

Special Town Meeting - October 16, 2023

Introductory Comments

Article 1 - FY24 Budget Adjustment / Item 5 - Select Board/Town Manager Expense to Support Mid-Year Salary/Benefit Increases

Article 11 - Fund Succession Planning and Reorganization-Related Expenses

Article 12 - Fund HR Resources Staffing and Related Expenses

Article 13 - Fund Rec Departments Staffing & Related Operational Expenses

Article 14 - Amend Personnel Bylaw to Add Position Titles

All Approved Unanimously by the Finance Committee: 7-0-0

On Behalf of the Finance Committee: Nick Athanassiou

Good evening. I am Nick Athanassiou. I have the privilege of being the Finance Committee Chair.

Tonight, Finance Committee members will explain briefly our support or not for key Warrant Articles on our agenda. Hopefully, this will help all of us make better informed decisions.

You will hear from two of us on two groups of Articles where we have a consensus position yet we feel strongly that Finance Committee support should be explained. These pertain to Town Administration processes, Human Resource management, as well as Fire/Emergency staffing and equipment.

On the three articles where our vote was split almost evenly, one of us will present the reasoning for the yes vote and another one on the no vote. Specifically these are Article 16 that pertains to funding of awareness and educational initiatives to honor indigenous peoples; Article 24 - Home Rule Petition for a Pesticide By-Law; and Article 32 Pilgrim Lake Alum treatment.

More generally, as a reminder, recall that the annual budget we approved last May for the current fiscal year exceeds \$52 million dollars. Our decisions tonight pertain to \$3.34 million. Of these, \$1.23 million are funded from Free Cash; in other words, funds authorized and not spent in a prior year. Another \$1.1 million require an override and \$500 thousand are funded with debt exclusions. The full summary is in a Warrant Index handed to you when you came in the hall tonight.

Now, I want to address Articles 1 (specifically item #5), 11, 12, 13 and 14. These fall under a general area of improving the management of Town Administration processes and human resources.

In more than four years on this committee, I have interacted with many staff members that do excellent work for us. These Articles are designed to make Town Hall work better for us and for them too.

Some of you will have read the excellent presentation of these Articles in the most recent Exit 89 electronic newsletter or heard about them in the recent Orleans Citizens' Forum.

Specifically, these articles relate to staffing, succession planning, career management, and Town administration reorganization flexibility. Importantly, these will allow decisions to be made and implemented throughout the year and not wait for the every-six-month decision cycle of Town Meetings. Further, efforts like these are first steps towards simplifying the Town Meeting Warrant and moving away from apparently trivial dollar amount decisions that often take up our time. Hopefully we will start seeing fewer Warrant Articles and only those of greater importance in Town Meetings.

The Select Board and Finance Committee have both voted unanimously to recommend all five Articles.

Article 1, Item 5 asks for an addition to the Select Board and Town Manager Expense Fund. This additional funding of \$50 thousand will allow quick response in situations where we need to retain valuable employees and compete for new talent in an extremely competitive labor market.

Article 11 asks for \$150K from Free Cash to engage consultants to review our human resources succession planning, recruitment methods, staffing structures, staff development practices, and regionalization opportunities. Also, this review will identify efficiencies in the warrant development and Town Meeting process. Over the years, we have introduced incremental changes. It is time to reexamine where we are and modernize our processes.

Article 12 requests a further \$150K to fund a full-time Human Resources Director position. This is effectively the implementation step that comes hand-in-hand with the professional review that you are asked to approve with Article 11. This hire will allow us to add professional expertise to managing our human resource needs that are becoming increasingly complex.

Article 13 asks for \$168K to fund two new positions to staff the newly reconstituted Recreation Department — one full-time (either Assistant Director or Program Manager) and one part-time supporting role.

Article 14, lastly, seeks to amend the Town's Personnel Bylaw. It will add eight new job titles that can be used as needed in our recruitment process. There is no dollar amount needed for this change. However, it will allow Town Hall to hire or reclassify staff as reorganization and succession planning efforts unfold, without having to wait for the next Town Meeting for approval. We need this flexibility to function in a competitive environment.

We are fortunate to have talented and experienced Town Administration staff. These Articles will further strengthen their ability to deliver services at the high level that we demand. We recommend that you approve Article 1 and Articles 11 through 14.