

Dear Town Meeting Members,

The Warrant for the 2018 Special Town Meeting opened on August 2nd, therefore this is an appropriate time to once again pass along some suggestions for the filing of a Warrant Article by Citizen Petition. These suggestions are based on the experiences of Advisory Committee Subcommittee Chairs over the past several years. I hope that you will find them helpful.

The first place to look for guidance in preparing a Warrant Article is pp. 7-9 of the Town Meeting Handbook (<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13887/Town-Meeting-Handbook-2018-Edition?bidId=>). Information on these pages includes the steps necessary in filing an Article, be it an amendment to the General By-laws of the Town or the Zoning By-law, an appropriation, or a non-binding resolution.

As many of you know, any Article placed on the Warrant by citizen petition goes through a lengthy vetting process that, at a minimum, includes public hearings held by the Select Board and the appropriate Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee as well as a public meeting of the full Advisory Committee. In addition, the Planning Board holds a public hearing on any zoning Article. Finally, a public hearing must be held by any other Town body wishing to offer its recommendation to Town Meeting on the Article.

To negotiate this process from the first step of drafting an Article through the final step of presenting it to Town Meeting, the Advisory Committee strongly encourages petitioners to consider the following recommendations:

- Before submitting an Article, it's a good idea to check with Department Heads and Boards and Commissions chairs to see whether Town Meeting action is really needed to achieve the desired result. Often assurances can be obtained that will eliminate the need for an Article. Additionally, it is important to determine the budgetary impact, if any, that the proposed Article would have.
- The Moderator ([sgadsby@foleyhoag.com](mailto:sgadsby@foleyhoag.com)) and/or Town Counsel ([jhmurphy@brooklinema.gov](mailto:jhmurphy@brooklinema.gov)) should be consulted prior to submission of an Article to ensure that it is in appropriate form and will accomplish the Petitioner's intent. Once an Article is filed, its scope cannot be broadened, and although motions adopted under the Article can differ somewhat from the filed language, these differences are tightly constrained.  
If an Article seeks to appropriate funds, Deputy Town Administrator Melissa Goff ([mgoff@brooklinema.gov](mailto:mgoff@brooklinema.gov)) can offer useful budgetary information and should be consulted.
- While all vetting entities holding public hearings do their best, within their own scheduling constraints, to accommodate the scheduling needs of the Petitioner,

flexibility in scheduling on the part of the Petitioner is also important. The Petitioner should be in early communication with those entities in order to try to resolve potential scheduling conflicts. It is also very helpful for a Petitioner to have a surrogate/co-petitioner available to advocate for the Article in the event that the principal Petitioner cannot be present.

- Finally, it is important to keep the relevant Advisory Committee subcommittee Chair and the Deputy Town Administrator informed as to language changes to the Article made during the vetting process so that the Petitioner, Select Board, and Advisory Committee will have the same text to consider prior to Town Meeting's discussion and vote.

In addition, all motions to be considered under an Article, and any subsequent changes to such motions, should also be submitted in electronic form to the Moderator to ensure that the proposed motion is allowable under the rules governing Town Meeting.

I believe that I speak on behalf of all Advisory Committee members in expressing our thanks to those who make the substantial effort to bring issues that they deem important to the attention of Town Meeting and the Brookline community. Going through the vetting process can sometimes seem never-ending and may be tedious and frustrating, but hopefully the above suggestions will make the review process run more smoothly.

Many thanks for your consideration. Please contact me ([slynn-jones@brooklinema.gov](mailto:slynn-jones@brooklinema.gov)) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Sean Lynn-Jones, Chair, Advisory Committee