

Warrant Article Questionnaire Non-Standard Town Agency Articles

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

Article #24	Date Form Completed: 9/2/2021
Article Title: Acquire 60R Harwood Road	
Sponsor Name: Conservation Commission (Matt Gardner, Chair)	Email: mgardner.concom@natickma.org

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it will appear in the Finance Committee Recommendation Book and presented to Town Meeting for action.
Response	<p>Move that the Town vote to authorize the Select Board to acquire by gift, purchase, taking by eminent domain, or otherwise, to accept a deed or deeds to the Town of fee simple, easement, or other interests in the parcel of land located at 60R Harwood Road, Natick, MA, assessor's parcel ID 14-0000016A, and authorize the Select Board to transfer such land to the Conservation Commission for conservation purposes and to take all action necessary or appropriate to effectuate the purposes of this Article.</p> <p><i>Note: This language was reviewed and approved by Town Counsel.</i></p>
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is the proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the accompanying Motion?
Response	<p>The Town has an opportunity to protect the last remaining privately held parcel of land in the Sunkaway/Pickerel Pond conservation area. The Natick Conservation Commission was approached by the family of the property owner who wishes to donate the land in honor of their mother.</p> <p>The purpose is to authorize the Select Board to acquire the property by eminent domain, as clouds on the title prohibit donation of the parcel.</p>
3	Has this article or one of a very similar scope and substance been on a previous Warrant Article and what have been the actions taken by the Finance Committee, other Boards or Committees and Town Meeting?
Response	No.

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4	Why is it required for the Town of Natick and for the Town Agency sponsor(s)?
Response	The property owner's family wishes to donate the land for open space purposes to be protected in perpetuity. The Natick Conservation Commission owns all the land immediately surrounding this property.
5	Does this article require funding, how much, from what source of funds and under whose authority will the appropriation be managed and spent?
Response	Town Counsel has estimated roughly \$1000 for legal costs associated with the taking, which will be absorbed by the Conservation Commission budget. No appropriation was requested.
6	Does this article act in any way in concert with, in support of, or to extend any prior action of Natick Town Meeting, Massachusetts General Laws or CMR's or other such legislation or actions? Does this article seek to amend, rescind or otherwise change any prior action of Natick Town Meeting?
Response	No.
7	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive Master Plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations?
Response	A goal of the Town of Natick 2020 Open Space & Recreation Plan is to <i>"Protect privately held open space through acquisition, conservation/agricultural restrictions, easements, and other means"</i> . This is an extremely critical way of conserving Natick neighborhoods. The Pickerel Pond and Sunkaway wetland system is natural resource loved by many for its wildlife and hiking amenities. The subject of this article is one of the last privately owned parcels within the Pickerel Pond/Sunkaway area. It is informally utilized by trail users today and contains a portion of the Pickerel Pond waterbody itself. Protecting the parcel would address multiple environmental, open space, and recreation goals in the Town's comprehensive planning efforts.
8	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?
Response	Select Board, Conservation Commission

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9	<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 ● Appropriate Town Boards & Committees were consulted ● Required public hearings were held
Response	<p>The Conservation Commission has been in communication with the property owner's family since 2019. The Conservation Commission and Select Board both voted unanimously to accept the land donation in 2020. The Open Space Advisory Committee and Trails and Forest Stewardship Committee are both in support of the project.</p>
10	<p>Since submitting the article have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?</p>
Response	<p>No.</p>
11	<p>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?</p>
Response	<p>This parcel is currently used as an unofficial part of the trail system around Pickerel Pond in North Natick. This area is a well-used and much loved part of the neighborhood and provides open space to a number of neighborhoods surrounding the pond. Should the town not take this parcel, it could potentially be sold and developed without any guarantee of continued public access.</p>