

Warrant Article Questionnaire Non-Standard Town Agency Articles

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

Article #27	Date Form Completed: 3/31/22
Article Title: Pickerel Pond Trail Connector	
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 transfer the sum of \$300,000 to be expended under the direction of the Select Board and/or Conservation Commission, which sum was originally appropriated from the Mathworks Mitigation Fund and used for road improvement projects under Article 23 of the 2013 Spring Annual Town Meeting, voted on April 25, 2013, which amount is no longer needed to complete the projects for which it was initially appropriated, to pay for the cost of design and construction of the Pickerel Pond Trail Connector, to be constructed between 60R Harwood Land to 0 Bradford Road, and through the Pickerel Pond Conservation area, all parcels which are dedicated to conservation purposes pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40, section 8C, and to authorize the Conservation Commission and/or the Select Board, on behalf of the Town, to apply for any and all applications deemed necessary for grants and/or reimbursements from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (P.L. 88-578, 78 Stat 897) and/or any other grants or reimbursements connected with the scope of this Article, and to authorize the Town by and through the Select Board and/or the Natick Conservation Commission to enter into all agreements and execute any and all instruments as may be necessary on behalf of the Town to affect said project; or take any other action necessary to effectuate the purposes of this motion.</p> <p><i>This language has been 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 connect two trail systems that are currently only separated by roughly 250-feet of open water. This boardwalk connection would provide access to residents on the south side of Pickerel Pond to the north side trails, and the Cochituate Aqueduct Trail, which connects this area all the way to Newton. Neighborhoods on the west side of Pickerel Pond are mapped Environmental Justice communities – this project would increase their access to open space and recreational opportunities.</p> <p>The purpose is to authorize the Select Board and/or the Natick Conservation Commission to appropriate the necessary funding and enter into all agreements and execute any/all instruments that may be necessary to affect said project. The Conservation Commission has</p>

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	submitted a Land & Water Conservation Fund grant application for 50% of the project cost (\$150,000) should the grant be awarded. The grant requires us to gain approval by Town Meeting to: submit said application (and all paperwork related thereof including reimbursements); and appropriate the full project cost (\$300,000).
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.
4	Why is it required for the Town of Natick and for the Town Agency sponsor(s)?
Response	The approval of Town Meeting is required for the Land & Water Conservation Fund grant program the Town has applied for.
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	This article does require funding. The full project cost has been estimated at \$300,000, but the Town has submitted a grant application to the Land & Water Conservation Fund, which if received, would reimburse approximately 50% of the project cost (\$150,000). Prior Planning Board mitigation funds related to the 2008 MathWorks Apple Hill development will need to be reappropriated in order to cover the remaining 50% which acts as our grant match. The Planning Board has voted unanimously in support of this article. The appropriation would be managed and spent under the authority of the Conservation Commission and its staff.
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>"Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect our open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the town."</i> A specific action noted under this goal is <i>"Connect north Pickerel Pond with south</i>

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	<p><i>Pickerel Pond via a boardwalk trail system.</i>” This project would increase access to and provide an opportunity to educate the public more about the existence of Pickerel Pond, a natural resource loved for its wildlife and hiking amenities.</p> <p>In addition, a goal of the Town of Natick 2030+ Master Plan is to “Improve the connectivity of the Town’s open and recreational spaces through both (1) better connections between trail systems and parks and (2) coordinated improvements to bike/pedestrian transportation infrastructure.”</p>
8	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?
Response	Select Board, Conservation Commission
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 and Open Space Advisory Committee have had numerous discussions on the project, all at public meetings where public comment is accepted. The project will incorporate public engagement surrounding the connection construction to ensure residents are appropriately informed of the scope and timing of work. This project was born from public outreach conducted in 2020 for the Town’s update to our Open Space & Recreation Plan. Many members of the public stressed that better trail connections are needed in Town and did not know Pickerel Pond (a >150 acre Conservation Commission owned parcel used for hiking and recreation) even exists.</p> <p>The Planning Board voted unanimously on 3/16/2022 to support this article.</p>
10	Since submitting the article have you identified issues that weren’t initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	No.
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?

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Response	If this Warrant Article is not approved by Town Meeting, the Town would no longer be eligible for the Land & Water Conservation Fund grant, and would need to put a hold on this project until new grant rounds open for FY24. Put simply, this important and much desired trail connection would not be created.