



The Advisory Committee Report to Special Town Meeting October 27, 2025

Background for this report:

The Advisory Committee Bylaw Chapter 9, Section 13A of Town Code: It shall be the duty of the Committee to consider all matters included within the articles of any warrant for a Town Meeting hereafter issued, and the Committee shall, after due consideration of the subject matter in said articles, report thereon, in print or otherwise, such information and recommendations as it shall deem best.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 1

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Zoning change to add new definition of Highway Major Retail and amend Industrial Park District to allow this use by special permit.

Prime location for Major Retail use:

The 21 and 32 Coslin Drive parcel(s) have been vacant and unused for about the past 7-8 years. Both parcels are in the Industrial Park District and were formerly occupied by Dell/EMC before acquisition by Atlantic Management Corporation. Atlantic Management wants to partner with the Town to create opportunities in currently desolate parcels that yield very little tax revenue. Adding the definition of major retail use to this district creates an opportunity for development of commercial business on a greater scale than would be feasible on any other currently existing parcel configuration in Southborough without significant investment from the town or developers to infrastructure like a wastewater treatment plant. The anticipated impact on residential neighborhoods should be minimal, as there are no direct residential abutters, unlike other areas in town which would face more challenges. The parcel is in an ideal location near the intersection of Routes 495/90/9 and is well-suited for major commercial retail such as a large-scale grocery/retail business. If the zoning change is approved, any site plan proposal would still require all the steps of the special permit process through the Planning Board, which will allow for public comment and debate on additional project details like traffic, wastewater, storm water, etc. In addition, with the property boundaries being in both Southborough and Westborough, we believe that if this zoning does not pass, the business project could be moved into Westborough with just parking left in Southborough. This would provide little benefit to the Town but any impacts such as traffic would remain.

Potential tax benefit:

Major retail use on these properties may eventually generate tax revenue

equivalent to about 10% of the existing tax revenue for the remainder of Rt 9 Southborough. This is based upon comparable projects completed by the same developer in both Marlborough and Westborough. Currently the breakdown of Residential and Commercial tax bases is about 84%/16% respectively and the residential burden has increased in recent years with commercial decline due to office parks and other businesses closing. The goal is to increase the commercial tax base, which will in turn help reduce the residential tax burden. Allowing a new use by permit in the Industrial Zone should help with this goal. We estimate that the full impact of the proposed development of this area would contribute enough commercial property valuation to change the breakdown from 84% residential /16% commercial to 78% residential / 22% commercial. A large “magnet” anchor store should bring more stores with expanding commercial tax revenue.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 2

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Allow unencumbered funds >\$75K annually from golf course revolving funds to be moved to the General Fund and used for operational expenses.

The golf course is doing well and generating revenue. Current revolving fund structure allows revenue to only be used at the golf course. This article would enable funds above a \$75K minimum threshold to be moved to the General Fund and used for other purposes. Currently, \$75K is a healthy level for the golf course to be able to operate and pay for usual maintenance expenses. When the end-of-year balance is at least \$75K and there are no identified needs that may require reserving additional funds specifically for the golf course, then excess funds would be converted to free cash in support of covering other Town operational expenses.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 3

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Appropriate \$100K from free cash for engineering, design and bidding of environmental remediation for Atwood (old water tower) property.

The Town owned Atwood property was the former site of a water tower supplying water to town residents. The soil testing on the site has revealed environmental contamination that the Town will be required to remediate. We currently know where the problem is but do not yet have the information about how to fix it. The appropriated funds would be used for engineering review and design of the specific remediation proposal. An article is expected at a future Town Meeting to request funds for the actual remediation, but this is the first step toward determining what will be required to clean up the site.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 4

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to **support**.

Consolidate classifications for Business Administrator I & II and appropriate \$7,412 of free cash to cover salary change.

This article would allow simplification and streamlining Business Administrator position classifications, compensation structure, and permit alignment of such positions and pay across Town departments. The cost to cover the necessary salary adjustment is a relatively small amount of free cash but this change would have benefit to overall structure of this role.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 5

Voted 6-1-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to **support**.

Amend vacation leave accrual schedule for employees with 0-2 years employment from 2 weeks to 3 weeks. Summary change is employees 0-7 years will accrue 3 weeks of vacation.

:

Often many candidates who apply and receive offers for vacant Town positions have significant level of expertise and experience and, as such, these candidates negotiate higher level of accruals before accepting offers. This results in delays in hiring since the Town Administrator must seek Personnel Board approval to change accruals for each candidate. Increasing base vacation leaves from 2 weeks to 3 weeks per year closely aligns with industry standards and should allow for hiring seasoned and qualified candidates without delays.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 6:

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to **support**.

Appropriate free cash amount of \$78,783 to fund market adjustment for non-union Schedule A employees with 7+ years of service placing them at midpoint (Step 8) effective July 1, 2025.

Eleven employees who have been working for the Town for many years are now at lower Steps on the SAP than newer employees who were onboarded at higher steps in competitive job market. This disparity has resulted in newer employees being paid the same or higher salaries as some of our dedicated, longer-term employees. If those employees choose to leave or there is turnover in these positions, it is likely to cost the Town more than raising employees to an equivalent comparable step now.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 7:

Voted 7-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to **support**.

Appropriate cable funds to update and install audiovisual equipment in McAuliffe Hearing Room.

The audiovisual equipment in the McAuliffe Hearing Room does not optimally support hybrid and remote meetings due to current technology. The McAuliffe Hearing Room is used several times each week for in-person meeting options to reach the largest audience. Hybrid meeting structure would benefit greatly from integrated technology. The Municipal Technology Committee (MTC) and Information Technology (IT) team have been collaborating to find the most cost-effective upgrade option that will support the current meeting structure. Appropriating cable funds collected by the Town from Verizon, Comcast, and Charter will enable the audio-visual upgrade using this funding source versus operational budget at cost to taxpayers.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 8:

Voted 5-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Appropriate cable funds the Town receives from Verizon, Comcast, Charter to support PEG (Public/Educational/Government) operations for Southborough Access Media (SAM).

The Town has a contractual agreement with Southborough Access Media (SAM) to provide operating funds. Appropriating cable funds to cover the cost of operations for SAM provides an alternative to using the operational budget and reduces impact on taxpayers. There is currently ~\$300K in the cable fund account and some portion would be used for Article 7 and 8 if approved.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 9:

Voted 5-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Amend zoning bylaw related to Accessory Dwelling Units to ensure compliance with Massachusetts General Law.

In August 2024, Massachusetts General Law (MGL) was changed related to Accessory Dwelling Units. Governor Healey signed the Affordable Homes Act and Section 8 of the Act allows Accessory Dwelling Units up to 900 square feet to be built by right in single family zoning districts. This article seeks to amend Town bylaw to align with this change in MGL while also administratively adjusting some language and terms in the ADU bylaw.

Advisory Recommendation for Article 10:

Voted 5-0-0 (Yes-No-Abstain) to support.

Authorize establishment of Town Governance Structure Committee consisting of seven (7) registered voters (no elected officials) appointed by Moderator with charge to expire June 30, 2027.

The formation of a committee to review current Town government structure and operations plus explore ideas that might improve government function is a worthy endeavor. Similar work has not been done in Southborough in the past 10-15 years. The committee would provide recommendations to elected officials and gather public input via public hearings or other means during the charge timeframe. There seems to be very little risk, if any, to forming a committee to study and review what we do now, how we do it, gather comparative information from other towns if warranted, and, at the end, offer suggestions that might improve a myriad of government functions and activities. Ultimately, execution of any suggestion that might result from this committee would require thoughtful and deliberate action of elected officials and Town Meeting voters.

Respectfully submitted,

Marci Jones, Chair
Andrew Pfaff, Vice Chair
Timothy Martel
Howard Rose
Barry Rubenstein
Larry Samberg
Erik Glaser