

## Warrant Article 35: Resolution regarding the TMM Email List

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee held a public hearing on Warrant Article 35, a resolution that seeks to open the TMM email list, on April 25, 2022. In attendance were: Petitioners Marissa Vogt (TMM P6), Michael Toffel (TMM P8), Jonathan Klein (TMM P10); Members of the TMMA Board Harry Friedman (TMM P12), Ernie Frey (TMM P7); David Marc Goldstein (TMM P8), Regina Frawley (TMM P16), Michael McGraw-Herdeg, and Subcommittee Members Kelly Hardebeck (Chair), Harry Bohrs, Neil Gordon and Stephen Reeder

**Recommendation:** The Administration and Finance Subcommittee recommends submitting a report, but no recommendation on Warrant Article 35.

<b>Executive Summary</b>	Warrant article is a non-binding resolution that seeks to make future email communications sent to the Town Meeting Members Association (TMMA) email list publicly readable. The resolution calls for this change to be made no later than September 1, 2022.
<b>Voting Yes will...</b>	Encourage the TMMA Board to make future email communications sent to the TMMA email list publicly readable. by September 1, 2022
<b>Voting No will...</b>	May send a message to the TMMA Board to not make the TMMA list publicly readable
<b>Financial impact [if any]</b>	N/A
<b>Legal implications [if any]</b>	N/A

### Link to Recording

[https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/T\\_zF1SBmaKsbOUwPPLxSEvdY0eNafYKN8JtvGiPDoitgVAodT2BfdyYeGWWFuiqm.R8ZDBJg3TOtOCP2v?startTime=1650929150000](https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/T_zF1SBmaKsbOUwPPLxSEvdY0eNafYKN8JtvGiPDoitgVAodT2BfdyYeGWWFuiqm.R8ZDBJg3TOtOCP2v?startTime=1650929150000)

**Passcode:** S&HTG.2L

### Introduction

The goal of warrant article 35 is to improve the transparency of the discussions Town Meeting members have via email on the TMMA list by encouraging the TMMA board to make the list publicly readable by September 1, 2022. The resolution would apply only to communication made after the change to the list was implemented.

### Discussion

The discussion at the subcommittee hearing centered around three topics:

- whether a resolution of Town Meeting was an effective way to request this change
- the technological changes necessary to change access to the list
- the impact that making the TMMA list publicly readable might have on the openness of discussions

The Town Meeting Members Association (TMMA) is an independent organization that operates the TMMA email list, which all members of Town Meeting are invited to join. TMMA volunteers maintain and moderate the list. People who are not members of Town Meeting, i.e., at-large members of the Advisory Committee, are part of the list to better facilitate communication about upcoming meetings and hearings; and to provide additional detail on issues coming before Town Meeting. The petitioners feel this information should be more widely available as it will help members of the public better understand the matters coming before Town Meeting and the positions taken by their TMMs. They also feel that bringing this warrant article will allow Town Meeting to discuss the change and provide input to the TMMA.

Members of the TMMA Board expressed concern about the warrant article itself and about the level of effort needed to implement this change. They noted this warrant article targets an independent organization and asks them to make a specific change. While the petitioners cited other warrant articles, such as the ban on crated veal and fur products, they felt were similar, none asked a single organization to make a change to the services they provide or operational processes. Requests have been made to the TMMA leadership in the past to make the list more widely readable and, historically, the Board has not taken action on those requests. Warrant article 35 is a nonbinding resolution and its passage at Town Meeting does not guarantee the requested change will be implemented.

There was recognition and appreciation that the TMMA list is maintained by volunteers and this change would require additional work to configure a separate read-only audience. Maintaining two lists would likely require additional ongoing work as well as it was unclear if each new member of the public wishing to read the list would need to be added manually via a request process.

Finally, there was some discussion about the potential effect that opening the list might have. The TMMA list is viewed as a safe space to ask questions and members might not feel as comfortable asking questions if the list was more widely readable. It was also pointed out that relatively few TMMs post in the list which could be viewed by voters as a lack of engagement and Select Board and Advisory Committee members are governed by the OML and cannot participate in discussions on the TMMA list.

The subcommittee chose to not make a recommendation on this warrant article because it felt, as Advisory Committee members, it had no better understanding of the subject matter of this Warrant Article and the decision should be left to individual Town Meeting Members.

### **Recommendation**

By a vote of 4-0-0, The Administration and Finance Subcommittee recommends submitting a report, but no recommendation on Warrant Article 35.