



## Guide to Writing a Citizen Warrant Article

The Select Board (by Town Charter and state law) is the body responsible for developing the town meeting warrant, which is the list of articles that is presented to the voters at town meeting for consideration and vote. Most articles are developed and submitted by various town officials and/or town boards/committees/commissions, but citizens can submit an article to be placed on the warrant (sample citizen warrant article form may be found on the town website). 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. Several months before a town meeting (or sometimes several weeks before a special), the Board endorses a timeline prepared by Town Administration which contains what actions are to be taken leading up to the town meeting, including when the warrant will be open for the acceptance of articles, meetings, hearings, notices, publications. The Town of Nantucket has taken the unusual step of providing legal assistance for the preparation of citizen warrant articles. The timeline will contain the dates when the legal assistance is available; generally, it is between 4-6 weeks prior to the deadline for citizen article submittals. We encourage citizens to take advantage of this unique opportunity for special assistance.

*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. The use of “spell check” is encouraged.
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, Select Board 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 Select Board is likely to request if you are seeking town funds. If you are seeking town funds, a funding source should be identified.
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 to the Select Board for consideration as to

sponsoring the item to go through the established process. For example, if you are proposing to fund a bike path project that has not gone through the Town's review process (which sometimes spans a year or more) 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 updates its Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP") with projects prioritized in order of need, funding availability, legal mandate, and other established criteria. 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.

*When you feel that your warrant article is ready to be submitted, you should:*

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, with a legible street address. 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 submitted to the Town Clerk's office, where verification of signatures will occur.
3. If possible, please provide your article to the Town Administration office in MS Word format, in addition to a hard copy with the signatures.

*Additional general information about warrant articles:*

1. Depending on what your article is meant to achieve (ie, bylaw amendment, home rule petition, zoning change, funding request) even if it is approved by town meeting, it may require additional action, including from other agencies such as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; or, a ballot vote at a subsequent election. 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; and, depending on what the item is, Town Meeting cannot mandate that the funds be spent (that happens with the discretion of your elected officials, the Select Board).

*Prepared by: Town Administration*

*Endorsed by Finance Committee: December 4, 2012*

*Endorsed by Board of Selectmen: December 12, 2012*

*Updated by Town Administration October 2018*