


Warrant Article Questionnaire
Citizen Petitions Articles

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

Article # 30	Date Form Completed: 09052023
Article Title: Replace SATM 2023 Town Seal with 1876 Town Seal	
Sponsor Name: Jeffrey Alderson	Email: meadowsoft@gmail.com

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	Move that the town vote to replace the Town seal that was approved at the Spring Town Meeting 2023 and reinstate the original Town of Natick seal approved in 1876, or otherwise act thereon.
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	<p>The town seal is 1.5 inches embossed on official documents such as birth certificates and death certificates. The original 1876 seal was clear and easily read, serving the town from 1876-1980, a period of 104 years. In 1980, Natick Town Meeting voted to make a new official seal from an image that was created by a town resident in 1951. Town Meeting retired that seal at SATM 2023.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="flex: 1;">  </div> <div style="flex: 2; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>The rationale for this change is first, legibility. When the 1980 seal was embossed on documents, the design was illegible. Elements of the 2023 seal are also illegible.</p> <p>Second, town meeting members at SATM 2023 were presented with a false dilemma - with a no vote on the design being seen as culturally insensitive or even racist. A proper vote exclusively on the merits of the SATM 2023 seal design was not possible in the context of also retiring the 1980 seal (and related imagery used elsewhere in the town) in the same vote.</p> <p>For the sake of legibility and to allow Town Meeting to properly discuss and approve a design for a town seal that meets the requirements set forth by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we respectfully propose returning to the original 1876 town seal.</p> <p>Changing the plate for the embosser to revert to the original seal will cost less than \$300.00. An anonymous donor is willing to pay this cost.</p> </div> </div>

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3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	The sponsor gains no benefit from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion.
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?
Response	<p>The Town Clerk will order replacement plates for the existing embosser using the design of the original 1876 seal. Changing the plate for the embosser to revert to the original seal will cost less than \$300.00. An anonymous donor is willing to pay this cost.</p> <p>The community at large will see value as soon as the replacement plates are put into operation and documents are embossed using this seal.</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	<p>See: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40/Section47</p> <p>MA General Laws, Part I, Title VII, Chapter 40, Section 47: Town seal; establishment; use</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The two changes to the town seal made by Town Meeting in 1980 and 2023 were done for aesthetic reasons and not legal ones. In both cases, the designs proposed and accepted by Town Meeting have proven to be controversial with many residents claiming that either/both 1980 and 2023 seals do not represent community values. Many issues identified in surveys of residents in 2022-2023 were left unresolved or unaddressed in the seal design accepted in 2023 SATM.</p>

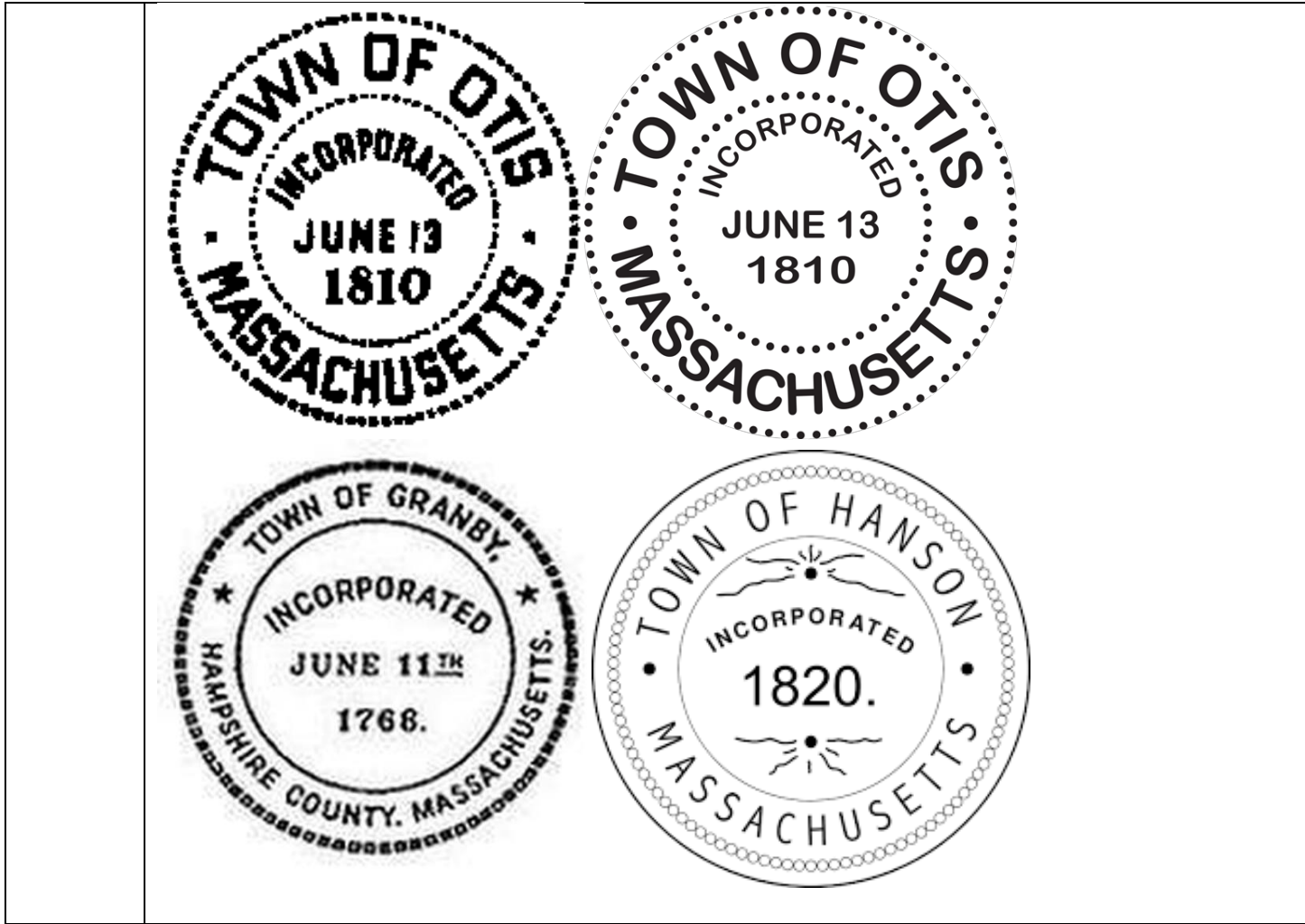
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	It is worth noting that the original 1876 town seal was not changed when this law went into effect as it was determined to meet the requirements of the law, nor have residents claimed that the 1876 seal does not represent community values.
6	<p>Have you considered and assessed, qualified and quantified the various impacts to the community such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Town infrastructure (traffic, parking, etc.) ● Neighbors (noise, traffic, etc.); ● Environment and green issues (energy conservation, pollution, trash, encouraging walking and biking, etc.);
Response	No such impacts exist with this article as proposed.
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	<p>Town Clerk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Obtained samples of embossed documents using both the 1876 and 2023 seals for comparisons of legibility. ● Confirmed the ease of replacing plates in the embosser, and related costs. ● Discussed the timeline (weeks) of when a new seal can be put into operation after voting at FATM 2023. <p>Communications Director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirmed that the town is well underway with a project to remove, retire, or replace imagery associated with the 1980 town seal. ● Confirmed that the SATM 2023 seal design and related assets may be considered, but not guaranteed to be used, in the new Town Brand project. ● Discussed that the designer of the SATM 2023 seal design will be invited to participate when requests for proposals from designers may be needed as part of the new Town Brand project. <p>Town Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only a vote by Town Meeting can change the design of the Town seal.
8	What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process, that ● Appropriate town Boards & Committees were consulted ● Required public hearings were held
Response	No town boards or committees, outside of the Warrant Article process, are required to be consulted for this article. No public hearings, outside of the Warrant Article process, are required for this article.
9	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	<p>Natick residents were not given a fair choice of designs during the selection process of the seal design approved at SATM 2023. The 1876 seal, or any design with similar elements was not included as an option as part of surveys to town residents. Survey feedback requesting such design elements, or in fact a return to the 1876 design itself, were ignored. Furthermore, Town Meeting Members at SATM 2023 were presented with a false dilemma: to vote no on the design presented could have been seen as being tone deaf to issues of racism, even if town meeting members did not like the design being presented. Town Meeting should have been given the option to vote for a design separate from the decision to replace the 1980 seal.</p> <p>By allowing Town Meeting members to vote purely on matters of design at FATM 2023 a vote can be made between two designs on the merits of those designs unencumbered by cultural and historical issues. Simply put, a YES vote on this article will allow the town to adopt the 1876 seal, and a NO vote will retain the SATM 2023 design.</p>
10	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	No.
11	What are other towns and communities in the MetroWest area, or the Commonwealth of MA doing similar to what your motion seeks to accomplish
Response	Other towns in Massachusetts that continue to use seals similar in design to the 1876 Natick Town seal include Hanson, Otis, Sandisfield, and Granby. Additionally, Otis updated the design of their seal to make it more readable for modern embossers while retaining the original design elements. See below. The same process could be used to update the 1876 seal, keeping the same design elements, but having even more legibility on documents when embossed.

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12	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	Natick will continue to use the seal adopted at SATM 2023.