

Warrant Article Questionnaire

Non-Standard Town Agency Articles

Article #14	Date Form Completed: 10/2/2021
Article Title: Amend Bylaws: Dates of Spring Annual Town Meeting & Submission of Fiscal Documents	
Sponsor Name: Town Administrator	Email: jerrickson@natickma.org

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it will appear in the Finance Committee Recommendation Book and presented to Town Meeting for action.
Response	See attached Motions
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is the proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the accompanying Motion?
Response	<p>Town Administration, in partnership with the School Department, seeks to provide the Finance Committee and the Natick community with the most accurate and well-informed annual budget at the time of submission, supporting an efficient and transparent review process. Recognizing the need to ensure the Finance Committee and community have the time and resources necessary to review the budget along with all Town Meeting articles in advance of the Spring Annual Town Meeting (SATM), this article seeks proposed town bylaw amendments to both the timing of the start of the SATM as well as the timing of the preliminary budget submission by Town Administration. In partnership with this proposal, the Select Board has indicated their willingness to adjust the warrant submission deadline for SATM to earlier in the calendar year in an effort to provide the Finance Committee and the community with more time to review and work through Town Meeting warrant articles in advance of the submission of the annual budget and the start of Town Meeting. Currently the Town Charter requires the Warrant to close at least 60 days before the start of Town Meeting, for which the Select Board has the authority to adjust to any number of days (75 or 90 for example) greater than 60. NOTE no motion is needed to authorize the Select Board to adjust the closing of the SATM warrant to greater than 60 days.</p> <p>With this in mind, the two motions of this article work together and seek the following:</p> <p>A) Motion A proposes to adjust the start date of the SATM from 2 weeks to 4 weeks following the local election. Along with starting SATM after the April school vacation week, This motion has the added benefit of allowing more time for the Town Clerk to complete post-election follow up with (among others) town meeting members in advance of SATM.</p> <p>B) In concert with Motion A, Motion B seeks to adjust the submission deadline for the Town Administrator's preliminary budget from January 1 to March 1 (NOTE this also impacts the</p>

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	<p>submission of the Capital Improvement Program from December 1 to February 1 per the Town Bylaws).</p> <p>As currently experienced with a January 1 submission deadline, the preliminary budget lacks the detail of several key revenue and expense drivers, leading to less than accurate budget figures, and (more often than not) a gap between proposed expenses and revenues. In practice, this causes the Finance Committee and the community to review multiple iterations of the budget, leading to the need to reconsider several components of the budget in advance of SATM, thereby adding meetings to the Finance Committee schedule.</p> <p>Though not all revenue and expense information is in hand by March 1, the additional time will allow for greater detail to be incorporated into the budget in an effort to ensure a more accurate and balanced budget at the time of submission. The result of a more accurate and balanced budget is a more efficient review process, limiting the need for multiple reconsideration meetings before the Finance Committee.</p>
3	Has this article or one of a very similar scope and substance been on a previous Warrant Article and what have been the actions taken by the Finance Committee, other Boards or Committees and Town Meeting?
Response	Yes –several years ago, a prior town administration proposed a similar, but very different, article. The details included an adjustment to the budget submission deadline without a similar adjustment to the start of Spring Annual Town Meeting. This was not adopted by Town Meeting.
4	Why is it required for the Town of Natick and for the Town Agency sponsor(s)?
Response	This is not required for the Town of Natick or the Town Agency.
5	Does this article require funding, how much, from what source of funds and under whose authority will the appropriation be managed and spent?
Response	No funding is required.
6	<p>Does this article act in any way in concert with, in support of, or to extend any prior action of Natick Town Meeting, Massachusetts General Laws or CMR's or other such legislation or actions?</p> <p>Does this article seek to amend, rescind or otherwise change any prior action of Natick Town Meeting?</p>

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Response	This article seeks to amend two parts of Natick's Bylaws – as noted in the motions.
7	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive Master Plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations?
Response	The proposed motions seek to amend two sections of Natick's Bylaws. These motions can be independent of each other, but are designed to work together in order to improve the annual budget creation, submission, and review processes of the Town (General Government and School Department) as well as the Finance Committee in advance of the SATM.
8	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?
Response	The primary participants who will need to execute the motions include the Town Clerk, Town Administration, School Department, and Finance Committee, among others.
9	What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that: <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 concept of this article was formulated through discussions and in partnership between Town and School administrations. Town Administration also engaged with the Town Clerk, the Town Moderator, the Select Board, School Committee members, the Finance Committee in advance of formulating the proposed motions in order to ensure the proposal balanced the needs and desires of all parties involved.</p> <p>There were no required public hearings for this article/motion in advance of Finance Committee.</p>
10	Since submitting the article have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	No. Issues raised were known and understood. Town Administration has engaged with several who have raised numerous, valid concerns with the proposed timeline adjustment. Through productive and proactive dialogue, consensus is building around the need/desire to adjust the bylaws as proposed by the motions of this Article.

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11	If this Warrant Article is not approved by Town Meeting what are the consequences to the Town and to the sponsor(s)? Please be specific on both financial and other consequences?
Response	The Town will continue to follow the current process and timeline for the annual budgeting process.