



The Advisory Committee Report to Special Town Meeting October 17, 2026

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 Committee Membership:

Current members of the Advisory Committee are Marci Jones, Al Hamilton, Timothy Martel, Howard Rose, Larry Samberg, Barry Rubenstein and Erik Glaser. For the FY27 term, Advisory members elected Marci Jones as Chair and Al Hamilton as Vice-Chair.

Role of the Advisory Committee:

The Advisory Committee is established by State law and Town bylaw. The Committee functions as a sub-committee of Town Meeting. The seven members are appointed by the Town Moderator for a 3-year term. Advisory is a legislative committee and has no executive authority. Advisory members may not serve on any other town committee, with the exception that an Advisory member may serve on one other ad-hoc committee appointed by a Town board or official, or one other committee appointed by the Town Moderator. In either situation, the Advisory Committee must vote to approve the appointment. Advisory members also may not hold any elected office.

Advisory has four principal functions:

- **Develop/Present a Balanced Budget to the Town** – Advisory is the sole body in the Town with this statutory responsibility.
- **Warrant Article Review** – Advisory is responsible for reviewing both money and non-money warrant articles and making a recommendation to Town Meeting.
- **Oversight** – Advisory has a specific set of powers with respect to an ability to review all aspects of the Town's operations.
- **Custodian of the Reserve Fund** – The Reserve Fund is the Town's allocation of financial resources that is available for addressing extraordinary and/or unexpected expenses.

The Advisory Committee has completed our review of Articles for Special Town Meeting October 17, 2026.

Article 1 – Town Clerk: Elected to Appointed Position

Recommendation: SUPPORT

Vote: 6-0-0 unanimous in favor

Discussion: The Committee discussed converting the Town Clerk position from elected to appointed. Members feel that an elected position may limit the applicant pool and skill set, while an appointed hire would draw a larger pool of qualified candidates. One member noted that nearly half of cities and towns in the state now use appointed Town Clerks, reflecting a trend as the role has become more technical and requires some level of skill and expertise. The committee's main concern is that an appointment process removes the position from direct voter control. The Committee also discussed the hiring and removal processes, noting the position would be treated like any other contracted employee, and several members suggested the contract include a "termination for cause" clause to protect against removal without justification.

Article 2 – Amend Zoning: Two-Family Dwellings

Recommendation: NOT SUPPORT

Vote: 3-4-0 majority against

Discussion: The Committee discussed the proposal to allow two-family dwellings, generally supporting the goals of addressing the housing shortage and clarifying the Town code, but raised several implementation concerns:

- Concern about eliminating the requirement that a single-family home is in existence for at least two years before conversion, as this requirement discourages speculative flipping by developers
- Concern about allowing two-family dwellings which could affect neighborhood character
- Reliance on percolation tests given the Town's full dependence on septic systems, and worry about long-term impacts
- A general sense that the zoning proposal was not fully developed and should not be rushed
- Concern about additional costs to the Town related to additional residents

The committee understands that special permits would still be required for two-family dwellings, but in practice this does not serve as a preventative safeguard.

Article 3 – Golf Course Irrigation (CPA Funds)

Recommendation: NOT SUPPORT

Vote: 0-7-0 unanimous against

Discussion: This article would fund improvements to the Southborough Golf Club's irrigation system, with roughly \$1M in costs funded almost entirely (~85%) by Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and only about 15% (\$150,000) from the golf revolving fund. Members agree the golf course is

a valuable town asset but there is strong opposition to shifting most of the cost to taxpayers rather than to users of the course since the course was intended to be self-funded. One member presented an alternative: the Town could borrow approximately \$533,000 over 20 years, funded by a \$1.50 per-round surcharge to cover debt service, with CPA funding roughly half the project and the surcharge ending once the bond is paid off.

Article 4 – Peninsula Trail / Bridge (CPA Funds)

Recommendation: NOT SUPPORT

Vote: 0-7-0 unanimous against

Discussion: This article requests an additional \$217,000 on top of an existing \$211,000 appropriation, bringing the total to approximately \$428,550 (\$324,000 for construction, \$104,500 for contingency — a 15% cost-escalation allowance plus a 20% construction contingency. All remaining funding is for a prefabricated bridge parallel to Route 30 and crossing a brook to connect two trail sections and contingency covering both potential price increases before construction and unforeseen conditions during construction. One Advisory member calculated the bridge cost at roughly \$5,000 per foot (\$320,000 for 65 feet) which is greater than major highway construction costs. The committee appreciates the safety concerns and desire to complete the trail connection but cannot support the project at this cost.

Article 5 – Create Stormwater Enterprise Fund

Recommendation: SUPPORT

Vote: 7-0-0 unanimous in favor

Discussion: This article establishes the Stormwater Enterprise Fund as an accounting mechanism for potential future revenues and costs associated with a stormwater management system. It does not create funding or fees, which would come later and would require additional authorization at Town Meeting. The primary benefit of such a fund is that it allocates the cost of stormwater management in proportion to the amount of impervious surface to all properties in town, both taxable and tax-exempt.

Article 6 – Rescind Unused Debt Authorization (Breakneck Hill & School Study Funds)

Recommendation: SUPPORT

Vote: 7-0-0 unanimous in favor

Discussion: Both the Breakneck Hill and Neary School Study are complete or near complete. Both required less borrowing than authorized and this article rescinds additional borrowing authority of the remainder funds. This article rescinds previously approved borrowing authority for the unspent portion for the Breakneck Hill project (\$727,960) and the Neary School Study (\$375,000). No money is being returned — this simply prevents future borrowing using previously granted authority that is no longer needed, since the related projects are complete or substantially complete.

Article 7 – Water Connection for Two Homes Near Parkerville Landfill (\$240,000)

Recommendation: SUPPORT

Vote: 6-0-0 unanimous in favor

Discussion: The Committee reviewed the information and determined this was the right thing to do. The project includes a water main extension as well as the water supply lines to the two homes, but most of the cost is attributed to the water main extension. Liability concerns regarding future water testing and state-imposed drinking water guidelines were raised by some members. Funding appropriation would come from the water fund which is intended for this type of work.

Article 8 – Increase Personal Property Tax Exemption (\$1500 → \$2500)

Recommendation: SUPPORT

Vote: 7-0-0 unanimous in favor

Discussion: The cost of administering smaller personal property accounts exceeds the annual tax revenue they generate. Based on FY2027 data, this article would exempt 22 accounts with a total assessed value of \$40,100.

Summary

Article		Topic	Vote	Recommendation
1		Town Clerk: Elected to Appointed	6–0–0	Support
2		Amend Zoning: Two-Family Dwellings	3–4–0	Not Support
3		Golf Course Irrigation (CPA)	0–7–0	Not Support
4		Peninsula Trail/Bridge (CPA)	0–7–0	Not Support
5		Create Stormwater Enterprise Fund	7–0–0	Support
6		Rescind Unused Debt Authorization	7–0–0	Support
7		Water Connection (Parkerville)	6-0-0	Support
8		Increase Personal Property Tax Exemption	7–0–0	Support

Respectfully submitted,

Marci Jones, Chair

Al Hamilton, Vice Chair

Timothy Martel

Howard Rose

Barry Rubenstein

Larry Samberg

Erik Glaser