

OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR



MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board
Advisory Committee
Town Moderator

FROM: Mel Kleckner, Town Administrator

SUBJECT: Proposal for Annual Town Meeting

DATE: March 20, 2020

As you know, the Town Moderator is convening a special task force charged with evaluating the merits and feasibility of postponing the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 19, and/or modifying the procedures for conducting the town meeting to meet guidance on social distancing that may be in place at that time. In addition, this year the Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election are linked with the Newbury project, so it is essential that decisions on each be coordinated.

One of the ideas that has been suggested is to limit the number of articles being considered at the Annual Town Meeting. The Warrant approved by the Board includes 41 articles. Limiting the number of articles could help with meeting the challenges of conducting an alternate form of town meeting. In addition, by signaling a reduced town meeting at this time, you could alleviate the number of public meetings and public hearings that will need to be held over the next several weeks leading up to town meeting. The ability to support the technology requirements of conducting virtual meetings/hearings for dozens of town boards and committees is challenging, not to mention my office's need to coordinate the actions of various warrant article amendments, explanations and motions needed for the Combined Reports document.

While it is true that only Town Meeting can decide which articles it will take up, I believe a strong and coordinated plan by the Select Board, Advisory Committee and the Town Moderator can set the expectation. It is essential that this plan include a commitment that the Select Board will place on the Warrant for the next scheduled town meeting those articles that were deferred, with the understanding that petitioned articles will be included without the need to re-submit petitions.

Please find below those articles that I believe the Annual Town Meeting should take up in an abbreviated Warrant.

Article 3 – Compensating Balances

This is an annual authorization that provides the Treasurer with the flexibility to manage the Town’s bank account and associated fees.

Article 5 – Unpaid Bills

We understand that there may be an unpaid bill from the School Department.

Article 6 – Property Tax Exemptions

Annual authorization providing tax relief to certain classes of taxpayers.

Article 7 – High School Appropriation

Additional authorization for the High School project- budget related.

Article 8 – FY2021 Budget

Annual budget.

Articles 9-15 – Newbury College Land Use and Land Acquisition

Article 18 & 19– Affordable Housing Legislation

This is a housekeeping article that could wait, but in this case it is related to the Newbury MOA’s affordable housing contribution to the Fund.

cc: Linda Golburgh, Assistant Town Clerk
Joslin Murphy, Town Counsel