



## Guide to Preparing a Citizen Warrant Article

### *Introduction and General Information*

The Select Board (by Town Charter and state law) is the body responsible for approving the town meeting warrant. The warrant is the agenda for town meeting and contains all of the articles that will be 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 articles for inclusion on the warrant (a recommended 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. In the summer or early fall, the Board endorses a timeline prepared by Town Administration that contains the actions that are to be taken leading up to the next annual town meeting, including when the warrant will be open for the acceptance of articles, meetings, hearings, notices, publications. (The timeline for a special town meeting is usually established in the weeks leading up to the meeting). The Town of Nantucket has taken the unusual step of providing legal assistance for the preparation of citizen warrant articles for the annual town meeting. 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.

Citizens are also encouraged to discuss their idea(s) for articles with Town Administration prior to submittal. Depending on the nature of the idea/article, it may be something that would be difficult to accomplish without a change to the structure of town government, a town department, an administrative procedure or additional resources, including funding. If we know what you are trying to accomplish, we will do our best to guide you toward success. Please be advised, however, that if your article would require changes to existing structure or additional funds or resources, it is possible that the idea may not be endorsed by Town Administration.

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

1. Your article must 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 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 to review and discuss it. The “Citizen Warrant Article Questionnaire” (may be found on the Town website) 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. Completion of the questionnaire is intended to provide a thorough understanding of what you are seeking to accomplish with your article. This is not required; however, it is a recommended mechanism to communicate fundamental information to Town Administration, the Finance Committee, the Select Board and any other agencies that may be involved in reviewing your article.
3. If your warrant article is something that would normally go through a Town process, such as a capital item or project, or a zoning change, you may be referred to the Select Board or other Town entity for consideration to sponsor your article and move through the respective review process.
4. If you choose to proceed on your own, and you are proposing an article that has not gone through the established review process, you may find that Town agencies and departments recommend against your proposal until it has gone through that process. For capital projects, 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. Other agencies, such as the Planning Board, have their own annual review process. The agencies are likely to find that your project simply does not fit in anywhere without the established review process.

Your appointed and elected town officials are in place to conduct reviews and make decisions and recommendations about a wide variety of projects and may have a broader perspective than you do about your article.

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

1. Obtain the required number of signatures (better yet, obtain more because sometimes people think they are registered to vote here but they are not). Your article will not be accepted without valid signatures of the required number of voters who are registered in Nantucket (again, that is 10 signatures for Annual Town Meeting warrant articles and 100 for Special Town Meeting warrant articles). 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. As a result, it is best to be sure that the first signature is that of someone who can represent and speak to the article.
2. Submit your article and the recommended questionnaire to the Town Clerk’s office (16 Broad Street, Town Building), where your article will be stamped in as “Received”; the questionnaire collected and the petitioners’ signatures will be certified.

3. If possible, please also email your article and questionnaire to the Town Administration office ([TownManager@nantucket-ma.gov](mailto:TownManager@nantucket-ma.gov)) in MS Word format.

***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 action by 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 (and sometimes other state agencies) 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 funding beyond the upcoming fiscal year; and, depending on what the item is, Town Meeting cannot mandate that the funds be spent (that happens at the discretion of your elected officials, the Select Board).
4. As noted above, a form has been developed to assist you with capturing the information that the Finance Committee and possibly other Town agencies such as the Planning Board or Capital Program Committee will need to properly review your proposal. The Citizen Warrant Article Questionnaire is available on the Town's website. The form is not required; however, completion and submittal of it will make the necessary review smoother. If the form is not submitted, your proposal might not be reviewable by the appropriate Town agency.

*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; September 2019*

## Citizen Warrant Article

*Primary Sponsor*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Warrant Article Title: \_\_\_\_\_

To see if the Town will vote to (may attach body of article on separate page):

; or otherwise act thereon.

***Petitioners:***

We, the undersigned registered voters of the Town of Nantucket, hereby petition the Select Board pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 39, Section 10, to include the following Article in the Warrant for the Annual/Special (circle applicable one) Town Meeting to be held on \_\_\_\_\_.

\*\*\*\*\*

A minimum of 10 signatures\* of voters registered in Nantucket and certified by the Town Clerk is required. Please attach separate sheets for additional signatures. Registered name must be substantially as written and signed. Please print name legibly.

*\*10 signatures for Annual Town Meeting articles; 100 signatures for Special Town Meeting*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Printed Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Address</i>
1			
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*Town of Nantucket - Citizen Article Submission Form (updated 09/2019)*

*While use of this form is not legally required, this format is preferred and will facilitate processing of the article on the warrant.*



## Citizen Warrant Article Questionnaire

The Finance Committee (FinCom) encourages article sponsors to provide complete and comprehensive answers to the below questions. Your materials will be distributed to members well in advance of the Public Hearing at which you will have the opportunity to speak on your proposal. The more specific and relevant information provided on the action you seek from the Town Meeting, the more prepared FinCom will be for the actual hearing with you. The questionnaire is not required but is intended to provide a full set of materials for the FinCom to evaluate. Additional sheets may be attached to this form.

Date Form Completed:	Date Rec'd by Town Admin:
Article Title:	
Sponsor Name:	Email:

<i>1</i>	<i>At a summary level, what is the proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article?</i>
<b>Response</b>	
<i>2</i>	<i>Does the community-at-large gain value through the article? If so, how?</i>
<b>Response</b>	
<i>3</i>	<i>Have you done any research on the topic that can be shared? If yes, please feel free to attach any supplemental information.</i>
<b>Response</b>	

4	<i>What is your understanding of the cost implications (operating and capital), both immediate and long-term to the town? (example: personnel costs, maintenance, equipment, supplies, etc); and, what would be the proposed funding source?</i>
<b>Response</b>	
5	<i>Who do you envision executing the outcome of the article (will it require a new position; how would it fit in with a particular department; who would enforce it; who would be in charge of implementing it)? Have efforts have been made to involve the necessary participants as to the impacts of executing the article?</i>
<b>Response</b>	
6	<i>Is the topic of the article contained within any Town Plan (ie, Master Plan, Transportation Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, Strategic Plan)?</i>
<b>Response</b>	

September 2019