

Town of Winchester

**Special Town Meeting
February 11, 2019**



Preliminary Motions

MOVED AND SECONDED that the following preliminary motions be voted as one:

1. That Lisa Wong, Town Manager; Stacie Ward, Comptroller; Arthur Kreiger, Mina Makarious or Jessica Wall, Town Counsel; and Mark J. Twogood, Assistant Town Manager, who are not Town Meeting Members, be permitted to sit at the front of the auditorium with the Select Board during all sessions of this Town Meeting.
2. That all members of the Finance Committee and their secretary, whether Town Meeting Members or not, be permitted to sit together at the front of the auditorium during all sessions of this Town Meeting.
3. That the Town Clerk or her designee or the Assistant Town Clerk be permitted to occupy a desk on the platform during all sessions of this Town Meeting.
4. That the Moderator be authorized to permit members of various town boards, commissions, committees, department heads, and petitioners of special articles to sit at the front of the auditorium during consideration of appropriate articles.
5. That unless it be otherwise ordered, all adjourned sessions of this Town Meeting shall be held on successive Monday and Thursday evenings at 7:30 P.M. in the Winchester High School Auditorium, until the work of this Town Meeting is completed.
6. That action on all motions involving appropriations shall be contingent upon compliance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 21C, a law known as the 2-1/2 Tax Limitation.
7. That cable television coverage shall be permitted at all sessions of this Town Meeting.

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ARTICLE 1. To hear the reports of Town Officers and the Finance Committee regarding the state of the Town and the Budget Outlook; or take any other action in relation thereto."

(Select Board)

MOTION:

MOVED AND SECONDED that the reports of Town Officers and Finance Committee be received and filed.

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Winchester strives to deliver quality public services and excellent schools, as well as sufficient building and maintenance of public facilities to match community needs. Over the past several years, expenditures have exceeded revenues to the point where an operating override is needed to keep pace with growth and maintain town services, schools, roads, sports fields and other capital and infrastructure needs. An operating override is a vote to override Massachusetts General Law c. 59 s.21C ("Proposition 2 ½") that limits property tax assessments levied by the town to a 2.5 % increase per year.

Town budget expenditures have been increasing by approximately 5% per year. The increase is driven by population, enrollment and capital needs. The overall town population has grown from 21,000 to 23,000 resulting in demand for more town services. School enrollment has grown by about 700 in the past decade which has meant more demand for teachers, classrooms and repair and replacement of school facilities. Growth has put pressure on capital through the wear and tear of buildings, water and sewer systems, and roads and sidewalks, resulting in the need for more capital investments.

Winchester has not had an operating override for the last decade. The town has been diligent in managing its finances, but with expenditures exceeding revenue, the result has been reductions in staffing and services, increasing use of one time revenues, and a draw-down on reserves. The town has continued to produce a good school system, rising property values and good quality of life.

Town officials and the Finance Committee will report on the budget impact for Fiscal Year 2020 and beyond of what would be impacted with and without an override. The Town is also considering and recommending action to help alleviate the impact of an override, especially for those on a fixed income, that qualify under existing programs allowed under Massachusetts General Law.

Majority vote required