

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TOWN OF GRAFTON
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT
WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
OCTOBER 19, 2020
7:30 PM**

Worcester, ss:

To Either of the Constables of the Town of Grafton, in the County of Worcester.

GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are directed to notify and warn the Inhabitants of the Town of Grafton, qualified to vote in elections and Town affairs, to meet in the Grafton High School located at 24 Providence Road on Monday, the Nineteenth (19) Day of October, 2020 at Seven Thirty (7:30) PM to act on the following articles, to wit:

ARTICLE 1. ADJUST FY21 OPERATING BUDGET

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the purpose of adjusting certain line items within the operating budget for FY21, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 1

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 1 increasing the FY21 Budget by \$230,000.00 such sum to be raised by taxation, and transferring \$20,000.00 within the Fire Department Budget from Personnel to Expenses and reducing the Debt Interest amount on Excluded Debt by \$303,320.00.

The Budget increase is necessitated by the departure of the Town Administrator and the need to conduct a search to find a new Town Administrator and paying an Interim Town Administrator. This increase also covers expenses incurred in the Accounting Department due to the departure of the Town Accountant and another employee in the department taking medical leave. The Town Clerk's Office also has additional expenses due to the need for additional personnel and materials for the elections to conduct the elections in accordance with COVID-19 protocols. All of these expenses are within the scope of town operations and need to be covered. The transfer within the Fire Department is routine and the reduction in interest expense is likewise routine and reflects market interest rates on our bonds.

ARTICLE 2. PRIOR FISCAL YEAR BILLS

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from available funds a sum of money to pay bills incurred in a prior fiscal year, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 2

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 2 in the amount of \$57,230.39 to be transferred from Free Cash to pay bills from FY20.

While the list of bills and the amount are much higher than previous years, Finance Committee believes that this reflects primarily the transitions in the Accounting Department resulting in these bills not being paid by the legal deadline. Under state law all bills resulting from appropriated expenditures for a fiscal year must be paid by June 30 OR carried as an encumbrance for a short period of time (typically two weeks) and paid before the "books are closed" on the year. Once the books have been closed the only way to use the money from a previous year, which is now carried as "Free Cash" is to vote on such amounts at a town meeting, even though the expenditures had already been approved at the town meeting that approved the fiscal year budget. This is a routine procedure, and for this year only the number of bills and the amount stand out against previous years. Passing of Article 2 requires a four-fifths majority vote.

ARTICLE 3. FIRE DEPARTMENT RETIREMENT

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum of money to the Fire Department Retirement Account, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 3

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 3 in the amount of \$12,500.00.

The Town continues the adopted practice of providing a one-time reward of \$100 per year of volunteer firefighting service. Free Cash is the funding source for Article 3.

ARTICLE 4. SICK AND VACATION BUYBACK

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds a sum of money to fund the accumulated sick and vacation leave buyback for retiring employees pursuant to the Town By-Laws and/or collective bargaining agreements, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 4

Finance Committee recommends passing over Article 4.

This article will be passed over since there are no retiring employees at this time.

ARTICLE 5. AMENDING FY20 OPERATING BUDGET

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, and/or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the purpose of adjusting certain line items within the operating budget for FY20, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 5

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 5 in the amount of \$75,659.00.

This article funds the deficits incurred in the FY20 budget with the use of Free Cash for the following Departments:

Debt in the amount of \$71,404.00

Reason: The full amount of the deficit was not resolved in FY20 since it would result in interdepartmental transfers from other Departments.

Street Lights in the amount of \$4,197.00

Reason: The amount of energy savings anticipated from the Street Light Department was not realized before the close of FY20 and the interdepartmental transfers from the Street Lights Budget to offset other Departments budget needs caused this deficit.

HR Salary in the amount of \$58.00.

Reason: The deficit in the Human Resources Salary line was a rounding up accounting error.

ARTICLE 6. ADJUSTMENTS TO SEWER RECEIPTS

To see if the Town will vote to amend the funding of Article 5 of the June 20, 2020 Annual Town Meeting for the FY 2021 budget by increasing to \$229,867 funding from Sewer Receipts, and decreasing to \$229,867 the appropriation from the tax levy, so that the total appropriation of \$64,046,257 will be funded by as follows: \$60,866,922 to be raised and appropriated; \$3,156,521 to be transferred from Sewer Receipts; and \$22,814 to be transferred from Sewer Betterments; or take any other action related thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 6

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 6 as written.

This article is a housekeeping article to adjust the FY21 budget by reducing the raised and appropriated amount by \$229,867.00 and increasing the transfer of Sewer Receipts by \$229,867.00. The total amount appropriated for FY21 in the amount of

\$64,046,257.00 remains the same amount voted at the Annual Town Meeting on June 20, 2020.

ARTICLE 7. CPC EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$225,000) from the FY2021 CPC Budgeted Reserve Account for the purpose of administering and funding an emergency rental assistance program, administered by MCO Housing Services, LLC, with such funds to be expended by February 28, 2021, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Community Preservation Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 7

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 7 as written in the amount of \$225,000.00. This article partially funds an emergency housing rental assistance program to help households who have been impacted by the economic fallout of the pandemic. This article includes a relatively short "sunset" window with any remaining funds returning to CPC on February 28, 2021. This short window allows remaining funds to be available for another project in time for the May 2021 Town Meeting in the case that the need for this program was overestimated.

ARTICLE 8. CPC ADA ACCESSIBLE PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of Two Hundred and Ten Thousand Dollars (\$210,000) from Community Preservation Act Funds, with \$75,000 coming from the FY2021 CPC Budgeted Reserve Account, and \$135,000 from the CPC Undesignated Fund Balance Account, for the purpose of installing ADA accessible routes and surfacing at the following parks and playgrounds: Perry Hill Park, Airport Park, Norcross Park, Riverview Park, Ferry Street Park, and Silver Lake Beach, with such funds to be expended by June 30, 2023; or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Community Preservation Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 8

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 8 in the amount of \$210,000.00 from CPC funds for the purpose of completing work to make town managed parks/playgrounds ADA compliant.

This is the last phase of a project that has been ongoing and includes the parks/playgrounds at Perry Hill, Airport Field, Norcross, Riverview, Ferry Street and Silver Lake. This will install ADA accessible routes and surfacing at these locations.

ARTICLE 9. CPC OPEN SPACE RESERVE ACCOUNT

To see if the Town will vote to transfer seventy-nine thousand nine hundred and fifty dollars (\$79,950) from the CPC Undesignated Fund Balance to the CPC Open Space Reserve; or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Community Preservation Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 9

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 9 in the amount of \$79,950.00. This article is a housekeeping article only. In a previous Town Meeting, a warrant transferring these funds was written incorrectly moving funds to the wrong CPC account. This article transfers the funds from the incorrect account to the correct account.

ARTICLE 10. CPC RESCIND ARTICLE FROM PRIOR YEAR

To see if the Town will vote to rescind its passage of Article 11, of the October 21, 2019 Town Meeting entitled "Baseline Reports for CPC" which contained an incorrect funding source, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Community Preservation Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 10

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 10.

This article is a housekeeping article only. At October 2019 Town Meeting, Article 11 inadvertently asked the Town to use CPC funds to pay for baseline reports on land that was purchased using Town funds. CPC cannot fund reports for land that was purchased with Town funds. Therefore, this article rescinds that request.

ARTICLE 11. BASELINE REPORTS FOR TOWN OWNED LAND

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and/or transfer from available funds, four thousand dollars (\$4,000) for the purpose of creating baseline reports for Conservation Restrictions held by the Grafton Land Trust on the Webber and Mazza Farm parcels, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 11

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 11 in the amount of \$4,000.00.

This article transfers from Free Cash in the amount of \$4,000.00 for the purpose of funding and creating baseline reports for Conservation Restrictions held by the Grafton Land Trust on the Town purchased Webber and Mazza Farm parcels.

ARTICLE 12. ROAD IMPROVEMENT STABILIZATION FUND

To see if the Town will vote to transfer \$1,500,000 from the Road Improvement Stabilization fund to the Road Improvement Capital Expenditures fund for road improvement projects consistent with Chapter 90 rules and regulations as recommended by the DPW Advisory committee and approved by the Town Administrator, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Recommendation of the Finance Committee for Article 12

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 12 in the amount of \$1,500,000.00. Funds raised for road repair through the 2014 override are accumulated in the Roads Stabilization Fund. These funds cannot be put to work repairing roads until they are transferred out of this Stabilization Fund to the Road Improvement Capital Expenditures

Fund at a town meeting. Article 12 transfers \$1,500,000.00 to the Road Improvement Capital Expenditures fund. Passage of Article 12 requires a two-thirds majority vote.

ARTICLE 13. LONG RANGE TREE REMOVAL/REPLACEMENT ACCOUNT

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds, a sum of money to the Long Range Tree Removal/Replacement Account (800.6420.5884) established under Article 14. of the May 2019 Annual Town Meeting, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Recommendation of the Finance Committee for Article 13

Finance Committee recommends the passage of Article 13 in the amount of \$52,000.00 for Tree Removal and Replacement, such sum to be transferred from the funds originally designated for Fire Equipment by vote at the Annual Town Meeting in June, 2020. The Fire Equipment requested by the Fire Department was funded twice; once via an article at the annual Town meeting and then again through the Override article and subsequent ballot. This article transfers \$52,000.00 of the \$102,000.00 voted at Town Meeting to the account for Tree Removal and Replacement. This is an ongoing expense and is often expensive given the size of many of our older trees and the need to have a paid detail on site when trees are being removed from the side of the road.

ARTICLE 14. ACTIONS TO AMEND THE FORM OF THE GRAFTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

To see if the Town will vote a package of actions to change the form of the Grafton Fire Department from a Board of Fire Engineers to that of one headed by a "Strong" Fire Chief (so-called) and the authority to appoint same to be vested in the Select Board. Such items may be voted as a single block, or in any combination, but however voted, will be treated for accounting and legislative purposes as if each item were voted as a separate article.

A. Amend the Town Charter

Amend Section 8-5 (b) of the Town Charter by deleting certain symbols and words (in strikethrough) to read as follows:

- ~~Board of Fire Engineers, a Fire Chief, forest wardens and other firefighters to serve for indefinite terms;~~

B. Amend the Town's General By-Laws

Amend Section 9-2 (c) of the Town's General By-Laws by deleting certain symbols and words (in strikethrough) to read as follows:

- ~~Board of Fire Engineers, a Fire Chief, forest wardens and other firefighters to serve for indefinite terms;~~

C. Adopt MGL Ch. 48 §42 (the so-called "Strong Chief" statute).

Adopt MGL Ch. 48 §42 (the so-called "Strong Chief" statute) contingent upon approval by the Attorney General of an amendment to the Town's General By-Laws, and a ballot vote amending the Town Charter to remove the authority of the Town Administrator to appoint a Board of Fire Engineers, a Fire Chief, forest wardens and other firefighters to serve for indefinite terms. Or take any other action related thereto.

Submitted by: Select Board

ARTICLE 14. ACTIONS TO AMEND THE FORM OF THE GRAFTON FIRE DEPARTMENT continued

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 14

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 14 as written.

This article consists of three actions which together implement the recommendation of the Fire Department Study Committee that the Town adopt the strong fire chief structure for organizing the Fire Department under a full-time chief. Two actions amend the Town Charter and By-Laws to eliminate the Board of Fire Engineers and the Town Administrator's appointing of the chief. The third action adopts the strong chief provision of Mass. General Laws, under which the Select Board appoints the chief and the amendment of the Charter will take effect upon passage of a ballot vote, at the next Town election, that is required in order to approve the Charter change.

ARTICLE 15. TOWN CHARTER AMENDMENTS - ARTICLE 2-3(b) – FINANCE COMMITTEE

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to petition the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a special act as follows: Amend the Grafton Home Rule Charter by deleting Article 2, Section 2-3(b) "Finance Committee" in its entirety and inserting in its place a new Section 2-3(b) as follows:

Section 2-3(b) Finance Committee There shall be a Finance Committee, the members of which shall be appointed by a 3-person committee that shall consist of the Town Clerk, a member of the Finance Committee who is not being considered for reappointment, and the Town Moderator. The number of members, the term of office, and any other conditions will be established by by-law. The subject matter of all proposals to be submitted to a Town Meeting by warrant article shall be referred to the Finance Committee by the Select Board. The Finance Committee shall report its recommendations on each article contained in a town meeting warrant, in writing, together with a brief statement of the reasons for each such recommendation. Before preparing its recommendations, the Finance Committee shall hold one or more public hearings to permit public discussion of the subject matter of all articles contained in the Warrant.

or to take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Finance Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 15

Finance Committee unanimously recommends passage of Article 15 as submitted. Currently, the Finance Committee is the only Committee whose members are appointed outside of a public process. The Town Moderator makes these appointments without any public input or participation. Article 15 will create a Three Member Committee that will appoint the members of the Finance Committee in compliance with all open meeting law requirements. Passage of this Article will make the appointment of Finance Committee members transparent and public.

ARTICLE 16. TOWN GENERAL BYLAW AMENDMENTS– ARTICLE 3-2 – FINANCE COMMITTEE

To see if the Town will vote to amend Article 3-2, Finance Committee, of the General Bylaws of the Town of Grafton, by deleting Article 3, Section 2 of the Bylaw in its entirety and replacing it with a new Article 3, Section 2 as follows: SECTION 2. After the Spring Session of the Annual Town Meeting each year and prior to June 30th, a 3-person committee that shall consist of the Town Clerk, a member of the Finance Committee who is not being considered for reappointment, and the Town Moderator shall appoint three (3) members of said committee for terms of three (3) years to fill the expired seats on said committee as they arise. Said committee shall choose its own officers and shall serve without pay, and it shall cause to be kept a true record of its proceedings. Members' terms shall run concurrent with the fiscal year, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Finance Committee

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 16

Finance Committee unanimously recommends passage of Article 16 as submitted for the same reasons outlined in its recommendation for Article 15. This Article amends the Bylaw to create the Three Member Committee that will appoint the Finance Committee.

ARTICLE 17. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE BYLAW

To see if the Town will vote to enact the following Town General Bylaw:

Purpose

The committee shall study the requirements and needs for Capital Improvement in the Town of Grafton. The committee shall advise the Town Administrator, Select Board, and Finance Committee on the results of its work.

Establishment and Membership

There shall be a Capital Improvement Planning Committee, henceforth abbreviated CIPC, comprising seven (7) members. Three (3) members shall be chosen by their respective boards as follows: one member each from Finance Committee, School Committee and Select Board; the remaining four (4) members shall be citizens at-large appointed by the Select Board. Each citizen-at-large member shall serve a three (3) year term. The Town Administrator and Superintendent of Schools, or their designated representatives, will be non-voting members. All voting members shall choose committee officers, set the committee's procedures and serve without pay. Any vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment and persons appointed to fill vacancies shall serve for the remainder of their predecessors' terms of office.

Definitions

A. Capital Improvement

Any acquisition, lease of land, building, or motor vehicles;

Any acquisition or lease of any single item of equipment with a total cost of \$10,000 or more, and a substantial useful life of at least (5) years;

Any construction, reconstruction, replacement, extension or other improvement of public buildings, highways, sidewalks, storm drains, sewerage installation,

playgrounds, parks and substantially similar public works or for a facility, structure or a utility appurtenant to any of the same with a total cost of \$10,000 or more.

ARTICLE 17. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE BYLAW continued

- B. Capital Budget. A one (1) year plan of estimated capital improvements and the method of financing them.
- C. CIPC Five Year Plan. An annual report assembled by the committee including prioritized recommendations for capital improvements for the following five (5) fiscal years to be submitted to the Finance Committee, Select Board and Town Administrator for consideration and preparation of the Capital Budget.
- D. Capital Package. All capital project submission forms completed by departments and submitted to the Town Administrator to be reviewed by the Capital Improvement Planning Committee.

Duties

The Capital Improvement Planning Committee is charged with carrying out the following duties, as appropriate, to fulfill its purpose:

- A. Maintain the CIPC Five Year Plan
- B. Review all requested capital projects in the Capital Package with Town Administrator
- C. Recommend an annual Capital Budget to the Select Board
- D. Collect additional capital project information, regardless of funding, as needed outside the budget process
- E. Track the delivery of the approved capital projects
- F. Research best practices related to capital improvement planning
- G. Any other relevant initiatives related to capital planning

Capital Request Submission Requirements

- A. All proposed capital improvements shall be submitted by departments in writing to the Town Administrator for inclusion in the capital improvement program.
- B. The Town Administrator shall compile all submitted requests into a comprehensive Capital Package, and transmit the Capital Package to the CIPC for review, including all original submission forms received from departments. The Capital Package shall be provided to the CIPC by September 15th for the committee to provide its recommendations to the Select Board and Town Administrator by December 15th in order to fulfill the requirements of section 6-7 of the Town Charter.

..... or to take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Select Board

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 17

Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 17 as written.

Finance Committee believes that this bylaw will add valuable structure, consistency, and prioritization to the Town's long-term capital planning process. While supporting the Town Administrator's role as specified by the Town Charter, this by-law will also provide increased visibility and a comprehensive view of all of the Town's capital projects.

ARTICLE 18. BUILDING REPAIRS – MUNICIPAL CENTER ENTRANCE RAMPS

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the repair of entrance ramps at the Grafton Municipal Center located at 30 Providence Road, or take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 18

Finance Committee unanimously recommends passage of Article 18 in the amount of \$75,000.00 from Free Cash. The handicap ramp in the rear of the Municipal Center for entrance into the gymnasium is in disrepair. Access to this section of the building is crucial for use by our Seniors and for early voting. Article 18 will also fund the repair of the second handicap ramp located in the rear of the Municipal Center used for entrance directly to the building's elevator.

ARTICLE 19. POLICE DEPARTMENT CRUISERS

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the purpose of purchasing a police cruiser and making certain repairs to the existing fleet, or to take any other action relative thereto.

Submitted by: Town Administrator

Finance Committee Recommendation for Article 19

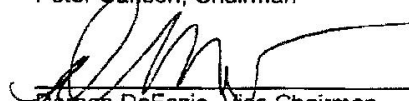
Finance Committee recommends passage of Article 19 in the amount of \$90,000.00. Finance Committee recommends replacing TWO vehicles. This would require purchasing TWO new Ford Explorers/Interceptors and associated equipment (lights, consoles, cages, corner LEDs) by transferring the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$50,000.00) from the Fire Department Replacement Equipment account (1.220.4.5881) within the override contingency budget PLUS the sum of Forty Thousand dollars and No cents (\$40,000.00) from free cash. The goal is to replace older front-line marked vehicles as part of the town's successful fleet management program. The first vehicle to be replaced currently has the equivalent of 219,000 service miles, along with electrical problems needing repair estimated at \$5,400.00. The second vehicle to be replaced has the equivalent of 297,000 service miles.

And you are directed to serve this Warrant by posting up an attested copy thereof in some conspicuous place in each of the precincts of the Town at least fourteen days before said meeting.

Hereof fail not and make due return of this Warrant, with your doings thereon to the town Clerk, at the time and place of meeting as aforesaid.

Given under our hands the 29th day of September in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Twenty.

Peter Carlson, Chairman



Doreen DeFazio, Vice Chairman



Colleen Roy, Clerk



Mathew Often

Edward Prisby

A TRUE COPY,
ATTEST:

OCT. 1, 2020

I have complied with the requirements of the above Warrant and with the Town of Grafton By-laws by posting an attested copy of the Warrant in some conspicuous place in each of the precincts of the Town on the above date.



Constable of Grafton
