Committee and Sub-Committee Scheduling
  - a. Update on upcoming Committee and Subcommittee meetings
7. Committee Discussion (for items not on the agenda)
8. Adjourn

Meeting may be televised live and recorded by Natick Pegasus. Any times listed for specific agenda items are approximate and not binding. Please note the committee may take the items on this agenda out of order.

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Hossam Behery, Member  
Dirk Coburn, Member  
David Coffey, Member  
Cathy Coughlin, Member  
Bruce Evans, Secretary  
Bill Grome, Member  
Todd Gillenwater, Vice-Chairman  
Richard Pope, Member  
Chris Resmini, Member  
Patti Sciarra, Member  
Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson

### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Jeff DeLuca, Member  
Julien LaFleur, Member  
Kat Monahan, Member  
Phil Rooney, Member

Town Administration Attendees

Mr. Bill McDowell, Town Engineer  
Mr. Jeremy Marsette, DPW Director  
Mr. Jamie Errickson, Town Administrator  
Mr. Abdul Rauf, Finance Dept.  
Mr. John Townsend, Ass't Town Administrator, Finance  
Ms. Juiling De los Reyes, Ass't Director, Finance  
Dr. Anna Nolin, NPS Superintendent

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Linda Wollschlager, Chairperson.

Announcements

Ms. Wollschlager welcomed Ms. Patti Sciarra as a new member. Some of you may be familiar with Patti as a Town Meeting member, but also recently as an Assistant Town Moderator during our virtual Town Meeting.

Public Comments: None

*Mr. Evans moved to open the public hearing on the Fall 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article review, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 11 – 0 – 0.*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = yes
	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Article 21: Easement at 21 Overbrook Terrace

Presenter:

Mr. Tom Waldstein, Attorney  
Mr. David Hawthorne, Property Owner, 21 Overbrook Terrace

Mr. Waldstein had a typo in the email address for the materials that you sent to the Finance Committee and re-sent them and Ms. Wollschlager distributed this information to the Committee.

Mr. David Hawthorne introduced himself as the landowner at 21 Overbrook Terrace in Natick, and it is my property on which we are asking for an easement from the town, because part of the town right-of-way intersects with my building. I bought this piece of property a year ago with the idea that we could resolve it and that's what we're proposing right now.

13:54

Mr. Waldstein explained that Overbrook Terrace was taken as a public way in 1928. The house at 21 Overbrook Terrace was built in 1928 and there is a standalone garage that was built in 1954. If you look at the property itself, it is one a dead end street and there was a straight paved street ending in front of this property and the

property across the street. But the layout includes a round cul-de-sac that was never been built in the last 93 years. In 2019, the pavement plan was produced for the town listing Overbrook Terrace with the comment that the town had no intention of changing anything on OVT. The circular layout of the cul-de-sac takes a small piece of the right front of his garage and an even smaller sliver of the porch in the front of his house. Those conditions have been in effect for decades so we thought that an easement would allow Mr. Hawthorne and any future owner to continue the use that is there now (continue to use the garage and continue to use the porch without having to make any substantial reconstruction). There is no cost to the town for this - we have already undertaken the engineering for the plan. Upon approval by Town Meeting, Mr. Waldstein said he would prepare the deed to be reviewed by Town Counsel and the owner would pay any of the recording fees which are pretty nominal. As Mr. Hawthorne stated, this came to light when the plot plan was completed during the purchase process. It is unclear why this wasn't noted in the previous 100 years, but was noted now. Mr. Waldstein noted that the area of the easement is a small half-moon shape totaling about 340 square feet

## ARTICLE 21 MOTION

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to grant to David Locke Hawthorne owner of 21 Overbrook Terrace Assessors' Parcel ID 00000369 an exclusive appurtenant easement running with the land of said 21 Overbrook Terrace to pass and repass, maintain such structures presently within the easement area but not to extend such structures, over a Parcel shown as 'Easement Area' on a Plan entitled 'Easement Plan 21 Overbrook Terrace, Natick, Massachusetts' Framingham Survey Consultants, Inc. , dated August 6, 2021' or to take any other necessary action to effectuate the purpose of this Article; or to act otherwise thereon.

David Locke Hawthorne  
21 Overbrook Rd.  
Natick, MA 01760  
Primary Sponsor

### Questions from the Committee

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether Mr. Waldstein had been in contact with the Town Engineer. Mr. Waldstein said he contacted Mr. Freas CED Director, but not the Town Engineer.

Mr. Errickson, Town Administrator stated that this was brought to his attention a few days before the closure of the warrant and the town had been engaged with Mr. Waldstein for a number of months in advance of that, to understand what the request was and to provide some direction on the request. Legal counsel also reviewed this and provided initial guidance on this request several months ago. The key question is whether the town can grant the easement and then how the process would go forward with providing the easement. Town engineering has looked into this request, but to my knowledge, has not provided anything officially in writing. However, this is a minor impact on the right of way or the roadway. If the finance committee is interested, Mr. Errickson can explain bit more about the process that legal counsel has provided guidance on and considerations with regards to this proposed article. Mr. Errickson said the proposed Article 21 seeks an easement from the town or essentially the location of a structure and a right of way. In order to do that, there are a number of questions that need to be completed and I'm just providing a snapshot of a sampling of the processes since Town Counsel is not available for this meeting. However, Mr. Errickson said he spoke with Ms. North briefly before tonight's meeting. In brief, this is a multi-step process to seek the authority from Town Meeting for the town to dispose of this easement. Because the easement grants the use of a piece of land, it is considered a real estate transaction. The next step is to go through the disposition process and that process can take many forms depending on the value is of the easement. In this case, we do not currently have a value of the easement that would be something that would need to be answered prior to advancement of a disposition of an easement in this case, and that

process would need to follow the disposition rules and regulations of MGL c. 30B, and that would include the Select Board approval based on how this is worded. Mr. Errickson is doing an RFP process to appraise the value of the easement. The town would then need to go through another RFP process to dispose of the property. Unfortunately, a town is prohibited from disposing of property to a single entity, although in all likelihood, this would only have one prospective buyer (the current owner of the property).

Mr. Gillenwater asked if there are deadlines that must be met in order to prevent any hardship with respect to this easement. Mr. Waldstein said there are no near-term deadlines that must be met. Mr. Hawthorne is a fairly new owner and, as far as I know, doesn't plan to convey the property in the foreseeable future. Mr. Hawthorne confirmed that summary.

Mr. Coburn asked whether, with the addition of the easement, that this property would become a nonconforming lot in terms of the zoning bylaws. Mr. Errickson said that this is really only an easement – it does not change the lot lines or frontage or the conformity of a lot with regards to zoning. Given the age of the structures, it likely predates the current zoning, which means they're likely grandfathered in some way. The proposed easement also would not change the lot lines.

Mr. Pope noted that the drawing of the cul-de-sac also affects 20 Overbrook Terrace and asked whether neighbors had been contacted about this. Mr. Errickson said that, assuming Article 21 is approved, the town would absolutely look at the entirety of a Overbrook Terrace - the road layout or changing the road layout might be a future Town Meeting action. An easement on other properties would be outside of the scope of this particular article so that might be a future Town Meeting action as needed. One thing that town would not necessarily do would be to review whether or not this easement impacts any rights to pass and re-pass over Overbrook Terrace for other abutting property owners. Mr. Errickson said he would ask Town Counsel's opinion to inform a decision by Town Meeting. However, the town would not assert rights per se that another property owner might assert. Mr. Errickson said he brings this up because Overbrook Terrace is an accepted right-of-way. For streets that exist "on paper only" pedestrians and traffic have rights to pass and re-pass over it, so somebody might feel that an easement or a structure that could potentially impact that right might be a consideration for a private property owner in the future.

Mr. Evans asked for confirmation that this is a multi-step process where because there's money that's going to be involved in this, the Select Board doesn't have the blanket authority to negotiate the price for the easement based on the assessed value of the easement, and then an article comes back to Town Meeting that requests funding for the purchase of the easement. Mr. Errickson stated that this was not entirely correct because the town is not appropriating the funding but is receiving the funding. Once the authority is provided to the Select Board for the disposal of any property of value, the Select board can move forward with that process at that point. There wouldn't be a process to come back to Town Meeting because the town is not appropriating money for the purchase of the easement. Depending on the value of the easement, that could trigger an additional step or two for the Select Board to properly dispose of the property.

Mr. Evans asked who pays for the determination of the assessed value of the easement. Mr. Errickson said that this has not been discussed and town administration has not made an appropriation for that purpose. Depending on the value for that easement and what legal counsel notes as to whether or not we could accept the easement as a gift. The town would need to confirm that with legal counsel when we need to do the assessment.

Mr. Coffey asked why the town cannot utilize the standard Article that grants the Select Board the authority to require easements. Mr. Errickson said this Article is for the acceptance of no cost utility easements. Plus, those are for accepting easements, not granting easements. This is also different because it's to an individual property owner, rather than a utility company.

Mr. Foss, Town Moderator asked if Town Counsel approved the motion provided. Mr. Errickson that Town Counsel has not reviewed any materials in this Article. Mr. Foss said, as moderator, he has never seen an easement motion written as this is, so he thinks this motion could be deficient and would want to consult with Town Counsel on it. He said that does not take away or make any comments on the substance of what was presented here, but the form of the motion may very well be different when it reaches Town Meeting.

Mr. Foss said that is also confused about the steps that will be required should this Article be voted favorably at Town Meeting, noting that Town Counsel needs to provide clarity on both what should happen and when it should occur and suggested that the Chair consult with town counsel as well.

*Ms. Coughlin moved to refer article 21 to the sponsor and the Select Board, seconded by Ms. Sciarra, voted 11 – 0 – 0.*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = yes
	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

*Mr. Coburn moved to postpone consideration of Article 21 until after review by Town Counsel has been obtained, seconded by Mr. Evans, voted 4 – 7 – 0.*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = no	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Grome = no
Mr. Coffey = no	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = no	Mr. Resmini = no
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = no
	Ms. Wollschlager = no

Ms. Wollschlager said the Committee would review the motion to postpone first.

Debate

Mr. Coburn said he understands the issues that have prompted a motion to refer, but I would like to let Town Counsel try to resolve this and bring forward an Article in the form that the Moderator would recognize as more consistent with prior easement articles, if possible for a number of reasons, but mostly because it's the neighborly thing to try to resolve this fairly and reasonably quickly.

Mr. Evans said he thinks referral is the wrong thing to do right now because that just moves it to Spring Annual Town Meeting. In principle, he believes the Committee wants to support this, but there are some deficiencies at present and the processes and timing need to be more clearly articulated so that Town Meeting members can understand it. Many of the questions the Committee has tonight are the same questions or variants that Town Meeting members will also have. When Town Counsel weighs in on this and works with the Moderator to get language that he has seen and is familiar with, the Committee will be in a position to be able to support this.

Mr. Coffey said postponement is not desirable because the Committee has an already compressed timeframe and is concerned that postponement will help create a backlog of Articles that we need to consider. He stated that if it's not ready now, we should refer the Article back to the sponsor.

Ms. Wollschlager agreed with Mr. Coffey noting that the Committee's last scheduled meeting is less than a month from now (October 5) so we have a very limited amount of time. The sponsors acknowledged that there is no particular urgency with this, although the property owner would like to see this move forward, so my preference would not to postpone that motion.

Mr. Evans asked Ms. Wollschlager to clarify that if referral passes and Town Counsel provides a new motion that addresses the concerns raised tonight, would that be considered substantial new information where a

member could request a reconsideration vote. Ms. Wollschlager noted that she would consider that new information and it's up to the committee whether to reconsider or not.

Ms. Coughlan said until she heard that there was no timeline to get this rectified. I was not considering referral. However, hearing that and believing that there are too many unanswered questions, I think referral makes the most sense and suggested that when these issues are resolved it can be brought before the Finance Committee again. She said that she understands how the property owner would want to resolve this issue but would prefer that this be researched and reviewed by the sponsor and Select Board before we vote on this again.

Ms. Sciarra agreed that there were many unanswered questions and because there's no urgent timeline for them, she prefers to understand the process fully and have it reviewed by Town Counsel for recommending approval to Town Meeting.

Mr. Coburn noted that if postponement doesn't pass, he supports referral. He appreciates the goodwill expressed by everybody participating in this debate, but will vote for postponement because if he was the property owner, he would appreciate that. He also said that he thought there's a reasonable chance that a review by Town Counsel can resolve this, but is there also a risk that it might not.

#### Article 14: Amend By-Laws: Dates of Spring Annual Town Meeting & Submission of Fiscal Documents

Presenter: Mr. Jamie Errickson

Mr. Errickson thanked the Committee for its feedback during the discussion at the last meeting and noted that there are a few members who were not here at that time, so will quickly summarize the genesis of this article and the prior discussion. This article comes from years of experience, but also most recently in discussions with members of the school administration regarding how to continue to improve the budgeting process for not only this coming year, but in the future. When we were discussing the budgeting process, we really came to the sort of "ahah" moment that a January 1 deadline for delivery of the Town Administrator preliminary fiscal year budget is challenging for both the school department and town administration. The January budget is a somewhat inaccurate budget for the upcoming fiscal year. There are many reasons for that:

1. For the town, the budget process starts in September for the town; and October for Natick Public Schools. At that point in time during the school year or during the fiscal year of a town administration, we really haven't had a chance to see meaningful burn rates from expenses, or actual revenues, so we're starting a budgeting process with potentially one quarter worth of data which is really challenging from an accuracy and data point perspective.
2. The finalization of the budgeting process occurs during the holiday season is challenging for staff above and beyond just doing the budgeting process from a numbers perspective. They are crunched from a capacity perspective and many people are out on holiday. We try to get this information completed by Thanksgiving or as soon after as possible in December so that further limits the ability to get really accurate numbers for the future fiscal year.
3. On top of that, there are just demands and more information that come out in the new calendar year that we can take into account into an updated budget. If we were to adjust the timing of the submission of the budget, that would be quite helpful.

Mr. Errickson said that he initially requested a March 1 submission date for the Town Administrator Preliminary budget, , fully appreciating the constraints that would put on the Finance Committee and the community at large to review the budget. Mr. Errickson said the current motion requests a February 1 deadline for budget submission. The reason why we chose March 1 initially is because a number of revenue and expense generators or drivers come out in February, for example, we receive our health insurance rates, West Suburban Health Group in February. Fully appreciating and respecting the budget process. February 1 is still a very viable for us to get create a more accurate budget. It allows us to get two quarters worth of data to improve the accuracy of the budget.

There are two motions by as part of this article:



**Motion A** seeks to move out the start of Town Meeting from two weeks after the local election to four weeks after the local election. It works in concert with **Motion B** moving the submission of the budget from the first business day in January to the first business day in February. By moving to February 1, we fully respect the need for the time to review the budget by the community and the Finance Committee. Moving the start of Town Meeting synchronizes with the February 1 budget submission date and has the added benefit of moving the start of Town Meeting until after the April school vacation week. Mr. Errickson spoke with the Town Clerk and she is highly supportive of both motions, but Motion A in particular, because she would like the additional time after the local election to be able to process all the work that she needs to do for Town Meeting members. This next year is particularly challenging for her in that it's a redistricting year based on the updated census, so voters will have to revote all of its members this election.

Motion A amends Article 1 Section one of Spring Annual Town Meeting and changes the word '*second*' to '*fourth*' where it reads the "spring session of the representative Town Meeting, known as the spring annual Town Meeting shall be called for 7:30pm on the ~~second~~ fourth Tuesday.

Motion B changes the word the first business day in '*January*' to the first business day in '*February*'.

### Questions from the Committee

Ms. Coughlin asked whether this will reduce the amount of time to review the budget and financial articles. Ms. Wollschlager stated that, from her perspective, we'll continue to have high level overview presentations from both town administration and school administration in January. Those are just overall strategic considerations and thoughts on what's coming up in the budget and not getting into the actual dollar numbers. Typically, we start our subcommittee process and go through the budget. It's been a source of frustration for many members that go through this budget only to have everything change afterwards. If Article 14 is approved, our subcommittees will need to be strategic in how they structure their agendas so that they don't actually vote on things that are likely to change and focus on having more of those strategic discussions with department heads on what the issues are and get an in-depth understanding of that. Then, although we'll have the budget after February 1, we start reviewing the budget and subcommittee processes continue through February and the subcommittees can vet the portions of the budget that they are responsible for reviewing and reporting back to the full Committee. We also don't get the final school budget until March. In her opinion, the subcommittee and the full Committee will save time by not having to vote multiple times on changing budget figures.

Mr. Evans asked to chime in with an opinion from the several subcommittees that I've been on. The Chair very accurately described how things progress. We have made it very clear to town administration and school administration that, this is not a "get out of jail free" card until February. We have asked him to provide snapshot of the directions and trends that they are saying regarding the upcoming fiscal budget. Changing the dates allows town administration and school administration to have roughly half a year's data from the current fiscal year to project to the future year. This should allow them to provide the budget framework in February and adjust it when actual data is available (for example, the health care rates at the end of February). This change would also enable them to get more solid feedback from our legislators about the state budget and some keep budget revenues and expenses are better known in late February and early March, such as health care costs. Mr. Evans said having the budget due in early February allows us to review the budget, ask questions, and be in a position to vote on the budget in March to prepare for Town Meeting. He said that the ability to avoid false starts and wasted time in subcommittee meetings outweighs the consequences of moving these dates. In previous years, there typically has been a standoff between town administration's budget and the school administration's budget request and the Finance Committee is caught in the middle and spends numerous hours trying to reconcile this to be able to make a recommendation to Town Meeting. This process is dysfunctional, and it's to the credit of both administrations that they have come together to figure out how this should work better and take a positive step forward.

Dr. Anna Nolin, NPS School Superintendent said she is hopeful that the Finance Committee will experience the same positive effect that it will have on school and town administration, noting that they're looking for efficiency and reality to be presented to the Finance Committee with more data behind it. Dr. Nolin said the

budget that NPS provides on January 1 creates a lot of other work for the Finance Committee, the School Committee, school administration and town administration. She sent both administrations spent a lot of time in retreat this summer with a leadership facilitation group among our departments and it continues now so that we can take away the dynamic that Mr. Evans just described and come to you with more actuals for the Finance Committee to see earlier what you usually get to see in the very last gasps of the budget season.

Mr. Pope asked if there any state requirements or bond restrictions that are impacted by the change. Mr. Errickson said there are not and many communities submit their budgets much later in the calendar year. This is a local bylaw that is being impacted by these proposed motions.

Mr. Coburn said he understands there's a benefit to having six month numbers, but asked whether when the town develops its budget that it looks at the last few years of historical budget versus actual spending to help in the budgeting process. Mr. Errickson said that there are many factors that go into formulating a budget and looking at historical trends is one of those factors. We go back several years and compare the budgets v. actuals for any given line item. However, that's not the only factor, especially when looking forward, one thing that we do have to look at are future trends, such as increased costs for items and materials. One thing that we're currently that we're acutely aware of right now, given the COVID pandemic, is lead times on purchases and the increased time it takes for materials to come to our vendors. For example, there are a number of vehicles that are on our capital fleet for this upcoming Town Meeting where we've already been told by vendors are going to cost more due to the cost of materials and the time it takes to get those materials. So those are all factors that factor into our general budgeting process for some of our departments, in particular the DPW, Police, and Fire departments. We are also looking at health care costs of trends and factors. Even though we typically get our health care numbers from the West Suburban Health Group in mid-February, having a February 1 deadline as opposed to a January 1 deadline does provide us with an additional month worth of data and a better understanding as to where those healthcare costs might come in. So while we won't have the exact number, we should have a more accurate number. And that's just another example of the ability to utilize trend data both in the past but also looking forward to help us with a better picture with the submitted budget if we're going to be moving forward.

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether town administration plan to continue using ClearGov to develop next year's budget. Mr. Errickson said town administration plans to continue using ClearGov this fiscal year and probably continue to use it after that. The town is always analyzing the software and the process that we use so that we find a better one and we might switch in a future fiscal year, but for the near term we will use ClearGov.

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether ClearGov would include the current year's half year actual revenues. Mr. Townsend said it would not be included in ClearGov – ClearGov would have the previous fiscal year's actuals, but having the half year actuals will help improve the accuracy of the budget. The actual data we'll be displaying in the budget book will be the same format you previously had.

Mr. Coffey asked whether town administration or school administration is opposed to this Article. Mr. Errickson said, given that we worked on this together with school administration, including Dr. Nolin and Dr. Gray, both sides are fully supportive. He also reached out to the School Committee, Select Board and others to ensure they are aware of this and understand what, if any, impacts this would have on their processes. So far, I've gotten very positive response from those groups as well.

Mr. Coffey asked whether the Finance Committee has a mechanism to encourage people with non-budget warrant articles to have the material ready in January so that we can address those warrant articles. Ms. Wollschlager stated that the warrant is not available until early February. Once the warrant closes, we try to get all the articles that we know are easy out of the way quickly, and that will not change.

Ms. Coughlin stated that the motion references charter section 5-3 and asked whether this would be a charter change that would require Town Meeting approval and approval by a majority of the voters. Mr. Errickson said that Section 5-3 just states per the town bylaw, meaning that the Town Administrator must submit a preliminary budget per what's outlined in the town bylaw. He said this is not the exact phrasing, but this is a cross-reference in the bylaw, so this is only a bylaw change.

Mr. Coburn asked, if this Article is approved by Town Meeting, whether the Chair would adjust the Finance Committee schedule. Ms. Wollschlager said the Committee has typically started its meetings in the first or second week in January, with town administration and the Superintendent go over their budgets at a high level. Then, when we start our subcommittee process, I expect that schedule will stay the same.

Mr. Beherry noted that, at the last minute, there was a concern about the ability of the town to be able to hire for school positions and asked whether this remains a concern or is resolved. Mr. Errickson said that he, Dr. Nolin, Dr. Gray and Mr. Townsend talked about this and they believe this will not have much impact on their ability to recruit and hire. Also, Dr. Gray explained that once they have their budget agreed by the School Committee and it goes before Town Meeting, they can advertise early in the season and their recruitment always notes “subject to appropriation”.

#### Questions from the Public

Ms. Kate Flathers said that she appreciates the constraints that the administrations face in developing the budget. However, when the information comes later in the spring, I’m concerned that it compresses the time for public debate and the Finance Committee. Based on what I’ve observed is that, if there are budget gaps and we are further into the spring, significant cuts to school services negotiated later in the school year really can put parents and students at a disadvantage of understanding what other options they may have available.

Ms. Wollschlager mentioned that the Finance Committee schedule would remain the same. She said she understands that those early January meetings are very high level and potential options are discussed even though they aren’t the real budget numbers. She said she has difficulty understanding how those meetings could happen if the preliminary numbers don’t come out until February 1 and is very concerned if even the preliminary numbers or options or the very rough gap isn’t even discussed until February/ That would seem to compress the review timeframe. She asked whether a bylaw change would make more sense combined with a change to an annual report that aligns with the fiscal year rather than the calendar year; him it makes it very opaque to be able to line up budget and actuals. And she said she appreciated all the efforts to hear the non-financial Articles earlier,

Mr. Foss agreed that the more important part is that you are now taking the public portion of public meeting in the public process and condensing it and you’re starting to encroach on that June 30 date, the date of when all municipalities except for cities have to submit their budgets to the Department of Revenue. Mr. Foss said he is skeptical that adding two weeks will cure all the ills, noted that the town, noted that, in his opinion, Natick has a woefully understaffed Finance Department that they can’t be as nimble as they might if they were properly staffed. Mr. Foss continued that he was disappointed to hear that the Finance Committee was not going to reconsider its schedule by considering additional meeting dates since this will compress the public meetings to review the budget. Mr. Foss said that he believed the Charter and Bylaw review committees looked at this idea and I would encourage you to seek out the people on that Committee and get their thoughts. Generally, they thought that while the system may not be great, it’s the best we have given the circumstances and in the constraints that we have and they chose not to change the dates during past administrations that came forward with this type of proposal.

*Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on Article 14 motion A, seconded by Mr. Coffey, voted 7-4-0. (THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS NO RECOMMENDATION)*

#### Roll-call vote:

Mr. Beherry = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = no	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = no	Mr. Resmini = no
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = no
	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate

Mr. Evans said members know that this is a flawed process, with fits and starts and too often, starting nearly from scratch because the numbers have changed dramatically and the Committee needs to reassess where we're at. In his opinion, there has been an earnest effort by the school and town administrations to find a better way to do this. By moving the budget due date to February and the start of Town Meeting out a month, this hopefully can be reduced. He said he is mindful of the potential impact that could reduce the amount of time available for public input. However, the increased accuracy in development of the budget reduces the likelihood of false starts that are frustrating to Committee members, the public, and the town and school administrations. He opined that this is not a radical redesign, it's a tweak that will, in the long run, save time and make communication lines cleaner and enable us to be more effective reviewers and communicators

Mr. Coffey said having the budget process start in January has always been a flawed. A concern has been raised about the public input. He opined that there will be ample time for public input in the budget process. The School Committee will still have budget hearings on its budget and the Finance Committee will still have hearings for the budget and there will be ample opportunity for public input. As we heard, moving the start of Town Meeting back two weeks really only means we lose one week because Town Meeting does not meet during school vacation week, so I don't think there's going to be that much of an impact in the overall process.

Mr. Coburn said he is not going to support this which pains him because he wants to be supportive of the schools and town administration. One of the reasons he didn't move referral is they've clearly identified something that people have long wanted to improve, and they've come up with something that has certain aspects that are beneficial, he is not sure it's a net gain. He expressed skepticism about the impact on school staff recruitment noting that he has seen many instances of the schools getting great employees because they could make a firm offer without conditions.

Mr. Grome said this is a welcome change, noting that when the subcommittees meet with various departments within the town when we don't have correct information or information that we know will change, it is a waste of our time. Moving the dates out allows those departments to have more accurate information. A previous speaker was concerned about having adequate time for citizen input. Mr. Grome questioned how valuable is that time spent on citizen input or Committee review when the information is known to be likely to change. He opined that making this change will result in less confusion for all parties involved.

Ms. Coughlin acknowledged that the process doesn't work ideally right now, but is not sure that the passage of this Article will change that. The success in developing the next budget is based on the cooperative agreements between the current town administrator and school superintendent position, but those people are not always going to be in those positions. She opined that there is always going to be some portion of town government wanting more.

Ms. Sciarra said there are pros and cons to each argument. As someone who's done budgeting, she agrees that having six month numbers is beneficial. But she also knows that, if you look at the historical data, there are a lot of line items in your budget that are pretty consistent year to year, so if you give someone an extra month, they will take the extra month and I don't think that's beneficial. She said she is not going to support this because she doesn't think it's going to make a difference since we seem to change budgets until we go to Town Meeting.

Mr. Pope said he's happy to see town administration and the school administration come up with ways of budget reform and he is going to support this and cited hearing that other towns have later deadlines than Natick currently does, so don't see this as putting us as an outlier, but bringing us in line with, with some with the processes developed by other towns.

Mr. Behery stated that he hears the concerns from some people that this is not going to work, but using the same flawed process doesn't help; He opined that there is an advantage of doing in a different way, the collaboration that is occurring between the different parts of the budget is encouraging. He noted that getting better numbers will improve the committee's effectiveness, so even if the process still not 100%, at least we're going to get better numbers and that might help us gain some efficiency and use our time in a better way

Ms. Wollschlager said it's important to understand what this really means from a timing perspective and from Finance Committee perspective. As has been said, this is only a one week delay for the start of Town Meeting.

And for Finance committee, it's a two week delay. As far as our ability to handle the budget at the last minute, she noted that in June of 2020, because of COVID, we had to vote on three different budgets, within one month. For those of you that were on the Committee at the time, it was crazy. We had many late nights, but we got it done, so she believes we can find out figure out a way to make this work. She noted that process is imperfect, but stated that only way to make the process closer to perfect would be if the school department moved up their budget finalization and not had it in March. And, if the Finance Committee had a confirmed budget that was agreed upon by administration and school administration in February that would really simplify things. But until that happens, unless the school department can change their processes and vote on their final budget earlier, we have what we have. She added that we've heard some good things from the administrations, with a new cooperative approach between the municipal side and the school side. Ms. Wollschlager said she hopes that there will not be a huge disconnect on February 1, because that's reconciliation is what really takes the time and those discussions take place outside of the Finance Committee. This will not fix everything and we're going to have to be creative on the Finance Committee to figure out a way potentially to restructure our subcommittee meetings to have some of the more strategic discussions with department heads that we haven't necessarily had the chance to have before. The department heads are amenable to doing it. Ms. Wollschlager also stated that this approach might not work, but think this is worth a try. If it helps municipal and school administrations come up with more accurate numbers that may foster greater collaboration.

*Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on Article 14 motion B, seconded by Mr. Gillenwater, voted 6- 5 - 0. (THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS NO RECOMMENDATION)*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = no	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coffey = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = no	Mr. Resmini = no
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = no
	Ms. Wollschlager = no

#### Debate

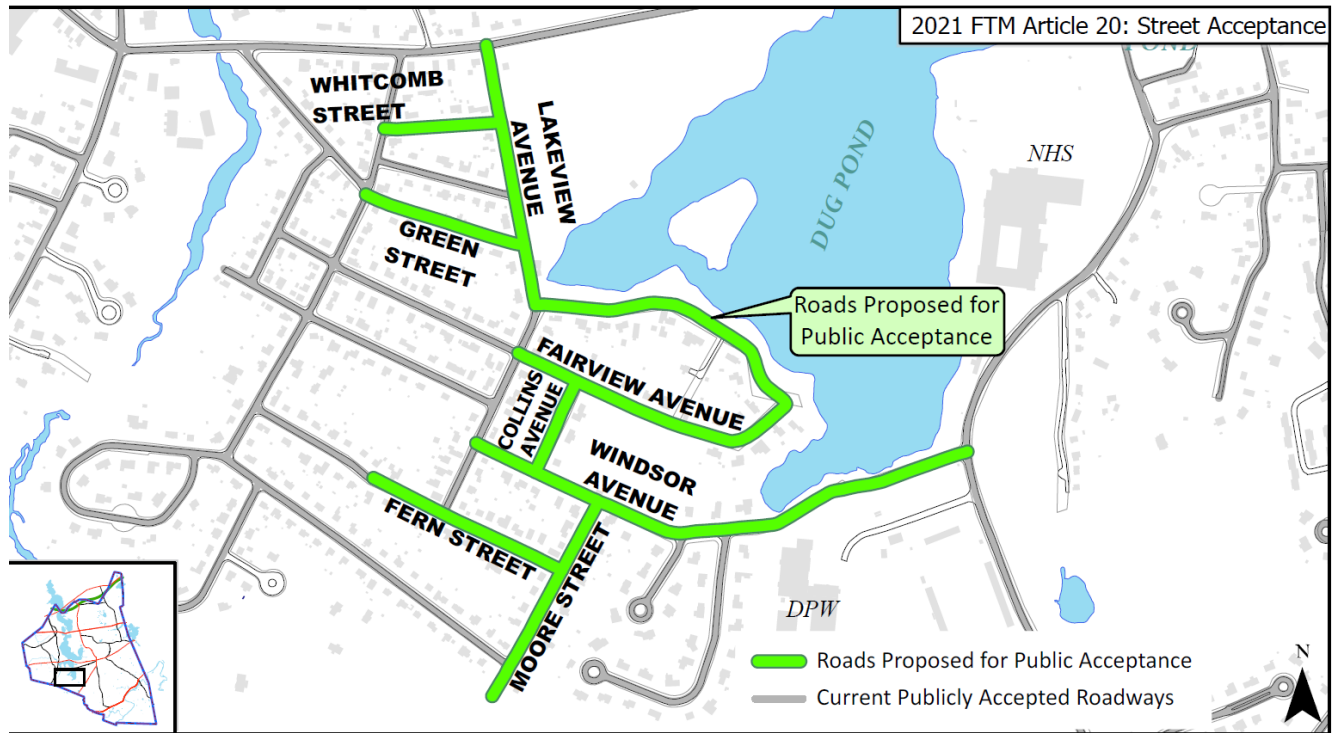
Mr. Evans noted that this is probably going to go the same way as Motion A. Hey, in terms of voting, so we probably won't have a recommendation for Motion B either. Having said that, I'm still going to support Motion B for all the reasons we stated earlier, and will let Town Meeting decide which way they would like to vote once they weight the pros and cons that will be included in the Finance Committee Recommendation Book.

Mr. Gillenwater agreed and noted that a split decision at the Finance Committee facilitates a little bit of narrative and discussion and questioning at Town Meeting that may be productive and that is why he will support favorable action.

Mr. Coburn said he has looked at these motions as a whole because they really make sense together. He noted that by February 1, the state legislature has a draft budget and the only way that this might work better is if we can figure out how to get the legislature to act a little sooner, but we don't have that kind of leverage. Him and

Article 20: Street Acceptance – Collins Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Fern Street, Green Street, Lakeview Avenue, Moore Street, Whitcomb Street, Windsor Avenue

Presenter: Mr. Jeremy Marsette, DPW Director



The roadways highlighted in green are proposed for acceptance and total a little less than two miles in total length. This article is in keeping with the Select Board's five year Roadway Improvement Plan, and the Select Board's policy of tackling roadways and neighborhoods in a comprehensive fashion. This neighborhood is now due for next calendar year for a reconstruction. However, it's a patchwork of accepted and unaccepted roads. The unaccepted roads are highlighted in green. All the properties on these roadways were created by subdivision called Fairview Terrace in the early 1920s and there are historic record plans on that. However, since that subdivision predates the modern subdivision control law, the subdivision plans cannot be used as the street acceptance plans. Therefore, through prior appropriation at Town Meeting, the town retained a consultant to prepare the roadway layout plans and they will be delivered to us in about a week. They will be essentially replicating what was shown on the historic subdivision plans. These roadways were accepted in a patchwork fashion. For instance, of the accepted roadways - some were accepted in 1920, some in 1981, some in 1954, and some in 1934. The town is tackling this neighborhood in a comprehensive way - a similar strategy was used for the Elliott Hill Road neighborhood where that neighborhood came up for improvement on the five year roadway improvement plan and portions of that neighborhood had unaccepted ways and we tackled it as one project for a comprehensive neighborhood package. For this project, the town held (virtually) a public neighborhood meeting this summer (August 10) and 60 to 70 folks virtually attended. As we presented the process forward, we sent letters and correspondence with all of those abutters in addition to that public meeting, and requested that all abutters provide us with signed letters of intent that set forth that all abutters are willing to deed these private ways by easement to the town at no cost and no damages paid as a result of this public street acceptance. The costs included in the warrant article language are merely for recording fees at the Registry of Deeds or other miscellaneous fees. The street acceptance process in the Commonwealth is generally laid out by MGL c. 82 § 17 through 32. There is actually an overview memo highlighting the process of street acceptance up on the town's

website under the DPW engineering division ([Street Acceptance Memo](#)). The Select Board is authorized by MGL to lay out ways with the intent to accept them as public ways. They must then be brought forward to Town Meeting for vote to accept them and authorize the Select Board to accept all of the property to make them public ways. Then after Town Meeting, it goes back to the Select Board where they then make a final vote to accept all of the deeds and accept the layout plans. Then they're all recorded at the Registry of Deeds. Once these streets are publicly accepted, they are added to our chapter 90 roads, which will add approximately 2 miles of roads. Chapter 90 is state fund funding that we received via MassDOT to help fund roadway improvements and roadway maintenance. We receive about \$900,000 annually and the addition of two miles would equate to about \$10,000 in additional Chapter 90 funds per year. If these roads are not accepted, they remain private and the town is prohibited from expending public funds for their improvement and therefore could not be included on the five year roadway improvement plan or in the project plan for next year.

#### Questions from the Committee

Mr. Evans asked whether any additional water and sewer work needs to be done prior re-paving once these roads are accepted. Mr. Marsette said, in keeping with our practice ahead of any roadway reconstruction, they comprehensively look at all of the underground piping, storm drainage, and water and sewer mains and will do so for these roadways.

Mr. Gillenwater stated that often prior to acceptance as a public roadway, private ways need to be brought up the standards of accepted roadways and the property owners are assessed betterments for this work and he asked whether the town is “gifting” the improvements and betterments to private property owners. Mr. Marsette said the betterment process is always available for the improvement of ways both public and private. The town may accept roads in any condition or any design base that they feel appropriate. New roadways that are under a current subdivision acceptance that have and have been constructed recently need to comply with the Planning Board approved plans and meet all the standards prior to acceptance. However, with respect to these older roadways, the town is free to accept them in any condition they so desire. Mr. Marsette said this is a neighborhood where most people drive through and do not realize they're driving from a public way to a private way and there is no difference per se to the traveling public. Therefore, it's proposed to tackle this neighborhood as a package.

Mr. Gillenwater asked whether this process or procedure is available to other neighborhoods, because in his neighborhood, four out of five streets aren't paved and asked whether the residents can petition the town to take over our neighborhood and just bring in new streets. Mr. Marsette said there is a process to petition the town for street acceptance. These roadways are coming before the Finance Committee and Town Meeting because they are due on the Select Board's five year roadway improvement plan. The town policy is to tackle neighborhood roadways in a comprehensive fashion and cleanup some past oversights.

Ms. Wollschlager requested that Mr. Marsette produces a map that delineates both the unaccepted and accepted roadways in this neighborhood. Mr. Marsette agreed to do so.

Ms. Wollschlager asked how many miles of unaccepted roadways will be left in the town if Town Meeting votes to accept these roadways. Mr. Marsette said several years ago, the town had approximately 25 miles of unaccepted roadways - 125 publicly accepted miles of roadways. Acceptance of these public ways will reduce it to around 20 miles of unaccepted ways within Natick.

Ms. Wollschlager noted that her recollection is that the town is able to accept some roads through a more streamlined process and asked whether we have exhausted those easy wins, or is there still more to come. Mr. Marsette confirmed that she was correct – that is was the “simplified street acceptance procedure” that the town received via special Mass. legislation. To be eligible, these roadways must be roadways whose subdivision plans that went through the Planning Board subdivision approval process. That helps simplify the procedures somewhat, but it does not alleviate all of the process. There were a few of those roadways left that meet these criteria.

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether Town Counsel had reviewed this motion and approved it. Mr. Marsette said this is the standard language that's been used on the most recent street acceptance with the exception of these roadways being named and this was drafted and approved by Town Counsel for prior street acceptances.

*Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on Article 20, seconded by Mr. Behery, voted 10- 0 - 0.*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate

Mr. Evans said many of the unaccepted roads join accepted roads, but that doesn't really matter to the residents and drivers who pass through those roads. In some cases, the roads are well maintained whereas others aren't as well maintained. He said to imagine that you lived on a road where I think it's a fairness issue and part of it is paved, well, reasonably well, part of it looks like it was just perhaps. So it's a fairness and equity issue. The chair pointed out, you know, the roads. Imagine living on a road where you're going over this rumble strip of road to get to your house at the other end every day. And I really think this is a fairness issue. These people these people have had properties are likely to have had properties, possibly in a family for decades. It's overdue on the paving plan. So I think there's shellfish.

Mr. Behery said he lives near that area and believes him it's unfair for residents and neighbors and applauds the town for taking this action so that the roadways can be re-paved.

Mr. Coburn appreciated the comments regarding equity and the questions asked that get to some of the possible implications of equity. He noted that he's usually skeptical of taking on substandard roads on the public dime, but acknowledged that there are unique circumstances with the patchwork of accepted and unaccepted roads. Having an unaccepted road alone might not persuade him to improve these private roads on the public dime.

Mr. Gillenwater said he supports this but noted that some other neighborhoods will not be treated as equitably, as four out of five roads in his neighborhood street aren't paved, don't have town sewer, and don't have gas lines, sidewalks or anything like that, but the property owners all knew that when we bought the property or should have known that they were buying a private way and were responsible for the maintenance of that private way. I'm not going to begrudge these residents from getting the upgrade that I think my neighborhood should also get but hope that it will apply to more roads in the future.

Ms. Coughlin stated that residents are taxpayers and these roads are on the 5 year roadway improvement plan. She agreed with the idea that the town should continue to work on their [roadway improvement plan](#).

Ms. Wollschlager said she always thought it was ironic that Windsor Avenue, which is the only road you can use to get to the DPW, was an unaccepted road. And contrary to what my colleague says, we've had testimony before the Finance Committee of people who have moved to town that had no idea they were on an unaccepted road and the street signs don't say private way. One can argue that should come up during the title search prior to buying the property. She noted that when you have this patchwork effect where you're driving and half the street is accepted and the other half isn't, we certainly don't want that to become a safety issue as well. We should try to eventually accept all of these streets and the Select Board feels the same and applauds DPW administration for working through these as I know there are a lot of steps involved to get this done.



## Article 18: Parks & Recreation Wage Increase Subsidy

Presenter: Mr. Cody Jacobs

Mr. Jacobs said he would have a brief [presentation](#). Mr. Jacobs said he submitted Article 18 intertwined with Article 17 (personnel pay plan). In a nutshell, Article 17 & 18 raise the minimum wage for part-time town employees to \$15/hr., in increments \$14.25 in January 1 2022 and \$15 in January 2023. Article 18 seeks the funding to pay for that increase to \$15/hr. for Parks and Recreation employees during the time between January 1, 2022 and the end of that fiscal year. The evidence for this effort is the relatively low minimum wage, according to MIT's living wage calculator. For a single person with no children to earn a living wage in Middlesex County, they would need to make \$19.55 per hour. The minimum wage currently is significantly lower than that at \$13.50 per hour. This disparity reflects major divides between the working class and the wealthy, both in Massachusetts and across the country and it's inspired a national movement to increase the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour. This presents an opportunity for Natick to take the lead by raising wages for its own employees right now. The current pay plan sets the minimum pay level for part time employees at \$13.50 an hour, the same as the state minimum wage. The state minimum wage is set to increase to \$14.25 an hour beginning on January 1 2022, and to \$15 an hour on January 1 2023. This proposal seeks to take that step to \$15 an hour a year early. He opined that this increase would allow us to show moral leadership by giving workers fair pay for their labor and may also have some direct benefits to our town. For example, it could help attract town workers and prevent worker shortages at a time many employers have been dealing with worker shortages, especially for jobs that are at the lower end of the pay scale. It would also put money directly into the pockets of people who are very likely to spend it locally here in Natick...

Mr. Jacobs said he wanted to respond to a couple of arguments that have been raised against this proposal in the past when it's been discussed.

- Most of the part-time employees are just teenagers. From what I understand, it appears that many of the workers were at the lowest end of the part time pay scale in Natick are seasonal workers who are teens, but he didn't think that should prevent Natick from raising the minimum wage. For one thing, we can't really make assumptions about anyone's personal situation. There are many people who, even though they may be teens, they are using that money to supplement family incomes or to support themselves through school or pay for extracurricular activities. Mr. Jacobs noted that if you have any class of workers that's paid a lower amount, it can depress wages for workers across the local economy and have ripple effects.
- The other argument is that other town workers have not received raises recently, or haven't received high enough raises and deserve higher pay. Mr. Jacobs said it would be great if we could pay all of our workers more and would support efforts to raise wages for other town employees. He noted that raising the wage for the lowest paid workers would not decrease the wages of other town workers. Nothing in either the proposed Article 17 or Article 18 would impede raising wages for other types of town workers.

The vast majority of the part-time workers work for the Recreation and Parks Department in seasonal capacities, usually, to support programming like camps and stuff like that. And although the cost of the wage increases is minimal over the course of the entire budget, there was a concern raised when this was discussed at Town Meeting in the spring, that if we went ahead with this increase, it could really have a bad impact on the Recreation and Parks Department programs because they are paid for through user fees that have to cover the entire cost of the program. And so if you raise costs by raising labor costs, you would have to raise the fees and this seems pretty unfair because it would sort of disproportionately put the cost of raising the wage on families that may not be able to afford it. Mr. Jacobs said they wanted to avoid that and Article 18 tries to eliminate that hurdle by subsidizing the cost of the increase in the minimum wage for the Recreation and Parks department from general fund dollars. Based on his conversations with the Recreation & Parks Director, they are already planning to increase the wages for part-time employees by \$0.75 to \$14.25 per hour Article 18 would pay the additional \$0.75 per hour to bring the minimum wage up to \$15 per hour for the remainder of FY 22 Mr. Jacobs maintained that this is somewhat analogous to the school bus subsidy that the town regularly pays to subsidize school bus fees.

Mr. Jacobs noted that Article 18 is only meant to pay for the proposed additional increase in the minimum pay level from \$14.25 to \$15. It would not pay for the increase that's already required by the increase in minimum hourly rate in going from \$13.50 to \$14.25. Article 18 would only cover the remainder of FY22, so if it's enacted we would plan to offer a similar subsidy article for the first half of the FY23 to cover July 1 through December 31, 2021 at Spring Annual Town Meeting.

#### Questions from the Committee

Mr. Coburn asked if town administration could tell us what positions are the hardest to recruit for in municipal government. Are they these part-time positions below \$15 an hour, something else or a combination of both?

Mr. Errickson said, from my experience in municipal government, it's really all positions that are hard to recruit for. He said they have many open department head positions and people are retiring at high rates in government across the board. As the baby boomer generation ages, we are seeing significant retirements and we have several positions that are open now and we know that there are going to be more coming down the pipeline. A lot of the skilled workers are also extremely challenging to hire and retain because municipal governments do not pay as well as the private sector. So for example, mechanics and the skilled laborer positions are extremely challenging to hire for right now and those people are already making higher wages in the \$20 to \$30 + per hour range, so they're already making well of a minimum wage per union contracts. The Boston market has a lot of campuses, whether it's healthcare or tech companies that have facility managers and facility workers. So we have a really hard challenge competing with facilities maintenance people were people who can do the certificate, electrical engineering or HVAC engineering because they're getting paid higher wages in the private sector. But, the seasonal workers are up there as well. We're concerned about our ability to attract people to fill these positions because the hourly rates from places like McDonald's are exceeding minimum wage because they are having difficulty attracting employees.

Ms. Karen Partanen, Recreation & Parks Director agreed with Mr. Errickson that camp directors are hard to find because they're typically teachers and they're not wanting to work in the summer right now. Lifeguards are also difficult positions to hire right now and we only hire them for two months, so we're not getting a lot of responses for that. We have difficulty getting bus drivers too, so it's across the board pretty much an across-the-board problem.

Mr. Coburn stated that it sounds like hiring is challenging across-the-board and if there a pot of money \$28,000 or \$100,000, or \$150,000, what would management prioritize spending on – these part-time positions or skilled labor positions. Mr. Errickson said that, looking at the entirety of Natick town government, \$29,000, is not a huge pot of money. That said, we have mandates that we need to accomplish – for example, we need to issue building permits for public safety purposes; we have certain obligations in our finance team for producing budgets and providing those in a timely manner to the town officials to vote on this. We would need to look across the entirety of government and identify the gaps where we may need to either do better recruitment or add some to that of department's budget to increase their ability to recruit. The two overall challenges we face are competing with the private sector - when you're in a strong market like Boston. In addition, colleges and universities haven't necessarily supported municipal government management as a primary career choice, so there is a supply chain issue with few people looking to get into local government. So, the more efficient we can be as a local government the better off we will be to hopefully recruit more people into local government and to offset some of the pay scale disparities.

Mr. Evans asked for confirmation that other town departments don't have a significant number of part-time employees, such as library pages, who would be affected by the minimum wage increase that only the Recreation & Parks part-time employees would get through passage of this article. Mr. Jacobs said his understanding is that the highest concentration of part-time employees is in the Recreation & Parks department. Further, he indicated that the primary reason for this approach is the way that the recreational programs are funded through user fees and the revolving funds and the intent was to not have to increase user fees dramatically. Mr. Errickson said, from an overall town administration perspective, going into next fiscal year, with any increase in costs, we are

looking very heavily at how those impacts future fiscal year forecasting, because during current fiscal year, we had to pull heavily from our stabilization funds. And moving forward, we're going to have to look at really look at all our cost drivers. Mr. Townsend said they investigated how many people actually make minimum wage in the town and it is very low and they are pretty much concentrated in Recreation & Parks, Mr. Townsend believed that the library pages are making \$15 an hour and already. Mr. Townsend said he thought that there are four particular positions in the camps that make minimum wage; the impact to the FY22 budget overall is minimal (estimated at \$12,000), because the camps are pretty much over. As Mr. Errickson said, the problem would come up in FY23, where in looking at minimum wage, we must consider the effect that would have on people throughout the pay scale and the narrowing of the gap between supervisor positions and those employees they supervise. So the basic cost on this entire issue for FY22, if we were to take those pay scales that are minimum wage now (\$13.50) and increased them to working dollars and \$14.25, that totals about \$63,957. Going into FY23, that's where the bulk of the cost actually would exponentially go up because that's when we would incur most of the increase in costs going to \$15 per hour.

Mr. Gillenwater said he understands the desire not to raise the cost of Recreation & Parks programs, but one of the main drivers for using the revolving funds is to match costs to consumers and making the programs sustain themselves. Article 18 subsidizes these Recreation & Parks programs with additional general funds to increase the part-time minimum wage to \$15 per hour - is this a philosophical change or a short-term change. Mr. Jacobs said it's a short-term change. This increase would last for a calendar year, spanning the second half of FY22 and the first half of FY23). Mr. Jacobs said consumer fees for these programs would need to be increased in FY23 to reflect the increase in minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Article 18 attempts to reach that \$15 per hour a year earlier without passing those costs on to consumers.

Ms. Wollschlager asked whether Mr. Jacobs has discussed Article 18 with the personnel board. Mr. Jacobs said he has not formally brought it to the Personnel Board, but said that he spoke with the chair of the Personnel Board very early on in this process to let him know of his intention to file this article.

#### Public Comments

Mr. Foss, Town Moderator noted that Article 18 is only offsetting the increase cost of increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for Recreation & Parks programs so that user fees are unaffected by the incremental increase above the mandated \$0.75 increase to \$14.25 per hour. It has absolutely nothing to do with other departments and other part-time employees. If you're only hearing Article 18, the scope of the discussion is on the subsidy for the Recreation & Parks part-time employees. All other discussion of part-time minimum wage positions is outside the scope of this discussion. The broader discussion would be under Article 17 with the Personnel Board so you can hear the bigger picture and also be in within scope of the article. Ms. Wollschlager said, she advised Mr. Jacobs to integrate Article 17 as part of his presentation - that may not be appropriate for Town Meeting, but it is appropriate for the Finance Committee in order to have a fuller picture.

Mr. Daniel Zitnick said, as a member of the public and someone whose kids have been regular attendees of the camp, I just want to say that he supports this Article and thinks it's a great thing to do for the young people who put a lot of time and effort into making those camps a success. And, as a parent, for families with working parents, these camps are really beneficial programs for them to so that they can. This subsidy is a good way to handle this.

*Ms. Coughlin recommended indefinite postponement on Article 18, seconded by Ms. Sciarra, voted 3- 7 - 0 (No Recommendation).*

#### Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = no	Mr. Grome = no
Mr. Coburn = no	Mr. Pope = no
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Resmini = yes
Mr. Evans = no	Ms. Sciarra = yes
Mr. Gillenwater = no	Ms. Wollschlager = no

*Mr. Evans moved to postpone consideration of Article 18 until Article 17 can be heard on September 23, , seconded by Mr. Behery, voted 7– 3 – 0. (No Recommendation)*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Ms. Coughlin = no	Mr. Resmini = no
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = no
Mr. Gillenwater = yes	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

Debate

Mr. Evans said when he came to the meeting tonight, he was pretty sure that he was going to vote no against Article 18. However, a lot of the arguments are compelling and much of the information by town administration indicates the net effect of this is minimal for FY 22 (from now until June 30, 2022). Nevertheless, there are a couple of reasons why I want to hear Article 17 before voting on this. I want to hear what the Personnel Board thinks about this regarding the effect on the part-time Personnel Pay plan and whether, when you raise the minimum wage from \$13.50 to \$15 per hour, the gap between the minimum and the next level closes and there may be knock-on effects. One theory is that offering a \$15 an hour increase via a subsidy may help get more people interested in summer jobs – that may be true. However, I'd love to have heard Article 17 tonight, so he urged the Committee to postpone it until a date to be determined by the Chair in concert with the Chair of the Personnel Board.

Mr. Behery agreed that raising minimum wage makes sense and I can see the challenges for hiring whether part-time or full-time staff for the town. The issue is that the town should do this the right way as part of an overall plan. Thus, without hearing the Personnel Board input makes it difficult to approve this Article without seeing the whole picture.

Mr. Coburn agreed that the Committee needs to have a comprehensive picture from the relevant town authorities that ought to inform us. He said he is not convinced that the little window that we're looking at in this Article is the relevant window, noting that I am associated with a small business that recruits some summer help semi-skilled labor, and recruitment has a lot of it has to do with things that are not necessarily monetary, such as both sufficient hours and predictable hours and work patterns. The principles behind addressing compensation, in the abstract, are laudable principles but we're here to do business for the town and to provide recommendations to town meeting to help them manage that town business. He noted that he is unconvinced that the Committee has the scope of view interest issue to make a recommendation, and perhaps via postponement and input from the Personnel Board we can get that broader view.

Mr. Pope stated that while the equity issue is an issue that I care about. He also noted that hourly pay is a market-based issue. In Natick, Stop-and-Shop is paying \$16 per hour, McDonald's pays up to \$17 per hour and Amazon has a company minimum wage of \$18. He noted that in the finance industry where he works, management has done mid-cycle, across-the-board pay increases from 4 to 8%. We're talking about a 5% increase over what the minimum wage would otherwise have been in January and adjusting those people at 5.3%. I'm not necessarily convinced that's not going to happen anyway just to keep up with the market. And having the Personnel Board and others more comprehensively work on a pay plan would likely be a better approach, so I support waiting to hear to hear this.

Ms. Coughlin said she might be the outlier here, but sees this also as a standalone motion not necessarily needing to wait to hear from people who are on the Personnel Board. In reading the Article, she didn't think anything she would hear in the personnel board would change her mind on this question as she didn't feel that the sponsor has met the criteria that she would need to be able to support this, noting there weren't a lot of specifics here.

Ms. Wollschlager said the Committee will hear Article 17 on September 23 and noted that she is very reluctantly going to support postponement, but not for the reasons already cited. She does not believe we need to hear from the Personnel Board or consider article 17 to make a decision on Article 18. However, there does need to be greater clarity on what the actual cost of the subsidy is. I applaud Mr. Jacobs for trying to get to that number, but we heard from Mr. Townsend, a couple of numbers, maybe only \$12,000 for FY 22, because the most of the people are hired over the summer. It's important to get that nailed down and she asked the sponsor to work with town administration to get that pinned down.

Ms. Coughlin said she applauds the maker of this Article and in a perfect world that would be a great thing to do. One of things she looked at was that the \$0.75 increase was presented as not being that that big of a number. However, one of the reasons that it's a graduated increase in the minimum wage is to give the cities and towns the time to budget properly. She also noted that no matter what this figure is, it's coming from the general fund or free cash. She stated that Free Cash comes from the pockets of everyone in this town so there are people who have relatively limited income and are low pay scale themselves who would pay for this subsidy. And, she believed that the Personnel Pay Plan does have relevance because it provides the context for the phasing in of the increase in the minimum wage. She didn't think that this is the appropriate way to get an increase for a certain limited number of workers, and then work their way up to others.

Ms. Sciarra supports indefinite postponement because this is a problem that's going to solve itself through the phasing in of the \$15 an hour wage increase. Each year, we struggle to balance the budget and we're always looking for \$100,000 here, \$50,000 there, and this is just going to put more pressure on a budget that we have trouble funding every year. She views funding this subsidy as taking money away from somewhere else and doesn't see where that's going to come from. She looks at her responsibility to prudently spend taxpayer dollars and believes there are other places that this money could go even though it's a nice idea.

#### Article 35: Hybrid Town Meeting

Presenter: Mr. Foss, Town Moderator

Mr. Foss stated that, for some time now, we've been conducting Town Meeting virtually based on permission of the state government. However, in examining the statute and the permission to hold a virtual Town Meeting, Town Counsel and others noted that, as the legislation stands today, you cannot have multiple options to access Town Meeting – you are either doing it in person or virtually. There also have been numerous discussions at the Moderators Association, as well as the State Legislature on how to modify our permission to change the venue of Town Meeting and use new technologies to enable members to attend either in person or virtually. We're finding out that each town's representative Town Meeting operates uniquely, so it is difficult to come up with one methodology to have a "hybrid Town Meeting" that allows for in person and virtual participation. The Moderators Association came up with a method and some standards for hybrid Town Meetings in for those towns with representative Town Meetings only and that is the motion that he has provided. It's a request that the Select Board submit this home rule petition to the legislature to allow, In Natick's case only, to conduct Town Meeting in a multiple venue manner (in person or virtual using internet, telephonic or Voice over IP [VOIP] technologies. Section 1 of the motion lays out the authority to determine whether a Town Meeting shall **be a** hybrid Town Meeting so that members, residents and interested parties may attend that any session in multiple manners as they wish and still be counted in this in this session. It also lays out specific voting and technology systems, who is going to operate it, who has the authority to oversee it, as well as requiring that participants provide written electronic notice so that they do participate in Town Meeting. Mr. Foss noted that some of is repetition of what we do now but lays it out in the hybrid form, rather than in the single form we have under the authorization for virtual Town Meeting. There are also provisions that where video conferencing is used, steps must be taken to ensure that everyone has the equal ability to access the Moderator and to speak at Town Meeting (i.e., the same rights whether attending in person or remotely), to ensure equitable access to the meeting. Everyone shall have the opportunity to vote on all matters at Town Meeting and publishing the actual voting results in a consistent manner, in accordance with the local bylaws in a timely manner. Mr. Foss noted that it's been very hard to get the electronic votes tabulated and posted and this motion makes it a requirement that they

be posted in a reasonable period of time. There are also safeguards that allow for the possibility that they are unable to join a meeting virtually or in-person to use telephonic or VOIP means and that's specified and they don't have to give notice to the Moderator for that purpose.

This Article is consistent with what about another 12-13 other communities are doing so as to provide a consistent message to the legislature – that a hybrid Town Meeting is a necessity and is possible with today's technology.

Having the flexibility to attend in person or participate virtually broadens the ability for participation of residents and interested parties. Mr. Foss opined that we now have a greater participation and interest since we offered virtual Town Meeting and he is a real proponent of a portion of supporting this. Having said that, there are going to be concerns and hurdles that we will have to work through to make this work properly. The Town Clerk, the Moderator, the Assistant Moderators, the technology people, and Town Meeting members will probably have to have a lot more patience as we ramp up to hybrid Town Meeting.

Mr. Foss said he has no illusions that if this passes at Fall Annual Town Meeting, the Mass. Legislature is going to run this right through and it will be approved by next spring and this is the beginning of a long trek, in his opinion. Having spoken with Senators Rauch and Spilka and Rep. Linsky, the Legislature itself is working through these same problems with respect to their meetings.

#### Questions from the Committee

Ms. Wollschlager noted that the language was developed by the town moderators and asked whether Town Counsel has reviewed it and said she has questions about a number of the sections. Mr. Foss said Town Counsel has not yet reviewed it in detail. This was actually drafted by the former Brookline Town Moderator, along with a small group of representative Town Meeting Moderators. The fifty-one Moderators of towns with representative Town Meetings, we approved it at a Mass. Moderators Association meeting. Mr. Foss also noted that he made a couple of minor changes to reflect the unique needs of Natick.

Ms. Wollschlager stated she will ask a couple questions and set aside the rest. In Section D near the end it says “In order to attend a session of a hybrid meeting remotely, a participant shall be required to provide written or electronic notice of such participation to the moderator and Town Clerk, which notice shall be required to be received no later than 48 hours before such session. Such notices may cover such person’s remote attendance at one or more sessions of a hybrid meeting. Such notice requirement may in general or in specific instances be waived for Town officials and other Town employees by the moderator, by written notice to the Town Clerk and Office of the Select Board.” Ms. Wollschlager said, theoretically, but if they decided to come in person, would they be allowed to attend the meeting in person? If they can, why wouldn't everyone say they will be attending remotely and then come in person when they want to come in person. Mr. Foss said the section is intended to require 48 hours’ notice for members attending remotely, not in person. However, Ms. Wollschlager noted that if a person who said they were attending remotely instead decided to attend in person would they be able to participate and vote in person. Mr. Coburn asked whether the moderator could specify a process that addresses the 48 hour notice issue that Ms. Wollschlager raised such that anybody who has registered 48 hours in advance to participate remotely can show up in person and be allowed into the meeting and participate in person. Mr. Coburn said while he is very supportive of this hybrid model and its benefits but thinks in person Town Meeting is a better quality experience and should be promoted. Mr. Foss agreed and will contemplate making that change.

Ms. Wollschlager opined that Section H was poorly worded and may have unintended consequences, as it says “the requirements of sub-sections (e) and (f) of this section shall to the extent that they cannot be complied with through said telephonic or related means not apply to town meeting members” She thought that what it meant to say was I think what really mean to say that this does not apply to Town Meeting members using telephonic participation and I think that needs to be explicit. Mr. Foss said he understood her point and would re-work it and run it by his fellow Moderators to ensure that change won’t create negative consequences for them.

*Mr. Evans moved to recommend Favorable Action on Article 20, seconded by Ms. Coughlin, voted 9 – 0 – 0.*

#### Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes  
Mr. Coburn = yes  
Ms. Coughlin = yes  
Mr. Evans = yes  
Mr. Gillenwater = yes

Mr. Grome = yes  
Mr. Pope = yes  
Ms. Sciarra = yes  
Ms. Wollschlager = yes

### Debate

Mr. Evans said the hybrid model is going to be here for at least the near term. He said that he agrees with the Moderator that this is not going to be a slam dunk kind of thing and getting started sooner is a good thing.

Ms. Coughlin thanked the Moderator and everyone who put this Article together because it was difficult enough to switch from in-person to all virtual, and will be even more challenging provider for both in-person and virtual and she is very supportive of it.

Ms. Wollschlager thanked the Moderator for putting this forward and she looks forward to a hybrid Town Meeting, She thinks it will help members with young families and broaden Town Meeting participation. She noted that she hopes that the Finance Committee can move to a hybrid model once other committees work out the kinks involved. Finally, she noted that she is confident that the Moderator will take the committee's comments into consideration and we will have a slightly different motion at Town Meeting.

*Mr. Evans moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Coburn, voted 9– 0 – 0.*

### Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes  
Mr. Coburn = yes  
Ms. Coughlin = yes  
Mr. Evans = yes  
Mr. Gillenwater = yes

Mr. Grome = yes  
Mr. Pope = yes  
Ms. Sciarra = yes  
Ms. Wollschlager = yes

### Committee and Sub-Committee Scheduling

Mr. Evans said he is setting up an Education Subcommittee meeting with NPS on Wednesday September 22 from 5pm to 6:45pm and will send out an agenda so that anybody who wants to attend can attend.

Mr. Evans suggested that we postpone approval of minutes until the September 21 meeting.

*Mr. Evans moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Coburn, voted 9 – 0 – 0*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = yes
	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

*Mr. Evans moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gillenwater, voted 9 – 0 – 0*

Roll-call vote:

Mr. Behery = yes	Mr. Gillenwater = yes
Mr. Coburn = yes	Mr. Grome = yes
Ms. Coughlin = yes	Mr. Pope = yes
Mr. Evans = yes	Ms. Sciarra = yes
	Ms. Wollschlager = yes

**MEETING ADJOURNED – 10:45 PM**