



TOWN OF BOXFORD

Office of the Select Board

7A Spofford Road
Boxford, MA 01921

DATE: May 13, 2024
TO: Boxford Voters
FROM: Matt Coogan, Town Administrator
RE: **May 14, 2024 Town Meeting Warrant Article Summary**

Boxford Annual Town Meeting is Tuesday, May 14, 2024. Below is a summary of each of the Warrant Articles. These are the summaries posted on the Town of Boxford Facebook page the week of May 6th. For the entire Warrant, and to access supporting documentation, visit www.boxfordma.gov/TownMeeting2024

May 14, 2024 Town Meeting Warrant Article Summaries:

1. [Receive Annual Reports](#): The Town of Boxford issues an annual report each year in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40 Section 49. The 2023 report covers the entire calendar year, from January 1st to December 31st. The acceptance of the Annual Report is typically the first Warrant Article at Boxford Annual Town Meeting and voters are asked to accept the report as a routine matter. This year's report is dedicated to the following Boxford residents who sadly passed away in 2023: Charlie Killam and Doffy Falk.
2. [Approve first year of funding for Police Reserves Collective Bargaining Agreement](#): The Town of Boxford has five collective bargaining agreements, not including schools. Town Meeting attendees are being asked to approve the first-year funding for a new, 2-year contract with the Boxford Police Reserves Collective Bargaining Agreement. Our reserve officers are certified police officers who work alongside our full-time patrol officers. The agreement includes wage increases for each of the contract years. The agreement is available on the Town Meeting website.
3. [Adopt Personnel Board FY2025 Classification Plan and Compensation Plan](#): The Town of Boxford sets an annual compensation plan in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 41 Section 108A that must be approved by Town Meeting each year. The plan is updated annually to ensure that the Town can not only recruit the best and brightest employees but can also retain those employees, even in a competitive marketplace. By retaining qualified, experienced employees the Town avoids the costs of re-recruitments and lost productivity, while maximizing the benefits of the investments it has made in employees and the institutional and community knowledge acquired by those employees over their tenures.

In the plan, the wages for part-time, non-union, non-benefit eligible positions would be increased by 2% for FY25 beginning July 1st, 2024. Non-union salary positions do not automatically receive salary increases. Department Heads and non-union, full-time positions must successfully achieve satisfactory performance evaluations and complete assigned performance goals in order to progress along the salary range in the plan.

4. [Adopt FY25 Operating Budget:](#) The proposed FY25 operating budget represents an increase of 3.94%, not including the override for Boxford Elementary Schools (article 5). For more details and information about the budget, please visit either the Finance Committee page at www.boxfordma.gov/FY25-Budget-Documents or www.boxfordma.gov/TownMeeting2024
5. [Override: Elementary Schools FY25 Budget:](#) Elementary School FY25 Budget: Article 5 is an operational override that would need to be approved at Town Meeting in order to fully fund the proposed FY25 elementary schools operating budget. An override increases the amount of property tax a community may raise in the year specified and becomes a permanent increase in taxing authority. For the override to be enacted, it needs to pass by a majority of votes at both May 14, 2024 Town Meeting and Town Election May 21, 2024. Article 5 is an override totaling \$599,170. Additional information on the elementary school budget can be found on the Tri-Town union website, <https://www.tritownschoolunion.com/committees/boxford-sc>
6. [Set annual curbside solid waste collection fees](#) : In past years, Town Meeting has voted to set the annual trash sticker rate for collection. The Town is moving away from stickers and to an annual collection fee. Beginning July 1, 2024, the Town has contracted with G.Mello for automated curbside trash & recycling collection. While the trash system works well for the Town's current manual collection system, it is not feasible to maintain it with an automated collection system, as employees no longer need to leave their truck to collect trash and recycling using a mechanical arm. The new user fee system will still maintain this source of revenue (which pays for a significant portion of the cost of the service, in addition to "general fund" revenues), but will only require one annual payment instead of multiple payments to purchase trash stickers at varying intervals. Additional information about the new trash & recycling program can be found at www.boxfordma.gov/WasteStreamTaskForce.
7. [Fund omnibus capital:](#) The Select Board and Finance Committee reviewed these thirteen capital requests during the FY25 budget process. This list of necessary items was vetted by both boards in consultation with town departments and the school department and compared with priorities identified in a five-year plan. For more information, visit the Town Meeting website, www.boxfordma.gov/TownMeeting2024.
8. [Fund consulting services for Emergency Response Advisory Committee:](#) Article 8 would appropriate Free Cash for the Emergency Response Advisory Committee (ERAC) to aid it in its charge with performing a comprehensive analysis of the town's 3-tiered emergency response system and identifying strategies to improve service through efficiencies and reduced

emergency response times. Information about ERAC can be found on the project website, www.boxfordma.gov/EmergencyResponse

9. [Fund Masco Capital Items](#): The Masconomet Regional District is requesting \$400,000 to fund several capital items in the upcoming year as part of their capital planning. Boxford's share of this request, which is based on a formula that includes district enrollment, is \$147,711. Two out of three of the Tri-Towns in the District need to approve and appropriate funding for this request. Information on Masco capital planning can be found on their website, www.masconomet.org/Page/918.

10. [Debt Authorization: Design for a new DPW facility](#): The last several months the Permanent Building Committee has been working with Helene-Karl Architect to begin the process of designing a new Department of Public Works (DPW) facility to replace the existing 54-year-old garage, auxiliary sheds, and trailers. For almost two decades, the Town has documented the need for a new facility to safely and efficiently support DPW operations. The existing facility has not kept pace with population, work, and equipment growth. The structures are in poor condition, present occupational health and safety issues, and are inadequate to meet the Town's needs.

At the [May 14th Town Meeting](#), voters will be asked to authorize \$1.55M to fund the completion of the proposed site and building design and put the project out to bid for construction. The new facility will be centrally located on 3 acres of Town owned land beyond the Recycling Center and adjacent to the solar array. During this next phase, the proposed site and building will go through a comprehensive design development process to further refine and value engineer the project and create the most cost effective and efficient DPW facility for Boxford. For more information, please visit: www.boxfordma.gov/NewDPW.com

11. [Debt Authorization: Masconomet District Design and OPM for HVAC, BMS, & Roof](#): The Masconomet Regional School Committee voted on April 10, 2024 to incur Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000) in debt for the purpose of paying costs of an owners project manager (OPM) and design services in connection with the Roof, HVAC, & Building Management System construction project at the High School/Middle School Building Complex. In accordance with M.G.L. c.71 § 16(d), any member town of the regional school district may hold a town meeting within 60 days of a district's debt incurrence for the purpose of expressing disapproval of the amount of debt authorized by the district committee, and if at that meeting a majority of the voters present and voting express disapproval of the amount authorized by the district committee, the debt shall not be incurred. In other words, there are both warrant articles and ballot questions at the Town Meetings and Town Elections of Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield this month for the \$5M debt authorization, and all votes will need to pass for the regional school district to incur the debt. Information on the roof, HVAC and BMS project can be found on the Masco capital planning website, www.masconomet.org/Page/918.

12. [Revoke Opioid Settlement Stabilization Fund](#): The Boxford Select Board agreed to join the Massachusetts Attorney General's settlement agreements against opioid manufacturers, granting Boxford access to funds available for helping to mitigate the opioid epidemic. The General Laws require special handling of this revenue. Last spring, Annual Town Meeting approved a stabilization fund for the opioid settlement revenue because it was the best available financial mechanism for managing these payments. Since that time, the state has authorized the use of a special revenue fund. This article revokes the stabilization fund and authorizes the use of the special revenue fund to allow the Town to spend the opioid settlement funds.
13. [CPA Annual Budget and Reserves](#): This is the annual vote to pay ongoing debt for approved Town projects funded with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, as well as reserve certain CPA revenues in accordance with the [Community Preservation Act](#).
14. [CPA: Boxford Historic Documents Center HVAC](#): The Boxford Historic Documents Center (Ingalls Memorial Library Association, Inc.) requests CPA funds to install a new climate control system and related chimney work to protect the important historic documents at their facility, particularly in the archive storage room. The Document Center is the town's largest repository of historic records, documents, and photographs.
15. [CPA: Johnson Playground Construction](#): The Boxford Recreation Committee is requesting CPA funds to renovate and construct a brand-new Johnson Playground adjacent to Johnson Field. The Committee has been working over the last 2 years to design a new playground that is safe, accessible, and engaging for children. Voters will be approving \$330,000 of CPA funds for this project. The total project cost is \$350,000, with the remaining funds to be obtained through private donation. Residents can donate through the [town website payment portal](#).
16. [CPA: Boxford Common Irrigation Well](#): CPA funds are requested to fund the installation of a new deep well for irrigation at Boxford Common. The current subterranean shallow well has caused issues over the last few years leading to clogs and the irrigation system malfunctioning. Sprinkler heads constantly become inoperable due to the water-powered rotator motor in each head getting clogged with the fine grit particles in the water. A deep bedrock irrigation well would reduce the amount of fine particulate matter in the water and will greatly reduce clogs and reduce maintenance costs.
17. [Stiles Pond Rehabilitation Project](#): The Boxford Board of Health and Conservation Commission, as well as several residents abutting Stiles Pond, have worked together as the Stiles Pond Advisory Committee to consider ways to address the increasing number of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) blooms in Stiles Pond that could potentially be toxic. This request of CPA funds would be used to hire an environmental consulting firm to study the nutrient loading in the pond and make recommendations on how the town can slow or halt the spread of algae and rehabilitate the pond. In particular, the funding would go towards piloting a new technology

that filters out the potential particulates that lead to the nutrient loading and causes these algae blooms.

18. [Bylaw: Adopt Specialized Opt-in Building Code](#): The Boxford Sustainability Committee is sponsoring this article for the Town to adopt the Specialized Opt-in Building Code. Massachusetts cities and towns have 3 related choices of stringency of building energy code. These are the 'Base code' the 'Stretch code' and the 'Specialized code'. Since 2019, Boxford has operated under the Stretch Code, which increases the energy efficiency requirements for all new residential and commercial buildings, as well as for additions and renovations that require building permits. The Specialized code is required by statute (MGL 25A Section 6) to help achieve MA GHG emission limits and building sector sub-limits set every five years from 2025 to 2050. As a result, all compliance pathways under the Specialized code are designed to ensure new construction that is consistent with a net-zero Massachusetts economy in 2050, primarily through a combination of energy efficiency, that it in turn enables reduced heating loads, and efficient electrification. Use of fossil fuels such as gas and propane or biomass is permitted but comes with additional requirements for on-site solar generation and pre-wiring for future electrification of any fossil fuel using equipment.
19. [Bylaw: Zoning Bylaw: Amend Accessory Apartment bylaw](#): The Boxford Zoning Board of Appeals is proposing certain changes to the Accessory Apartment By-Law. These changes are proposed, in large part, to address recurring issues that have come before the Board. New owners would no longer have to re-apply for and be granted a new Special Permit to use an existing accessory apartment. So long as a new owner certifies, within 90 days of the change in ownership, that there are no changes to the accessory apartment plan approved in the original special permit and the Inspector of Buildings performs an inspection to certify that no changes have been made, the previously issued Special Permit will continue in full force and effect. In addition, the proposed bylaw increases the maximum size of an accessory apartment. Under the current by-law, the maximum size of an accessory apartment shall not exceed the lesser of 25% of the gross floor area of the sum of the two dwelling units or 1000 square feet. The amendment proposes to increase the maximum size to the lesser of 25% of the gross floor area of the sum of the two dwelling units or 1500 square feet. The proposed amendment also seeks to clarify or provide more precise definitions of certain terms in the current bylaw.
20. [Bylaw: Amend Recreation Committee bylaw](#): The Recreation Committee is proposing changes to the bylaw that governs the Committee further clarifying its role. Under the new proposal, the Recreation Committee would serve as an advisory committee that assists the DPW with the maintenance, assessment, and operations of the town's recreation assets.
21. [Bylaw: Remove Computer Advisory Committee bylaw](#): During the re-appointment process in June 2023, the Select Board identified boards and committees not actively meeting or deliberating, without enough appointees to hold a quorum, or no appointees entirely. The Board discussed discontinuing these boards/committees. Some of these boards and committees

were established in the Town's Bylaws. Any changes to these committees, including their abolishment, would require action by voters at Town Meeting. This includes the Computer Management Committee. The Committee Bylaw was created in 1998 but it has been several years since this committee held meetings. The last significant activity taken by the Computer Management Committee was participating in the selection of the Town's IT consultant, Hi-Q, 2012. Since then, Hi-Q has been managing the Town's technology initiatives under the oversight of the Town Administrator's office. Purchases of IT that were once reviewed through the Computer Management Committee, as per the Bylaw, have been overseen by the Town Administrator's office for the last 10 years. Thank you to the volunteer residents who served over the years on the Computer Management Committee.

22. [Bylaw: New Town Administrator bylaw: Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41 Section 23A](#) enables the Select Board to appoint a Town Administrator, who "shall act by and for the selectmen in any matter which they may assign to him relating to the administration of the affairs of the town or of any town office or department under their supervision and control, or, with the approval of the selectmen, may perform such other duties as may be requested of him by any other town officer, board, committee or commission". The Financial Management Resource Bureau (FMRB) of the Massachusetts Department of Local Services (DLS) recommends municipalities to further codify the authority, role and responsibility of the Town Administrator in their local bylaws or charter. According to FMRB, "administrators are equipped to develop and oversee budgets, analyze financial data, and make informed decisions regarding town revenues and expenditures. Defining the town administrator's financial role and authorities creates a structured approach to financial processes and decision-making. This ensures consistency in overall fiscal management and promotes transparency and accountability in the use of taxpayer funds." Article 22 would establish a Bylaw to provide a clear legal foundation for the Boxford Town Administrator position and to ensure proper implementation and enforcement of the position's role and responsibilities.
23. [Citizen Petition Initiative: Turf Field Moratorium](#): The general guidelines for citizens petitions appears in [Massachusetts General Laws, Ch. 39, § 10](#). A petition article is an article brought to Town Meeting for discussion and possible action by a group of voters (rather than by a Board or Committee of the Town). Any group of voters, with the minimum requisite number of 10 signatures, may bring a petition article on any topic to an open town meeting, the town's legislative body. An article becomes part of the Warrant and the Warrant serves as the agenda for Town Meeting in that it "warns" voters what is to be discussed and what is being sought at the Town Meeting. For any matter to be discussed at the Town Meeting, it must come within the scope of the article being debated. No action shall be valid unless the subject matter thereof is contained in the warrant.
24. Any other business