

# Town of Southwick, Massachusetts

454 College Highway, Southwick, MA 01077

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## STM October 10, 2012 Warrant Explanations

**October 10, 2012, 6:30 p.m.**  
**STRSD Auditorium**  
**Town of Southwick**  
**Special Town Meeting**  
**Warrant Article Explanations**

### **Article 1.**

This article ratifies the donation and acceptance of the Park from Mr. and Mrs. Whalley by the Town of Southwick. The article describes the land in question and the Trust document which sets forth in some detail the permitted and prohibited activities on the parcel.

This is a generous gift from Mr. John H. Whalley III and Kathy A. Whalley, in honor of their son John H. Whalley IV. Whalley Park consists of 70 acres of land located on Powder Mill Road, and will benefit the Town of Southwick for recreational use and purposes as well as a centralized park to hold community events. Thirty five acres are for active playing fields and thirty five acres are for passive use woods and trails. This park will include ten athletic fields, a play-scape, restrooms, a concession stand, a storage building and a parking lot for over 130 vehicles. Mr. And Mrs. Whalley are additionally donating \$100,000 to fund general maintenance of the park for at least the first two years of operation. The Whalley Park Project will not only offer a recreational facility that addresses the immediate need for additional youth and adult recreation, but also provide a more regional destination located alongside the Great Brook wetlands, historic Fletcher Park and the currently constructed Rail Trail.

### **Article 2.**

This article requested by the Community Preservation Committee is for an appropriation from prior year and FY13 CPA funds of approximately \$1.2 million for improvements to complete the Park itself, including finished paving, lighting, etc.

### **Article 3.**

Mr. and Mrs. Whalley have agreed to complete the construction of a donated pavilion at the Park. Mr. & Mrs. Whalley have agreed to donate the pavilion to the Town of Southwick at no cost to the Town. This article simply allows them to complete the work already in process, even after such a time that the Park becomes Town property. The reason for this article is that it is anticipated that the pavilion will not be completed by the date of the Special Town Meeting, and therefore, the Town has to allow Mr. & Mrs. Whalley to complete the pavilion.

### **Article 4.**

The article accepts as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Whalley the sum of \$100,000 to be used for the maintenance of Whalley Park.

The Community Preservation Committee has voted in favor to support articles one through four, including the expenditure of CPA funds to finish the park.

### **Article 5.**

#### **(1) What is the Westfield Parallel Sewer Project?**

The project includes the construction of 3,800 feet of 21 inch sewer pipe in Westfield to complete a dedicated sewer pipe from Southwick to the Westfield Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**(2) Why is the Project Needed?**

In 1998 Southwick negotiated an agreement with Westfield to purchase 500,000 gallons of sewage capacity at the Westfield treatment plant. Southwick's cost for the sewage capacity was about \$5,400,000. To utilize the capacity, Southwick constructed a 21 inch sewer pipe along the old railroad bed from Depot Street in Southwick to South Meadow Street in Westfield where Southwick temporarily tied into to an old 12 inch Westfield sewer pipe that connected to the Westfield treatment plant. The temporary connection allowed Southwick to transport 175,000 gallons of sewage to Westfield without constructing the last 3,800 feet of 21 inch sewer pipe in Westfield that was expensive because of two river crossing and a crossing of Route 20. In 2012, Westfield needs the capacity in the borrowed pipe plus Southwick has sewer needs that will exceed 175,000 gallons. Thus, Southwick needs to construct the sewer pipe in Westfield to comply with the terms of the agreement and to allow future extensions in the community.

**(3) What is the Project Cost?**

The estimated total project cost for the project is \$2,200,000.

**(4) How will the Project be Financed?**

Southwick has been offered \$2,070,000 of financing by the US Rural Development office. The financing consists of a grant of \$621,000 and a 40 year loan of \$1,449,000 at 2.75%. The RD financial offer may be increased if the cost exceeds \$2,070,000 or the added cost will be financed by the town.

**(5) How will Southwick Pay for the Project?**

The estimated annual financing cost for the project is \$67,500. For the next few years, the \$67,500 cost will be paid for using a combination of Westfield Gas and Electric easement funds and existing sewer retained earnings. In the future, the project will be financed by betterments that will be charged to future sewer users. The town's general fund will not be used to finance the project.

**(6) What is the Status of the Project?**

The design of the 3,800 feet of sewer pipe is complete, permitting of the project is complete and easements in Westfield have been acquired. The project is ready for construction bidding and actual construction in 2013.

**(7) What Needs to be Done?**

Southwick needs to authorize \$2,200,000 to bid and construct the project. An Article will be presented at the October 10, 2012 Special Town Meeting requesting that the funds be authorized for the project.

**(8) Where might sewer extensions be pursued in Southwick?**

The Sewer Implementation Committee and the Board of Selection, acting as Sewer Commissioners, have completed planning documents that identify a number of areas where sewer extensions are needed in the community, including the following:

- a. Congamond Road
- b. North Pond
- c. Feeding Hill Road – Powder Mill Road
- d. Gargon Terrance – Feeding Hills Road
- e. Hudson Drive
- f. Route 10/202 to the Westfield line
- g. Middle Pond, along Berkshire Ave
- h. Lakewood Apartments
- i. Other Areas?

**(9) What is the anticipated Project Schedule?**

Once town meeting authorizes funds the project, the project will be bid in the winter of 2012/2013, a construction contract will be awarded in March of 2013 and the project constructed over the next 6 months with an anticipated construction completion date of the fall of 2013.

**(10) When will future sewer extensions be pursued?**

The Sewer Implementation Committee and the Board of Selectmen, as Sewer Commissioners, will seek grants and loans to finance the construction of phased sewer extensions in the community. The priority for the extensions has not been determined but will be based on need, environmental concerns, available

financing and the support of the public. The first sewer extension can proceed after the Westfield Sewer Project is complete.

**(11) Is the USRD financial package of \$2,070,000 available for a number of years?**

No - RD has offered Southwick a \$621,000 grant and \$1,449,000 loan. If Southwick does not authorize funds for the project at the Special Town Meeting, RD will withdraw the financial offer and offer the funds to another community that has a project ready to construct.

**(12) What if the Project is Not Approved?**

Southwick will lose the RD financial offer. Also, Southwick will not be able to pursue any sewer extensions in town. Finally, Southwick will not have access to the 500,000 gallons of sewage capacity at the Westfield treatment plant that the town paid about \$5,400,000 for in 1998.

**Summary Statement:** Southwick has purchased 500,000 gallons of sewage capacity from Westfield in 1998 for \$5,400,000. Currently, Southwick has access to 175,000 gallons of capacity or 35% of its initial investment. Southwick needs to authorize \$2,200,000 to construct the Westfield Parallel Sewer Project to have complete access to the remaining 325,000 gallons of sewage capacity that was purchased in 1998. Finally, Southwick has been offered an attractive financial aid package from USRD for the project that includes a 30% grant and 70% loan. If construction funds are not approved for the project, Southwick will lose the USRD funding.

The Sewer Implementation Committee recommends approval of the project and the Board of Selectmen, as Sewer Commissioners, recommends that the town approve the project.

**Article 6.**

The Community Preservation Committee is requesting that the Townspeople approve transferring \$185,000.00 from the CPA Open Space account to supplement the \$356,400.00 that will be provided from the State "Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity" grant for 134 acres of land on North Loomis Street. The \$185,000.00 will only be transferred if the "LAND" grant is approved by the state. The current owner of the property, Seth Kellogg, will donate an endowment to the Winding River Land Conservancy to hold a Conservation Restriction on the property in perpetuity and steward the property. The property will be used for passive recreation with maintained hiking trails.

**Article 7.**

The Southwick Water Department is under a Department of Environmental Protection Consent Order requiring the final construction of a new one million gallon water storage tank to replace the existing steel tank. This requirement is due to the existing tank's age and present condition and must be completed by July 1, 2014. The water department is in the process of applying for United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development funds in the form of grants and low interest loans to pay for the construction of the tank. One of the requirements of the application is that the Town will have voted to approve the appropriation of the funds at Town meeting. The approval of this article will satisfy this application requirement.

**Article 8.**

Feeding Hills Road is being redesigned in order to provide new drainage, road paving improvements, road widening, traffic control improvements, and traffic signals at Rebecca Lobo Way, Hudson Drive, and Powder Mill Road. Also being designed is a replacement water line for the existing asbestos concrete waterline that is buried under the road. The cost of designing the replacement water line is \$20,000. The approval of this article will fund the design of the water line from water retained earnings. The redesign and permitting of Feeding Hills Road is in an effort to obtain state funded construction money for the project.

**Article 9.**

The Water Department is asking that \$64,500 be appropriated from water retained earnings to design and build a computerized control system for the water system components. The system will enable the department to collect information, and control the tank, the wells, and the booster pump stations from remote locations through a network based computer system.

**Article 10.**

Over the last seven years the sewer department has experienced failures and expensive repairs to three sewer pump stations. They are located at Prifti Park, Berkshire Avenue, and Island Pond Rd. They are in need of improvements including backup power, new submersible pumps, new pump enclosures, improved lightning, and surge protection. The approval of this article will appropriate \$71,000 from available funds for the purpose of designing and permitting these improvements.

**Article 11.**

During the months of August and September of this year, the Berkshire Avenue sewer pump station was damaged by lightning strikes that disabled the electronic operating systems. Without the electronics, the pump stations must be manually operated and monitored twenty four hours a day to prevent sewage from overflowing the wet wells. The incidents of lightning strikes happened twice during the summer requiring weekend and 24 hour monitoring over two weekends. This depleted the sewer overtime account. The approval of this article will transfer \$10,000 into the sewer overtime account for future overtime needs.

**Article 12.**

Sign regulations are described in Southwick's Zoning Bylaws, and haven't been revised in many years. Approximately 3 years, in response to queries from the public and businesses, the Planning Board formed a sub-committee to review the existing sign bylaw and to propose revisions as necessary. The sub-committee was comprised of members of the Planning Board, Board of Appeals, Economic Development Commission, and members of the business community. The sub-committee met numerous times, held several public information sessions, and composed the bylaw amendment being set forth in this article. Key changes to the sign bylaw include a new height limit (our old bylaw has no height limit), appropriate sizing requirements per zoning district, including for the first time separate size allowances for the College Highway corridor v other areas of Town. The proposed by law also allows for and controls electronic/changeable signs. The bylaw itself provides several tables of uses, to make sign allowances very clear for proposed signs in the Town of Southwick. The bylaw also addresses temporary signs, event signs, and several other signage issues that been brought to the attention of the Planning Board, the Board of Appeals, and other Town Employees.