



*Prepared by: Town Administration*

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## Guide to Writing a Citizen Warrant Article

The Town of Nantucket has a healthy tradition of citizen-submitted warrant articles for town meetings. Per Massachusetts General Law (Ch. 39, s. 10), citizen articles require the signatures of 10 registered voters (registered in the Town of Nantucket) for an annual town meeting and 100 registered voters (or 10% of registered voters whichever is less – generally 100 is less) for special town meetings. The Board of Selectmen generally “opens” the warrant to citizen articles within a certain time frame prior to a town meeting in order to allow citizens time to submit articles. Well in advance of the town meeting, the Board endorses a timeline prepared by Town Administration which is meant to contain what actions are to be held leading up to the town meeting, including meetings, hearings, notices, publications. The Town of Nantucket has taken the unusual step of providing legal assistance in the preparation of citizen warrant articles. The timeline will contain when the legal assistance is available. Generally it is between 2-4 weeks prior to the deadline for citizen article submittals. The timeline for Annual Town Meetings may be found on the Town website [www.nantucket-ma.gov](http://www.nantucket-ma.gov) under the “Town Meetings” link. We encourage citizens to take advantage of this unique opportunity for special assistance. Sample warrant article formats are attached.

*When your warrant article is ready to be submitted, please proceed as follows:*

1. Obtain the required number of signatures. Your article will not be accepted without valid signatures of the required number of voters registered in Nantucket. You may obtain more signatures than required, but not less. Please make sure the signatures are legible and that the names are legibly printed next to the signature. The first signature on the warrant article will become the sponsor of the article. It is best to be sure that signature is that of someone who can represent and speak to the article.
2. Submit your article to the Town Administration office, where it will be stamped in as “Received”, it will then be handed back to you for submittal to the Town Clerk’s office, where you may then submit it.
3. If at all possible, please provide your article to the Town Administration office in MS Word format.

*Some things to remember when preparing your warrant article:*

1. Your article will be printed in the warrant “as is”. This means that any spelling, grammatical, punctuation or typographical errors will be printed in the town meeting warrant document.

2. You may be asked a lot of questions about your article by the various boards/committees/town agencies that may be reviewing it. Most likely, these questions will be coming from the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen or Planning Board (if it is a zoning article). It is recommended that you “do your homework” on the article and attend the meetings that are held about it. The attached “Basic Information Request for Town Meeting Appropriation Articles” has been developed to assist you with information that the Finance Committee and/or Board of Selectmen is likely to want if you are seeking town funds.
3. If your warrant article is something that would normally go through a Town process, such as a capital item, you may ultimately be referred back to the Board of Selectmen to seek its concurrence for the item to go through that process. For example, if you are proposing to fund a bike path project that has not gone through the Town’s review process (which can be quite lengthy) you may find that Town agencies and departments recommend against such a proposal until it has gone through that process. The reason for this is that annually the Town prepares a list of capital projects that will go through a rigorous review process through several agencies and those projects will be prioritized in order of need, funding availability, legal mandate, etc. The agencies are likely to find that your project simply does not fit in anywhere without the established review process. You may disagree and lengthy discussions about what is/isn’t a “priority” tend to follow. Your appointed and elected town officials are in place to conduct reviews and make decisions and recommendations about a wide variety of projects and must take a wider perspective perhaps than you do about your project.

*Additional general information about warrant articles:*

1. Depending on what your warrant is meant to achieve (ie, bylaw amendment, home rule petition) it may require additional action from other agencies, such as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts if it is approved at Town Meeting. Do not assume that it will go into effect immediately upon passage.  
Bylaw amendments (general and zoning): require the approval of the state Attorney General’s office before taking effect, although there are special rules relating to the application of zoning bylaw amendments, to specific developments.  
Home rule petitions: require the approval of the state legislature (this has been known to take years)  
Financial appropriations: funding is generally available in the fiscal year specified – either the current year or the next fiscal year beginning on July 1
2. If your warrant article is NOT recommended by the Finance Committee and you still want to proceed with it, you will need to prepare a positive motion for it and submit it to the Moderator in writing prior to Town Meeting. Limited assistance is available from the Town to help you with a positive motion.
3. If you have a funding proposal, please keep in mind that Town Meeting cannot mandate the funding for any more than the upcoming fiscal year.