

Town of Southwick, Massachusetts

454 College Highway, Southwick, MA 01077

Finance Committee's Pro's & Con's of ATM

Annual Town Meeting
May 16, 2017
PROS AND CONS

Article 7

PRO:

The Town wants to replace aging equipment in order to keep the DPW fleet reliable and available for the Towns work.

CON:

Keep repairing the equipment and hope that the truck will be available when needed.

Article 8

PRO:

This will keep the system working properly. Failure to upgrade and rehabilitate will cause disruption of the system.

CON:

None

Article 9

PRO:

The replacement is necessary to keep the water service functioning. Water main breaks to the system have proven costly and disruptive.

CON:

None

Article 11 & 13

PRO:

Approving this article provides the mechanism for establishing the related funding limits for certain revolving funds for operational processes of various departments.

CON:

Disapproving this article would prevent the various departments the ability to function as designed.

Article 15

PRO:

The taxpayers agreed to pay an additional 3% tax annually towards the Community Preservation Fund. The government matches the taxpayer contribution. In the past it was a dollar-for-dollar match, although that has not been the case over the past couple of years. This Article outlines the transfers of the individual reserves within the Community Preservation Fund at a rate of 10% as required by the laws that rule the Community Preservation Committee, which the Town of Southwick has agreed to. The balance of the tax generated monies, 70%, will be deposited in their General Fund.

CON:

If we do not approve this article, we would be in violation of our agreement with the Commonwealth and Town of Southwick.

Article 16**PRO:**

This Article allows the transfer of monies, not to exceed 4% of the collect taxes, to be used for administrative and operational expenses of the Community Preservation Committee. This provision is allowed under the agreement.

CON:

None

Article 17**PRO:**

As presently written, Article 17 will set aside 61.63 acres for passive recreation including hiking, fishing, and hunting in addition to conservation. With 2500' of waterfront which the town will manage it is the only remaining undeveloped waterfront property on North Pond. The proposed conservation restriction would prohibit any future development of the property. Further, the property will encompass a water line easement and possible future town well site should the need become necessary. This will also protect the recharge area for the lakes.

CON:

The property is valued at best possible use without taking into consideration percolation tests, conservation restrictions, planning board requirements, etc. which would most probably reduce the valuation. The two appraisals done in this manner have come in at \$4.9M and \$5.0M respectively and while the town's share is \$1.0M, that amount will effectively drain the community preservation open space and general parts of the fund. In 2014, the state match for the CPC tax (which was originally supposed to be 100% match) was 88%. Since then, the state match has steadily declined and the projected state match for 2018 is 15%. So doing this project will severely limit the ability for the town to participate in much needed projects as South Pond Canal rehabilitation, rail trail parking areas, playground rehab, etc. During a recent school feasibility study done by an independent non-profit organization, the report showed that there were no significant building projects in Southwick, Granville, or Tolland, hence, unlike what the proponents of the North Pond project would lead you to believe, there are no developments even being looked at by the planning board so the supposed danger of this property being developed seems very remote.

There are additional costs to this project which will occur every year which are not included in the proposal. First, the town will lose a little over \$15,000 every year in existing property taxes. Secondly, there will be increased police patrols which will be added costs and perhaps additional personnel. Thirdly, there will be additional maintenance costs borne by the Department of Public Works with respect to rubbish clean-up and a proposed chemical toilet for the trail parking lot. All in all, these are an ongoing, annual real cost of \$25,000.00 to \$30,000.00.

Article 18**PRO:**

This water line easement facilitates the connecting of two dead-end water mains and promotes healthier, continuously flowing water. It is subject to Article 17 approval.

CON:

The cost of this easement is \$30,000.00.

Article 19**PRO:**

This article helps to preserve 34.8 acres of farmland on Laro Road and North Longyard Road. It provides for the property to remain as an active farm in perpetuity. The Town's share is 10% of the cost of the project.

CON:

Not doing this project could result in less food production and limit the local economy.