

# **TOWN SEAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Spring 2023 Town Meeting**

**Article 32**

# MASSACHUSETTS LAW REQUIRES A TOWN SEAL

Section 47. Each town shall have a seal, established at a town meeting, to be kept by the town clerk. Papers or documents issued from any office or board of the town may be attested therewith. Cities which had an authorized seal in use on May tenth, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine, may continue to use such seal until changed by ordinance, and other cities shall by ordinance establish a seal of the city and designate the custodian thereof.

**M.G.L., Ch 40 § 47**

# Fall 2020 TOWN MEETING

- Article 16: To see what action the Town will take to review and revise the Town Seal, including the preparation of a report and recommendation for a future Town Meeting, or otherwise act thereon.

## MOTION

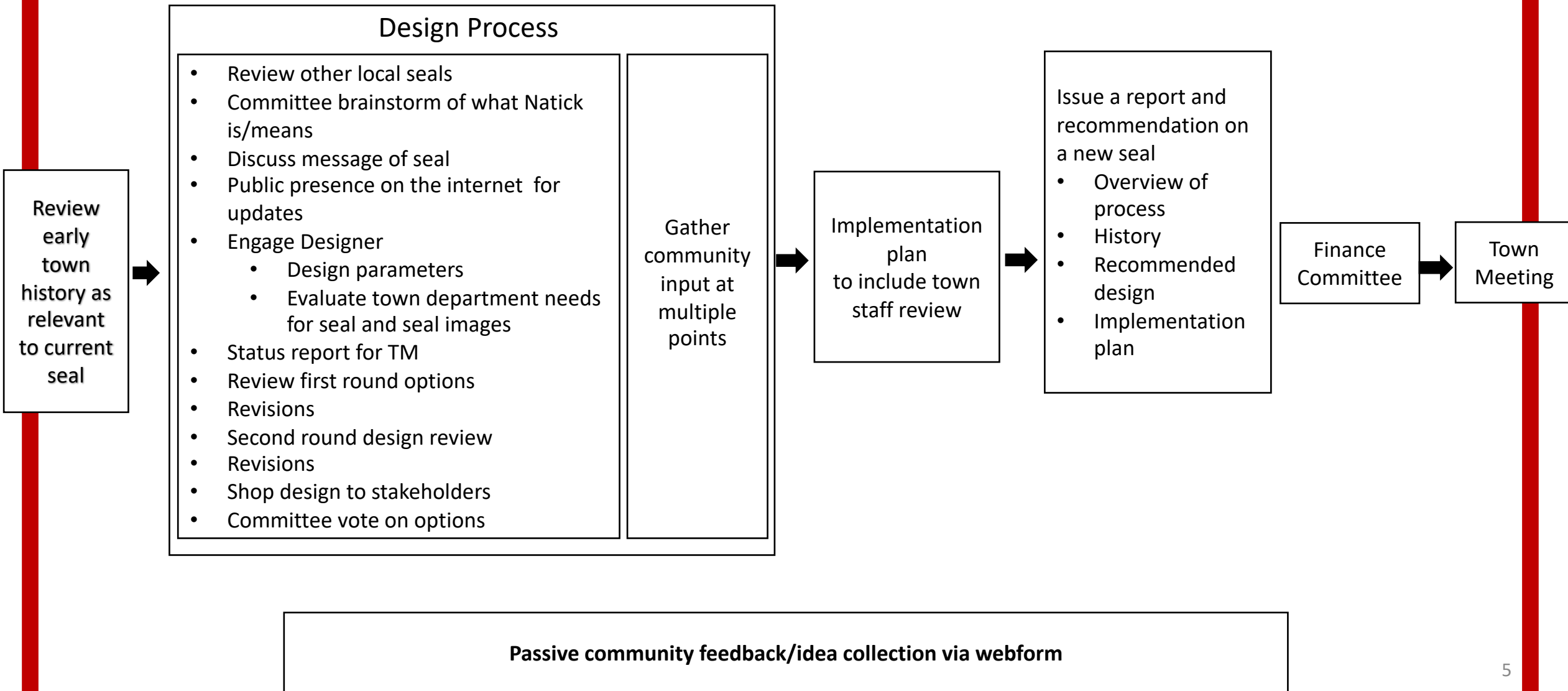
- To establish a Town Seal Review Committee of up to seven individuals appointed by the Moderator, said committee to include persons suited to the charge of the committee by their interest and familiarity with history, design, and civic participation, and whose charge shall be to review the history of Town Seals in Natick; to propose a new Town Seal after a public process that shall include consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders including members of Indigenous communities; to hold at least one public forum; and to provide a report and recommendation to a future Town Meeting that shall consider implementation of a new seal.

**Passed Town Meeting 109-4-1 on November 10, 2020**

# TM SPONSOR PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS FALL 2020

- The seal, and the many versions of it we use today, is historically inaccurate in oversimplifying a complex history about which we have learned much more of since 1951. The repeated use of this image reinforces offensive stereotypes of Native American people.
- While the seal does depict history, it does so from the point of view of white settler colonists, in particular Puritan missionaries. The repeated use of this imagery normalizes a 1950's view of a 17<sup>th</sup> century understanding of the relationship between the Puritans and the Indigenous people they encountered.
- The seal enshrines the missionary work of Reverend Eliot as the brand of our community. Furthermore, Natick was not founded by Eliot alone, but rather was negotiated in concert with Indigenous leaders, particularly Waban, Cutshamekin, and others whose people had always inhabited the land here.
- While we cannot know what was in the minds of the Indigenous people who joined with Eliot and formed Natick, historical accounts leave us to believe that Natick was a negotiated place. Settling in English style settlements was one option for people who had faced decades of catastrophic epidemic disease, warfare, and land loss. Settling in these English style places, with all the sacrifice it entailed, was an option that would hopefully allow people to preserve some culture, protect their families, and remain on ancestral lands.
- The image depicts a religious scene and celebrates the translation of the Bible. How relevant is that to our diverse town?

# COMMITTEE PROCESS



# FALL 2021 TOWN MEETING

Article 36: To hear a progress report from the Town Seal Review Committee and to see what sum the Town will appropriate for design and associated services of a new Town Seal, or otherwise act thereon.

- **MOTION A**

Move to hear and discuss a progress report from the Town Seal Review Committee.

- **MOTION B**

Move to appropriate \$11,000 from tax levy to be expended under the direction of the Town Administrator and upon the request of the Town Seal Review Committee for design and associated services for a new town seal.

**Motion B Passed Town Meeting 101-15-3 on October 26, 2021**

# HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMITTEE WORK

- Conversation about early Natick led by Niki Lefebvre, Natick Historical Society
- Guest speaker, Director of Historic Newton, leading the redesign of Newton's seal
- Guest speaker, Education Manager of Historic Newton on the iconography and art history of imagery on the Newton and Natick seals
- Committee members reflections on seal, approval of process outline
- Review of other Massachusetts town/city seals
- Guest from Framingham City Seal Committee
- Creation of committee website, public outreach brainstorming
- Community survey
- Community survey report
- Outreach to Indigenous community members; guest speakers including several Nipmuc individuals including Pamela Ellis, Carolyn Hasgill, Maria Turner, and Brittney Walley
- Graphic designer search and hiring
- Two rounds of revisions
- Video/website to introduce designs
- Online survey and open house for design feedback
- Development of implementation plan with Town staff participation
- All committee work product at [NatickSeal.org](https://NatickSeal.org)

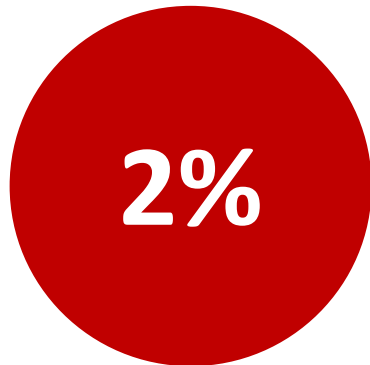
# 2022 SURVEY RESULTS



**Individuals  
responded to the  
survey**



**Respondents  
included an open-  
ended comment**



**Response rate  
based on Natick's  
population**

## **What themes would you like to see on a new seal?**

Nature & Scenery 59.4%

History 43.5%

## **What represents the theme of history in Natick?**

Historic Town Center 50.3%

The Indigenous Community 36.3%

## **What represents the vision for Natick's future?**

A diverse and welcoming community 53.8%

A thriving town center 25%

## **What represents the theme of nature & scenery in Natick?**

Town Common 39.9% South Natick Dam/Falls 28.8%

## **What represents the theme of building & industry in Natick?**

Morse Library 38.5%

Town Hall 22.03%

## **Which elements of the current seal do you want retained?**

State & Town Name 78.1%

Massachusetts Incorporation Date 51.6%

## **Which elements of the current seal do you want removed?**

Christian symbols 79.1% Images of Rev. John Eliot 69.8%



# PROCUREMENT OF DESIGN SERVICES

- Summer 2022: Scope of Work document was posted on the Town's website, in several Facebook groups, and the Natick Report with a September 1 deadline for submissions.
- The committee received seven complete submissions.
- After discussion, the committee decided to interview four of the graphic designers who submitted proposals.
- Committee voted to advance Sebastian Ebarb pending a reference check and final negotiations on the design process.
- References were checked and a kick off meeting was held on 11/17/2022

# GRAPHIC DESIGNER SEBASTIAN EBARB

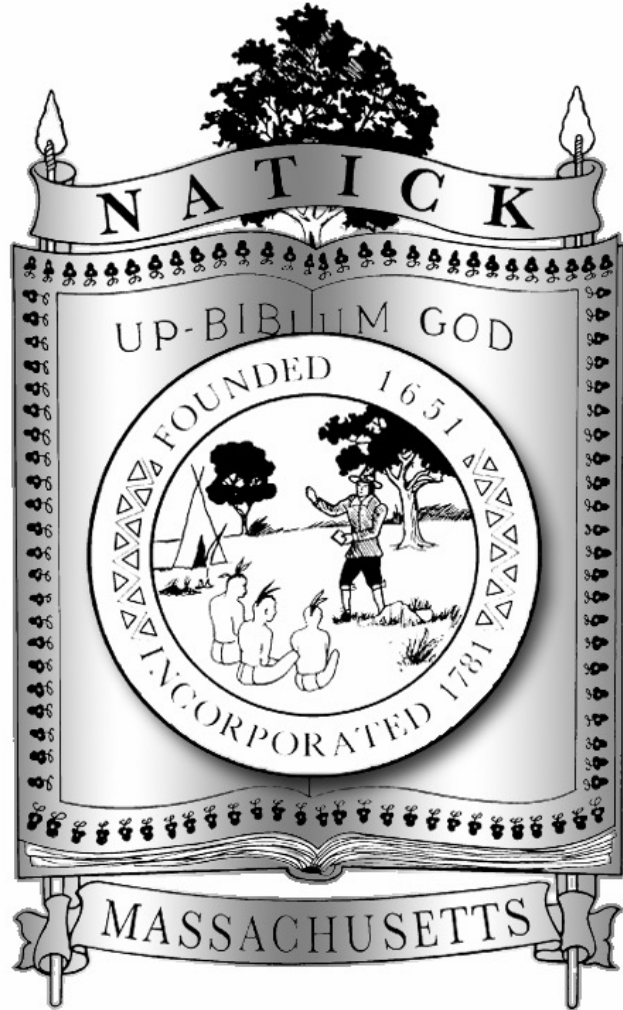
Sebastian Ellington Flying Eagle Ebarb is a designer based in Wayland. As a member of the Choctaw-Apache tribe of Ebarb, he has spent his years working to revive, hold and revere his native heritage. As a digital and print designer, he has spent his career working to push past conventional thinking.

Ebarb is the former Design Director for the City of Boston and co-owner of the design studio Nahi (meaning “we” in Apache). He is an Associate Professor of Graphic Design at Northeastern University. Sebastian’s work is centered on empowering and lifting up those around him.

Sebastian's work is perhaps best exemplified by his work for the Pipestone National Monument logo. For hundreds of years, a 300-acre plot of land has been the site of one of the most important and sacred Native American pipe-making quarries. Sebastian created a logo that served the needs of the 23 tribes that claim and use the space.

In creating designs that help people, Sebastian’s work has won numerous awards, including ten Excellence in Graphic Design awards from GDUSA, two Awards of Design Excellence from Communication Arts, and eight other notable design awards over the last decade.

# CURRENT SEAL



# EMBOSSER IMAGES



# DESIGNER GUIDANCE

- Simple, clear image optimized for a small embossed image
- Image to speak for all of Natick as one community
- Committee members reviewed seals of other towns in Massachusetts and preferred those that were simple and timeless
- Committee members discussed the challenge of accurately portraying history in this medium (small embossed image) as well as the inaccuracy/unoriginality of the image on our current seal
- Many survey respondents highlighted concerns about racist/offensive images on the current seal
- Most survey respondents wanted no reference to religion on a future seal
- Most survey respondents showed a strong preference for a nature-based design
- Conversations with Natick Nipmuc individuals highlighted two parallel concerns - cultural appropriation and erasure
- Committee members agreed with designer that a circular image would be best and agreed to address designs in black and white before considering color options

# DESIGN PROCESS

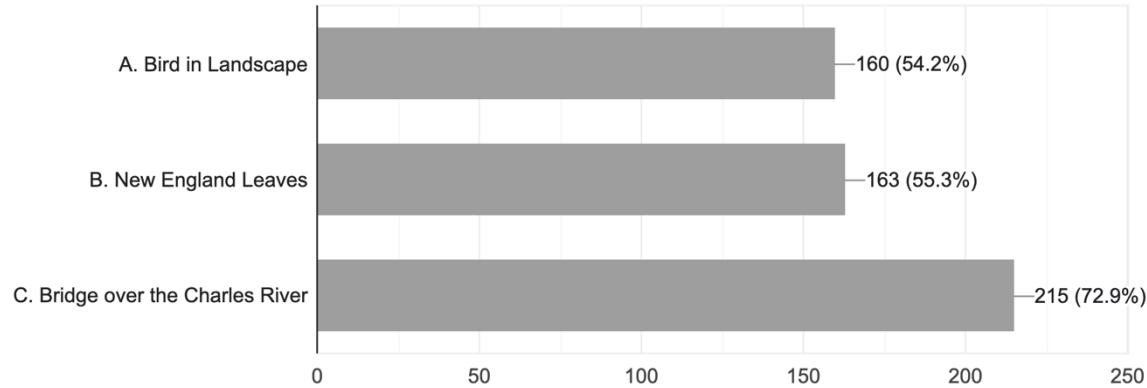
- Graphic designer originally submitted four design sketches in December 2022
- After committee feedback three of the designs were digitized and refined
- Committee presented the three digitized designs to the community via an online survey and at an in-person open house on February 5, with the designer present.



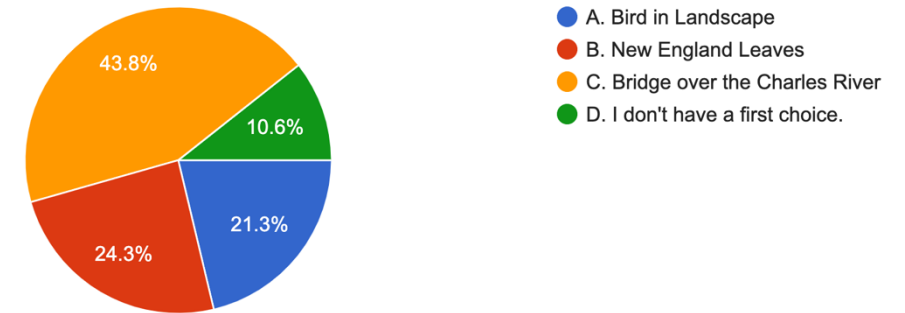
- Survey results were reviewed by the committee, and the designer presented variations of the one design most preferred by community members who participated in the survey.
- The design was finalized in March

# DESIGN SURVEY RESULTS

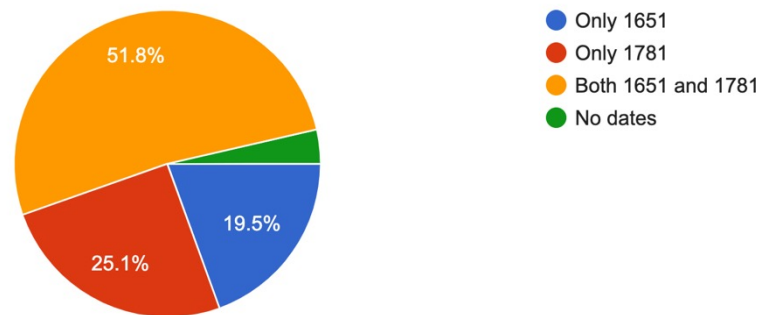
## Which designs are acceptable to you?



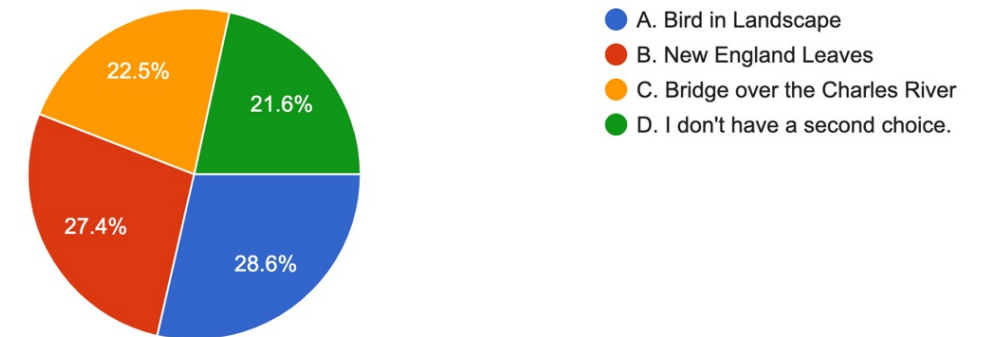
## Which of the three designs is your first choice?



## Which date(s) would you prefer to see on the new seal?



## Which of the three designs is your second choice?



\* 351 total respondents

# RECOMMENDED NEW SEAL DESIGN



# DESIGNER STATEMENT

*“Those who have always lived in this area have long maintained a bridge over the Charles River. One of the first known written descriptions of the area highlights one bridge, built by Indigenous inhabitants, constructed of stone and wood, that withstood ice flows that destroyed other bridges.*

*Bridges connect communities and make them stronger. It shows the enduring nature of not only the current community but also the original inhabitants of this land. The water is a force that continues to move this community forward, ebbing and flowing but always moving towards a better future.*

*The night sky is eternal and uniting. Ten stars were chosen to remind us that Natick marks the tenth mile on one of the most famous marathons in the world. The stars allow us to navigate home and provide something to reach for. Used both by settlers and Indigenous inhabitants alike, the stars will always bring us back home to Natick.”*



# OUR HISTORY AND OUR FUTURE

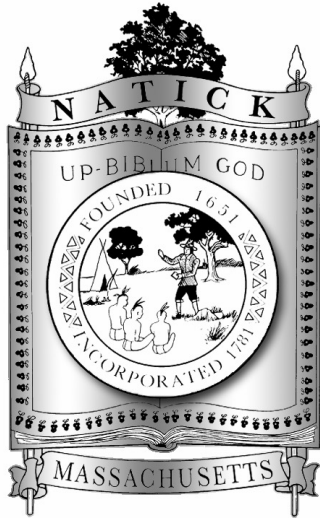
- **It is not feasible for a single, small image to do the work of local history education.**
- The current town seal does not accurately represent our local history. It depicts a vision of Natick's past that was popular in 1951, and based on characterizations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Any image that seeks to represent our rich history would still be a symbolic representation of the vitality and complexity of early Natick, and the stories of the people who settled the mission on this land. Indigenous descendants of Natick's early residents live in and around this community today. They have perspectives to share and stories to tell. Massachusett, Nipmuc, and other descendent voices have been underrepresented in our community.
- Further, since Natick's founding as a mission town, the community has undergone constant change.
- To better understand and acknowledge our history, including the diverse Indigenous culture, will require active, meaningful and sustained effort. That work begins with one important step. *Listening*.
- **The committee urges the community to create formal and official opportunities to listen and foster dialogue with Massachusett, Nipmuc, and other Indigenous people with connections to Natick's past.** Establishing such opportunities and creating safe spaces for all perspectives will take time, effort, and resources, but will ultimately set our community on a path that is all the richer for it.
- The proposed town seal better serves Natick's past, present, and future. Its centerpiece, the Quinobequin/Charles River, made this land bountiful and meaningful to Indigenous peoples for generations before 1651. The South Natick Bridge bears historic ties to the Indigenous families who built a footbridge close to the same spot in their first year together establishing a mission in Natick. The bridge is also recognizable to residents and neighbors who pass through Natick today. And, importantly, the design expresses a vision for the future: a community in which two banks of a river—two sides of a divide—can join together for common purpose.
- Community members should continue to bring forward underrepresented Indigenous voices, and support local history education in schools and beyond. Thoughtful listening and learning can bring meaningful action that will do more than any town seal could ever hope to accomplish in local history education and underscore the enduring presence of Massachusett, Nipmuc, and other Indigenous peoples in Natick and beyond today—and in the future.

# OFFICIAL USE OF TOWN SEAL

- The committee's mandate from Town Meeting was to redesign the town seal.
- If Town Meeting votes in favor of the image recommended by the Town Seal Review Committee, the Town Clerk will purchase two new embossers to certify all new official documents with the new image.
- Town Administration will decide where else the seal imagery may be used. The committee is working with Town staff on implementation options, but the implementation of the images is beyond the committee's scope.

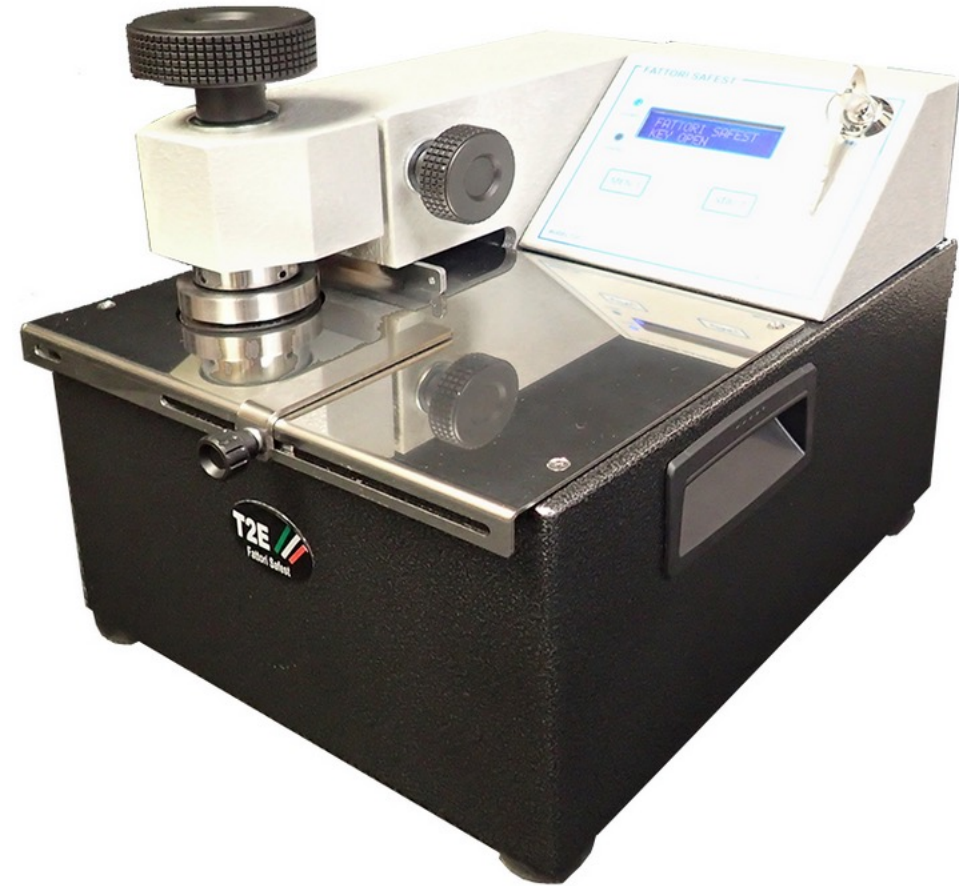
# WHAT DOES A YES VOTE FROM TM MEAN?

- The voted image will be used with new embossers for use by the Town Clerk. Documents will no longer be certified with the 1951 image.



- Town Administration will move forward with plans to remove/replace the image where it is used on other town assets.

# SAMPLE EMBOSSERS



# OTHER USES OF TOWN SEAL

- Town staff have completed an extensive inventory of uses based on the current seal.
- The implementation of these images is generally beyond the Town Meeting's scope of authority.
- In general, Town Administration decides where new images and logos will be used, in some cases subject to appropriation (e.g. street signs).
- The committee recommends prioritizing the most public and visible assets for removal of the current seal as soon as is practicable, and defers to Town Administration on whether the new seal should be as widely deployed or whether different images should be used.

# SAMPLE COLOR OPTIONS



# IMPLEMENTATION

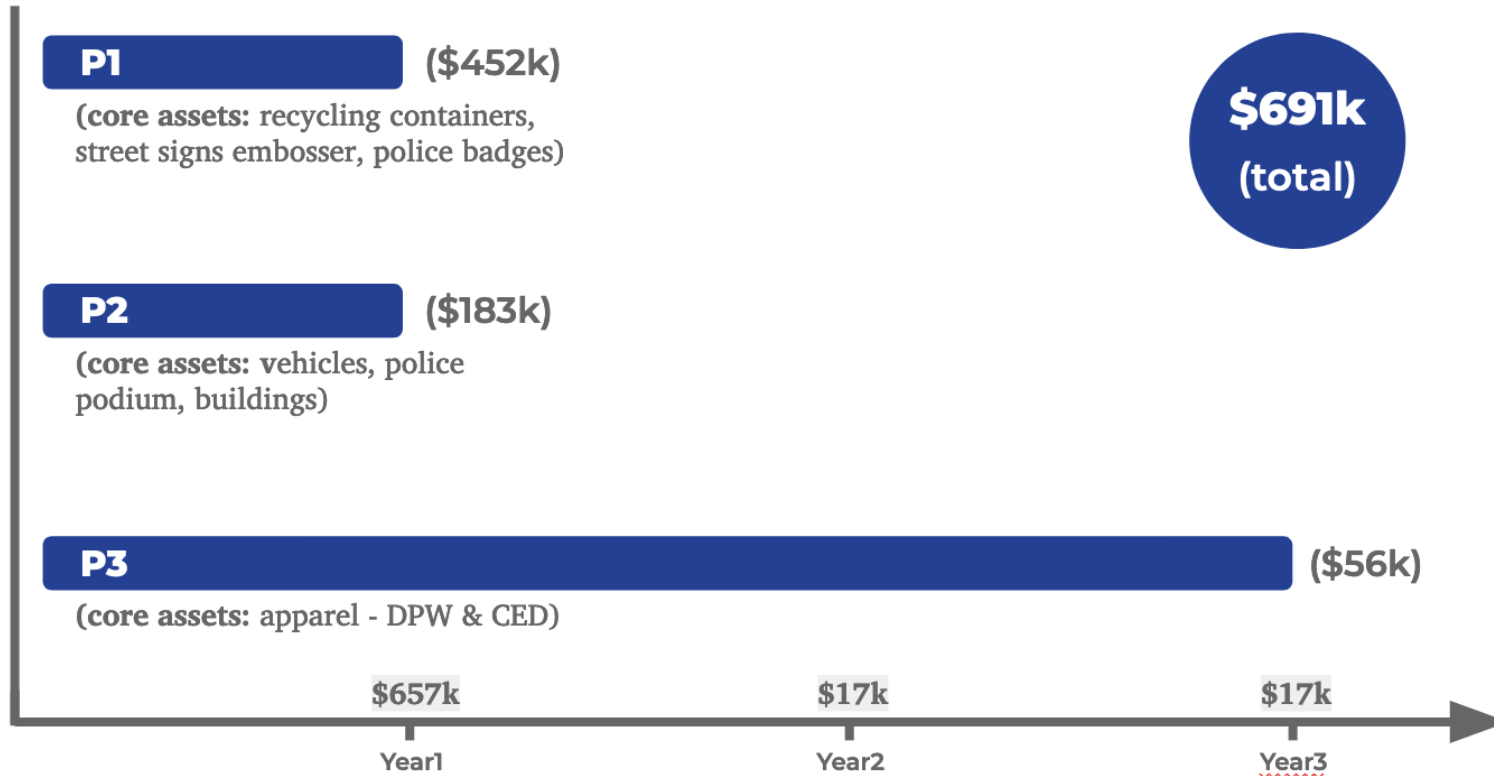
- Step 1 (subject to Town Meeting votes)
  - Replace embossers used by town clerk
  - Cost is ~\$5,000 in proposed Town Clerk's budget
  - Timeline summer 2023 for procurement
- Step 2 (subject to Administration plans)
  - Remove other uses of this imagery with a phased or alternate approach
  - Consider what assets are appropriate for an image based on the new seal
  - Cost varies from free (digital assets) up to \$700,000 to replace visible locations (Town Hall, DPW building and Cole center emblems)
  - Consider in the context of the Town's communications and branding efforts

# IMPLEMENTATION: SAMPLE PHASED APPROACH

## In Summary:

- Town staff completed **inventory** of 42 categories across 24k physical assets (eg. 200 police badges, 18k recycling containers, 1.2k street signs, etc.)
- The Town recommends a **balanced plan**: [1] removal of current seal & [2] capital expenses
- A strategic subset of current locations are recommended for "**seal removal**" (eg. recycling containers, street signs), based on cost-benefit rationale
- The focus of implementation plan is **physical assets** (eg. apparel, building decals, etc.), as digital assets (eg. website) will be swapped at no cost

**Phased Plan**  
(\$691k total)



## [A] Seal Removal

- Street signs (no logo)
- Vehicles (alt. logo)
- DPW equip. (alt. logo)
- Police assets (alt. logo)

## [B] Digital Assets (\$0)

- Website
- Certified docs
- Presentations
- Press releases
- Letterhead/memo
- (+ others)

## [C] Key

### Priority levels:

- “P1” = high
- “P2” = medium
- “P3” = low

*[def] - subjective scoring based on factors including: visibility, costs, end-of-life, & other factors*



# IMPLEMENTATION: ASSET DETAIL

**Headline:** firm objective to replace or remove all current seal instances (+ balance capital expenses)

<u>PHASED PLAN</u> (categorization)	<u>Priority</u> <u>level</u>	<u>Recommendation</u> (re: current seal)	<u>Y1</u>	<u>Y2</u>	<u>Y3</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>	
Street signs	P1	Removal (no logo)	\$322,000	\$0	\$0	\$322,000	
Police Shirts/Jackets	P1	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$85,500	\$0	\$0	\$85,500	
Police Badges	P1	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$30,600	\$0	\$0	\$30,600	
<b>Embosser</b>	*	P1	Replace	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000
Recycle containers	P1	Removal (+ phased alt logo)	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	
Police Patches	P1	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$3,150	\$0	\$0	\$3,150	
<b>Town Hall mural</b>	*	P1	Replace	\$1,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000
DPW Registered Vehicle Door	P2	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$168,000	\$0	\$0	\$168,000	
DPW Small Equipment	P2	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$5,725	\$0	\$0	\$5,725	
DPW Decals (equip. chest)	P2	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$8,625	\$0	\$0	\$8,625	
Police Station Podium	P2	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$350	\$0	\$0	\$350	
Recc & Parks Truck	P2	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$100	
<b>Cole Center building</b>	*	P2	Replace	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$100
<b>DPW building (entrance)</b>	*	P2	Replace	\$50	\$0	\$0	\$50
DPW Jackets	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$6,750	\$6,750	\$6,750	\$20,250	
DPW Sweatshirts	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$6,480	\$4,320	\$4,320	\$15,120	
DPW T-Shirts	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$5,400	\$3,600	\$3,600	\$12,600	
DPW Rain Coats	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$3,105	\$2,070	\$2,070	\$7,245	
CED Exterior Jackets/Vests	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$240	\$160	\$160	\$560	
CED Jackets/Vest/Sweatshirts	P3	Removal (+ alt logo)	\$48	\$32	\$32	\$112	
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>\$657,223</b>	<b>\$16,932</b>	<b>\$16,932</b>	<b>\$691,087</b>	

\* Denotes a "replace" instance with the newly-approved TSRC seal

## NOTES:

- All dollars are subject to Town Meeting appropriation of funding
- If Town Meeting appropriates lesser funds, Town staff will re-assess based on appr. funds
  - Eg. what can be removed/replaced with \$x? \$2x? \$3x?

## ALTERNATE PLAN:

- Allow all current seal assets to extend to end-of-life over est. 20 years (requires est. \$7k budget for critical assets)

\* Alternate plan largely replaces the Embosser (\$5k) & Town Hall Mural (\$1k)

# IMPLEMENTATION: COMPLEX ASSET DETAIL

**Headline:** Of the 24k physical seal assets that were reviewed, the below examples are summarized to explain two complex “removal” seal decisions (totalling 19.2k assets, 80% of 24k total seal assets)

## [1] Recycling Containers

**HEADLINE:** strategic decision to shift towards alternate logo design (v. seal) as the assets hit “end-of-life” (v. immediate removal)

### **GROUNDING FACTS:**

- 18k (est.) units in circ. x \$60/unit = **\$1.2M** of in-circulation assets
- Significant hurdle to gather containers & distribute replacements (eg. sticker)
- Significant sustainability impact (given long end-of-life of plastic)

### **GO-FORWARD PLAN:**

- Allow each unit to hit end-of-life & replace, as needed
- All newly-ordered containers will use a simple, evergreen “logo” design (TBD)
- **Opp:** communications strategy to offer temporary sticker replacement (eg. avail for pick-up at Town buildings)
  - This enables residents “remove” current seal imagery w/o disposing of recycling containers

### **Recycling containers** (current)



## [2] Street Signs

**HEADLINE:** strategic decision to avoid “seal” designs on high-volume street signs (limited value + high switching costs)

### **GROUNDING FACTS:**

- 1.2k (est.) units in circ. x \$280/unit (materials+labor) = **\$322K** cost
- Overview of removal process:
  - Outsourced to contractor (given the scope of project)
  - Replace all assets (given the difficulty to adhere & match a reflective sticker on all signs)
    - Note: est. 400-600 st. signs nearing end-of-life (installed approx. 2000)

### **GO-FORWARD PLAN:**

- Upon TM budget appropriation, pursue multiple contractor bids
- Target 12-mo completion timeline
- **Confirmation:** street sign will become devoid of seal and/or logo
  - **context:** this is commonplace across many (most) municipalities

### **Street Signs** (current)



# ARTICLE 32 MOTIONS

## **Motion A**

Move to hear and discuss the report of the Town Seal Review Committee.

## **Motion B**

Move that pursuant to MGL c. 40 §47, to approve a Town Seal design, as set forth in the document titled Natick Town Seal Review Committee - Proposed Town Seal Design and dated March 30, 2023, which seal will become effective as the seal of the Town of Natick on September 1, 2023.

## **Motion C**

Move to appropriate \$5,000 from tax levy to be expended under the direction of the Town Clerk for purposes of procuring new embossers.

## **Motion D**

Move to discharge the Town Seal Review Committee.

**THANK YOU**

**NATICK TOWN SEAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Mia Kheyfetz, Lincoln Anniballi, Joshua Ostroff,  
Simone Poliandri, Todd Sonneborn, Sandra LeFleur,  
Niki Lefebvre; Virginia Mayo, Saul Beaumont, Associate**