

Warrant Article Questionnaire  
Citizen Petitions Articles

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

Article #29	Date Form Completed: 9/5/2023
Article Title: <b>Eligibility of Finance Committee Members to Serve on Charter Commission</b>	
Sponsor Name: Joshua Ostroff	Email: joshua@ostroff.net

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	<p><b>Motion</b></p> <p>Move to insert the words “Charter Commission,” after the word “except” in the first line of Article 23, Section 1.2 of the Town of Natick Bylaws, so that Section 1.2 reads in its entirety:</p> <p>1.2 <b>Eligibility</b> - Persons holding an elective Town office, except <u>Charter Commission</u>, Town Meeting member or constable, and those serving on appointed committees or boards that have responsibility for issuing permits, approving expenditure of funds, or exercising final authority over any matter are not eligible to be Finance Committee members. Finance Committee members may serve on committees that advise decision-making Town agencies or Town Meeting. No Finance Committee member shall serve for more than a total of twelve (12) years.</p>
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	Article 29 would amend the bylaws to permit a Finance Committee member to run for election to, and to serve on a Charter Commission, and if a Charter Commission was elected, a member could apply to serve on the Finance Committee. Currently, the only local elected offices or positions that FinCom members may hold are Town Meeting member and constable.
3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	N/A
4	Describe with some specificity how the sponsor envisions how: the benefits will be realized; the problem will be solved; the community at large will gain value in the outcome through the accompanied motion?

## Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

Response	<p>The benefits to the community are that FinCom members with the interest and capacity to serve on a Charter Commission will have the opportunity to seek election, and if elected, to serve. Similarly, members of a Charter Commission could apply to serve on the Finance Committee.</p> <p>A Charter Commission is exceptional in that it is very rarely proposed; the last such commission in Natick was over 40 years ago. FinCom members often have perspective and knowledge about local government that could be an asset to a Commission, and thereby to Natick as a whole. Likewise, a Charter Commission member may offer skills and experience as a FinCom member.</p>
5	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations
Response	This is not allowed under the Natick bylaws, hence the article. It is consistent with the community's volunteer traditions. There is no prohibition on this in MGL from a reading of Chapter 43B ( <a href="#">link</a> ) including <i>Section 6: Charter commission; number of members; election</i> ( <a href="#">link</a> ).
6	<p>Have you considered and assessed, qualified and quantified the various impacts to the community such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Town infrastructure (traffic, parking, etc.)</li> <li>● Neighbors (noise, traffic, etc.);</li> <li>● Environment and green issues (energy conservation, pollution, trash, encouraging walking and biking, etc.);</li> </ul>
Response	N/A
7	<p>Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?</p> <p>To this point what efforts have been made to involve those participants who may be accountable, responsible, consulted or just advised/informed on the impacts of executing the motion?</p>
Response	The critical participants are the FinCom in its advisory capacity; Town Meeting in its authority to amend our bylaws; the Attorney General in effecting prompt review; interested members of the Finance Committee in seeking election to the Charter Commission; and the voters of Natick who, if a Charter Commission was on the ballot, may have an opportunity to elect a member of the Finance Committee. Also, the Moderator in making future appointments to the Finance Committee would be able to consider members of the Charter Commission, subject to other criteria.

## Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

<b>8</b>	<p>What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process, that</li> <li>● Appropriate town Boards &amp; Committees were consulted</li> <li>● Required public hearings were held</li> </ul>
Response	I am leaving this to the normal process by which TM articles are considered.
<b>9</b>	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	It is not required, but it is consistent with encouraging and enabling civic participation by knowledgeable and engaged community volunteers.
<b>10</b>	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	<p>Some history of the relevant bylaw (Article 23, Section 1.2):</p> <p>Prior to the adoption of the Natick Town Charter in 1980, Finance Committee members were not permitted to serve on any committees or hold office, including Town Meeting Member. In 1979, the FinCom chair resigned as Chair and member on the Finance Committee once elected to the Charter Commission.</p>
<b>11</b>	What are other towns and communities in the Metro West area, or the Commonwealth of MA doing similar to what your motion seeks to accomplish?
Response	Natick's current prohibition on Finance Committee members serving on a Charter Commission is unusual, but not unique, according to the staff member at the Massachusetts Municipal Association who staffs the Association of Town Finance Committees, and to the principal at Community Paradigm, a firm that consults with municipalities on governance issues, recruitment and other matters. Other recently established Charter Commissions have had Finance Committee members.
<b>12</b>	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	FinCom members will not be allowed to run for election to a Charter Commission, or to serve on a Charter Commission if elected. Conversely, Charter Commission members would not be eligible for appointment to the Finance Committee.