



Select Board Office

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Warrant Article Explanations

May 16, 2023

7:00 P.M.

Article #1 Explanation: Town Election acted on May 9, 2023. For the above individuals: See the ballot posted on the Town of Southwick's web page at www.southwickma.org.

Article #2 Explanation: This is a General Housekeeping Article to authorize the Select Board to operate Town Government.

Article #3 Explanation: This is a General Housekeeping Article to authorize the Select Board to operate Town Government.

Article #4 Explanation: This is a General Housekeeping Article to authorize the Select Board to operate Town Government.

Article #5 Explanation: This is a General Housekeeping Article to authorize the Select Board to operate Town Government.

Article #6 Explanation: This article establishes a new Revolving Account to allow the town to collect fees for police cruisers used at private details (ie) utilities and other vendors. The Municipal Modernization Act was passed in 2016 which provided for a new manner in which revolving funds are regulated and managed.

Article #7 Borrowing Authorization – Road Reconstruction: This article authorizes the Select Board (as Road Commissioners) to borrow \$1,000,000 for road work, including paving and infrastructure repairs. There is a backlog of roads that need to be addressed. The amount of State Aid (known as Chapter 90 Funds) and other local appropriations are insufficient to reduce the backlog.

Article #8 Borrowing Authorization – Dump Truck: This article authorizes the Select Board to borrow \$318,000 to purchase a dump truck for use by the Highway Department. This truck will replace a 1999 Freightliner FL80 dump truck and will be used for snow plowing as well as hauling stone, sand, and other materials.

Article #9 Explanation: Approving the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget will allow for the proper allocation of resources for the continuing operation and welfare of the Town, while providing the fundamental fiduciary responsibilities in our current economy.

Article #10 Explanation: This article reauthorizes all other existing Revolving Accounts to operate some town government functions for inspections and services. Without it would require funds to come out of taxation. The Municipal Modernization Act was passed in 2016 which provided for a new manner in which revolving funds are regulated and managed.

Article #11 Explanation: This warrant article requests approval of the assessment from the Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District for next year's operating budget. The assessment represents the Town's share of the District's operating and capital costs for the upcoming fiscal year.

Article #12 Explanation: This warrant article requests approval for the borrowing that the District pursues annually to finance capital improvements and acquisitions. An affirmative vote authorizes the District to borrow funds to pay for the projects and equipment identified in the School Committee's vote.

Article #13 Explanation: Under the current bylaws, *Short-Term Rentals* are prohibited in Southwick. The Southwick Planning Board requests consideration of this bylaw in order to define *Short-Term Rentals* and the required steps that an applicant must take in order to register and operate such rentals. The proposed bylaw defines Short-Term Rental Property eligibility, performance standards, occupancy requirements, and inspections, amongst other relevant matters. The bylaw also describes the processes for managing complaints/violations and permit suspension, modification, and revocation.

Article #14 Explanation: The property owner requests to change the zoning of the entire subject property from Business Restricted (BR) to Residential-20-A (R-20-A). After holding a public hearing, the Planning Board issued a positive recommendation on the request, noting that the uses allowed under the R-20-A zone are compatible with the adjacent residentially-zoned land, including the adjacent and nearby residential communities zoned for housing the elderly and/or handicapped.

Article #15 Citizen's Petition – Term Limit

Article #16 Citizen's Petition – Conservation Commission – Election of 3 Members

Article #17 Explanation: A yes vote would change the current bylaw that prohibits retail cannabis establishments to allow such establishments. By allowing retail establishments it would allow the Town of Southwick to collect property taxes as well as a local option tax of up to 3%. This local option would allow for voters to impose an additional tax of up to 3% of all gross retail sales from any dispensary allowed within the Town of Southwick. A no vote would keep the current by law prohibiting the establishment of retail cannabis establishments.

Article #18 Explanation: Annual budget as required by State Law. Mandatory 10% reserved for Open Space, 10% reserved for Historic, and 10% reserved for Housing, the remainder in General Unreserved Fund that may be spent on any projects eligible for CPA funds.

Article #19 Explanation: CPC FY 2024 5% Administrative & Operating expenses set aside.

Article #20 Explanation: The money being requested is for the fourth payment on the \$600,000.00 bond that was voted on and issued for Alum Treatment of the Congamond Ponds in 2020.

Article #21 Explanation: The money being requested is for the restoration of five war memorial bronze plaques, four of these plaques are located at the War Memorial, 488 College Highway and the fifth plaque is located at the Old Cemetery.

Article #22 Explanation: The money being requested is for the installation of a spray park located at Whalley Park.

Article #23 Explanation: The money being requested is for the replacement of one horizontal timber with posts under the north attic window, repair/replace the trim and clapboards as needed and to scrape/sand/prime/paint the exterior of the Moore House at 86 College Highway.

Article #24 Explanation: The money being requested is for the removal of 44 trees that pose a hazard to monuments, gravestones, visitors and cemetery workers at the Old Cemetery.

Article #25 Explanation: The money being requested is to repair the slate roof and cupola at the Police Station, 11 Depot Street.

Article # 26 Explanation: The money being requested is for the replacement of all tile flooring in 20 common hallways with commercial vinyl plank at the Southwick Housing Authority facility at 12 Depot Street.

Article #27 Explanation: A yes vote would allow the Town of Southwick to develop a plan to negotiate with different electrical suppliers for stable rates over a contracted period of time.

All residents are able to opt in and out of this program at any time to select their own electrical supplier with no penalty and the number of participating residents will impact the negotiated rate.

If approved, the plan would need to be reviewed and voted on by the residents of the Town of Southwick and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

A no vote would continue to allow local rates to be determined by Eversource.

Article #28 Explanation: This vote authorizes the Select Board to enter into a successor Intermunicipal Agreement with the City of Westfield for access to send the sewer effluent generated and collected in our town to Westfield's Municipal waste water treatment plant where it is treated extensively per State and Federal regulations and discharged into the Westfield River. The Town of Southwick has no treatment plant and it would be cost prohibitive to construct one. Therefore, this is the best manner to address the need.

Article #29 Explanation: This permits the town to give property tax reduction relief to veterans or their spouses for participating in a volunteer work program with the town.

Article #30 Explanation: The Southwick Planning Board requests consideration of this bylaw amendment in response to recommendations reported by a town consultant, whose charge was to identify barriers to the use of Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development methods within Southwick's bylaws. The proposed change will allow, where appropriate, the use of engineered permeable paving materials and substrate for in-situ stormwater infiltration.

Article #31 Sawgrass Lane Acceptance: Sawgrass Lane is a recently constructed subdivision road built in accordance with Town standards. Town Meeting acceptance will allow the Town to start maintaining the road as well as make it eligible for funding through State Aid Chapter 90.

Article #32 Explanation: The Southwick Planning Board requests consideration of this bylaw amendment in response to recommendations reported by a town consultant whose charge was to identify barriers to the use of Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development methods within Southwick's bylaws. The proposed change will allow, where appropriate, a narrower driveway width to minimize the amount of impervious surface required to be installed.

Article #33 Explanation: The Southwick Planning Board requests consideration of this bylaw amendment for two separate reasons:

to resolve a mathematical conflict discovered in the existing bylaw, and

- 1) to respond to recommendations reported by a town consultant, whose charge was to identify barriers to the use of Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development methods within Southwick's bylaws. The proposed change will allow, where appropriate, a narrower driveway width to minimize the amount of impervious surface required to be installed and allow for the use of engineered permeable paving materials and substrate for in-situ stormwater infiltration.
- 2) to respond to recommendations reported by a town consultant, whose charge was to identify barriers to the use of Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development methods within Southwick's bylaws. The proposed change will allow, where appropriate, a narrower driveway width to minimize the amount of impervious surface required to be installed and allow for the use of engineered permeable paving materials and substrate for in-situ stormwater infiltration.

Article #34 Explanation: The Southwick Planning Board requests consideration of this bylaw amendment in response to recommendations reported by a town consultant, whose charge was to identify barriers to the use of Green Infrastructure and Low-Impact Development methods within Southwick's bylaws. The proposed change will allow, where appropriate, the use of engineered permeable paving materials and substrate for in-situ stormwater infiltration.

Article #35 Explanation: The Town of Southwick is one of the last remaining towns with a combined 3 way statutory combined Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Collector Office. The 1971 Special Act that created this structure is no longer a viable way to structure the office. Best management practices along with increased laws and regulations as well as workload demands necessitate the splitting of functions. The vote to approve the Special Act submission to the Massachusetts State legislature is the first step in an effort to modernize Municipal Finance Offices functions.

Article #36 Explanation: The High Speed Internet Subcommittee has been meeting and planning for over 3 years to bring a fiber internet alternative to Southwick. The Subcommittee requested the Select Board to bring forth what is on the warrant. This Article asks for permission for the Select Board to form a Municipal Light Plant for the purpose of bringing fiber Internet to Southwick residents and businesses. This is the 2nd vote required under Massachusetts General Law, the first being taken at the November 2022 Special Town Meeting. At the November Special Town Meeting, the article passed by a wide margin. Two affirmative votes are required by Town Meeting for the project to proceed. Additional articles will be required to fund the project's design and construction. The forming of a Municipal Light Plant gives the Town access to the

utility poles and rights of way, which are required for the installation of fiber optic cable through the Town of Southwick.

Article #37 Explanation: If Article 36 passes at Town Meeting, this article authorizes the Select Board to borrow up to \$3M to design and construct the municipal fiber network that will bring high speed Internet connectivity to Town residents and businesses. Revenue from subscribers to the service would be used to service the debt and interest. The Select Board has already designated \$900,000 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to be allocated to the project as well, and those ARPA funds will be immediately available to start the work required to construct this crucial infrastructure.

Article #38 Explanation: The town has determined over the last few years operating under emergency CV-19 rules for meeting schedules that there is no adverse effect in starting Annual Town Meetings earlier than 7:00 p.m. listed in the bylaw and it may encourage more attendance and participation.