

Finance Committee Warrant Article Hearings Important Things to Know – Procedural Matters and Best Practices

You are receiving this letter because you are considered to be the sponsor of the Warrant Article. The primary sponsor is expected to be the spokesperson/presenter at the FinCom hearings and at Town Meeting. If the sponsor is not prepared for that role they should be ready to designate someone else. As the sponsor you are requested to prepare materials for the schedule Finance Committee hearing.

The materials include the **Warrant Article Questionnaire**, which is provided as an attachment to this email. Completing the Finance Committee questionnaire as requested is discretionary to the FinCom and is discretionary on the part of the sponsor. There is nothing to compel a sponsor under Massachusetts General Laws, the Bylaws or Charter for anything that is being requested.

That said, it is helpful to understand that the Finance Committee is a standing committee of Natick Town Meeting. As such it reviews the capital and operating budgets of the town departments and agencies. Further, the Finance Committee evaluates and makes recommendations on all articles on the warrant. Our purpose is to advise Town Meeting on the merits of any article, viewed as a proposal to Town Meeting to take some type of action. The more information that Finance Committee has available to it during the hearings the better equipped Finance Committee is to debate and understand the merits of all facts and opinions presented.

Please be aware that depending on the scope and subject-matter of your Warrant Article it is possible other Town Agencies might have oversight during the Warrant Hearing period and to prepare additional documents, questionnaire and supporting materials for these hearings and meetings. It is solely the article sponsor's responsibility to determine if they are required to appear before other boards or committees, such as the Planning Board, to meet any statutory requirements, such as a Zoning By-Law change.

The **Guide for Citizen Petitions and Warrant Articles**, which has been provided with this email, has further information that may be useful to the sponsor. This Guide was recently developed and published by the Finance Committee for the benefit of all citizens and Town Agencies of Natick. It's hoped this Guide is of benefit to the article sponsor by providing helpful explanations and procedures.

In Natick, it is customary and expected that the primary sponsor of the article will draft the motion for his or her article. Prior to a Finance Committee hearing on the article, the sponsor, based on the scope of the article and consistent with the goal for the article, must draft their motion and submit it to the Finance Committee. The Sponsor submitting the motion to Finance Committee is not an optional step, but a clear requirement on the path to Town Meeting.

No special language is required for the motion, but motions which involve spending money must also state where the money is coming from and under whose authority or direction the monies may be expended.

During the hearing, the sponsor will be given time to make the initial presentation. Finance Committee reserves the right to set time limits of initial presentations (for example, ten (10) minutes to be consistent with Town Meeting rules). The sponsor will have access to the room audio-visual system for attaching their computing device. The sponsor can also have co-presenters participate. Best practice is to limit the number of presenters to three maximum.

Finance Committee requests that the sponsor should not present or seek to distribute any new material or information that has not been submitted to the Finance Committee in advance. Doing so will possibly delay a final vote on the subject matter to a different day and time, to allow members time to reflect on the new materials. If a sponsor believes there is compelling new information that missed the submission deadline they are welcome to discuss the facts with the Finance Committee Chair, in advance of the meeting.

The possible options for Finance Committee advisory recommendations mirrors Town Meeting votes and they include:

- Favorable Action
- Referral (usually to the sponsor and sometimes a Town Agency or other party)
- No Action (can be construed as a no vote)
- Indefinite Postponement (usually construed as a negative action)
- No Recommendation (no majority vote achieved)

It should be noted that Finance Committee only provides advisory recommendations to Town Meeting and Town Meeting is not bound by any Finance Committee vote.