

Bedford Annual Town Meeting 2021 Finance Committee Warrant Recommendations

The Finance Committee has a responsibility for creating the budget for the Town, as well as providing recommendations on articles in the Town Meeting Warrant. The Committee reviews each article in the Warrant, listens to presentations, asks questions, discusses and finally votes for a recommendation. While our recommendations are printed in the warrant, we are presenting additional information about our recommendations in advance of Town Meeting. It is our hope and goal that making this additional information available will be of benefit to the voters.

Article 2 – Debate Rules

Recommend: Approval 9-0-0

This article proposes the adoption of the usual procedures under which we operate Town Meeting. They provide a means by which an orderly and efficient meeting may be run.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 3 – Consent Article

Recommend: Approval 9-0-0

This article represents a number of items which have been regularly voted upon in prior Town Meetings and need yearly approval. It also provides for the ongoing ability to conduct short-term borrowing, if necessary, in anticipation of revenue, as well as funds for the annual financial audit. Additionally, it accepts state law provisions for property tax exemptions, and it allows the Selectmen to accept easements on behalf of the Town without the necessity of scheduling a Town Meeting to do so.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 4 – Bills of Prior Year

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 5 – General Bylaw Amendment- Revolving Funds

Recommend: Approval Approval 5-0-3

This article proposes establishing two new revolving funds. The Tree Mitigation Revolving Fund will be used by the Department of Public Works to help ensure proper maintenance of trees on public ways. For example, the fees can be used to replace any trees impacted by municipal and/or private development.

The Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Mitigation Fee (Sewer I/I), also to be used by the Department of Public Works, will be charged when any new connection to the Town's sewer system is made or there is any change in use that can be expected to increase wastewater discharge. This fee-based system is common throughout Massachusetts and authorized per MGL. The Finance Committee believes this fund provides an appropriate way to manage these fees. Several members abstained from supporting this article due to uncertainty in their view regarding the impact on the Town operating budget.

Depending on development patterns the Town could have a number of years where few new connections are made and then a period where there are many. Thus, there may be years when few fees are collected and there is not yet enough for a meaningful project until funds build up. In addition, the Town should be able to account for the fees collected and eventually show how they were used for applicable Sewer I/I removal.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 6 – Revolving Funds Expenditure Limits

Recommend: Approval

Approval 5-0-3

This article would establish the Fiscal Year 2022 expenditure limits for the Town's revolving funds as authorized under Article 13, Section 13.4.4 of the General Bylaws of the Town. Please note that limits for the two new funds proposed in Article 5 were inadvertently omitted from the printed warrant and will therefore be addressed as an amended motion at Town Meeting. The Sewer I/I and Tree mitigation limits are proposed to be set at \$900,000 and \$50,000, respectively. The limits set are consistent with the use of the funds, and annual procedure for setting said limits and as recommended by the Department of Revenue. These expenditure limits are based on a high-end estimate of what might be collected in and expected use of these funds in a busy year, per the best-practice of DOR.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 7 – Community Preservation Budget – Fiscal Year 2022

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0 Items 1 to 9 and 11-14; 5-4-0 Item 10

The Community Preservation Committee presented its FY2022 budget to the Finance Committee. The budget met with approval of the Finance Committee for the items being recommended at Annual Town Meeting. The finance committee felt that the proposed budget met the goals of community preservation.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 8 – Operating Budgets-Fiscal Year 2022

Recommend: Approval

5-3-0

This article presents the Town’s operating budget, which is approximately projected to increase by 3.5% for the coming fiscal year. It is constructed from the needs and requests of all departments, balanced against current and expected revenues and expenditures. The increase is roughly equivalent to the 2.5% allowable increase in municipal taxing authority, plus estimated new tax revenue growth.

This year the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all aspects of our lives. Financial planning is particularly difficult in this environment. The economic impacts of the pandemic are still evolving, and there is unusual uncertainty around several aspects of the budget. The Finance Committee believes that it and the Town departments have attempted to find the appropriate balance between minimizing the tax increase while maintaining the Town’s historically sound financial position. Members voting no were concerned about the risk to the budget caused by increased revenue numbers not supported by town professional staff. There is opportunity to revisit the final budget in November special town meeting.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 9 – Ambulance Enterprise Budget-Fiscal Year 2022

Recommend: Approval

7-0-0

This article presents the Town’s operating budget for the ambulance service for the coming fiscal year. This budget is generally self-supporting, with a modest \$20,000 subsidy from the Town's General Fund. We support continued robust operation of our Town ambulance service.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 10 – PEG Access and Cable Expense Related Budget Fiscal Year 2022

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article presents the Town’s operating budget for the Public Education Governmental (PEG) Access programming for the for the coming fiscal year. The budget is funded from the PEG Access and Cable Related Fund. The finance committee values and supports the continued operation of the Town’s PEG access and cable operations.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 11 – Supplement Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2021 and Articles of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 12 – Salary Administration Plan Bylaw Amendment – Classification & Wage Schedule

Recommend: Approval 8-1-0

This article is presented annually and establishes the pay ranges for non-school employees for the Town. This update allows the Town to offer market-based wages in order to attract and retain employees and potential employees. Note that this is a salary schedule and does not inherently change existing compensation.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 13 – Salary Plan Additional Funding

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 14 - Appropriate Funds for Bedford Police Officers Association Collective Bargaining Agreement FY2021-2023

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 15 – Appropriate Funds for Transportation Infrastructure Funds

Recommend: Approval 9-0-0

This article authorizes the Town to appropriate money received from the Commonwealth. The funds come from the Commonwealth Transportation Infrastructure fund and will be used by the Town for transportation services. The funds cannot be used by the Town until a vote to appropriate has been passed. We support being able to use these funds and, therefore, their appropriation to allow it.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 16 – Supplement Accrued Sick Leave Fund

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article appropriates \$100,000 to a Sick Leave Buyback fund to support the buyback of accrued, but unused, sick leave when an employee retires. This is a forward-looking exercise, to ensure that sufficient funds are available as they are needed. An analysis is done each year to determine the likely amount of funding that will be needed over the next 12 months. The Finance Director calculates this amount, which is based on the Town's expected liability.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 17 – Stabilization Fund Appropriation

Recommend: Approval

6-1-0

The Town maintains a Stabilization Fund, a type of “rainy-day” fund, to help in times of financial stress. Since 2013, we have augmented this Fund in line with its purpose. Our financial policies outline a fund balance goal of between 2% and 6% of the Operating Budget. As of 2021, we are at the top-end of this range.

For 2022 we are proposing the use of \$1,900,000 from Stabilization to increase the Finance Committee Reserve Fund balance. The intent is to have these funds available for potential School expenses resulting from the uncertainty of the Covid Pandemic. Funds unused during the fiscal year, or reimbursed from State or Federal programs, would fall to Free Cash. It is our current intent to recommend that any such funds be returned to the Stabilization Fund at the next Town Meeting.

If this amount were needed, and not reimbursed, this would leave the Stabilization Fund with over \$4 million which is in the middle of our target range.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 18 – Free Cash

Recommend: Approval

7-0-0

The term Free Cash represents unspent funds and unexpected revenue from prior years. It is prudent financial policy, and it is recommended by the State Department of Revenue, that Free Cash be used for one-time (non-recurring) items within the budget. Our fiscal policy states "An ample Free Cash balance shall be maintained to provide the Town with financial flexibility and stability for the future".

The policies further state a free cash amount of no less than 1% of the operating budget should be maintained. Free cash in excess of these guidelines may be used to reduce the tax levy. For Fiscal Year 2022, the operating budget from Article 8 makes use of over \$7.1 million from free cash and leaves a balance that represents 3.9% of the operating budget.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 19 – Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Capital Projects Plan

Recommend: Approval	Items 22-1 through 21-9	9-0-0
	Item 22-10	8-0-1
	Items 21-11 through 21-26	9-0-0

This article would appropriate \$2,652,047 from the FY 2022 Free Cash to partially fund the proposed FY2022 capital projects plan in amount of \$7,208,047. The remaining \$4,556,000, would be funded through bonding, water/sewer rates, Chapter 90, Operating Budget, and Community Preservation. The Finance Committee discussed the FY2022 proposed Capital projects in detail and supports its funding. The Finance Committee believes maintaining Town assets is integral to its fiscal health.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 20 – Bond Authorization Police Station Addition/Renovation

Recommend: Approval	8-0-1
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This article would appropriate \$6,400,000, funded from a Bond Authorization of \$4,100,000 and available funds of \$2,300,000. This project is planned to construct and renovate the current police station to meet the current and future needs of the Police Department and is consistent with town policy of maintaining all town assets. Design for this construction was based on the 2016 space study and is intended to meet the Town’s Net Zero requirements. It should be noted that Net Zero requirements increased the cost of this project by approximately \$1,000,000. This expenditure is consistent with the Town’s Net Zero policy pursuant to Town meeting vote and Select Board policy.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 21 – Bond Authorization HVAC Replacement Bedford Public Library

Recommend: Approval	9-0-0
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This article would appropriate \$2,500,000 funded from a Bond Authorization. This project is planned to replace the aging HVAC system and components prior to failure. The system and components were originally installed 1999. It should be noted that Net Zero requirements increased the cost of this project

by \$1,000,000. This expenditure is consistent with the Town's Net Zero policy pursuant to Town meeting vote and Select Board policy.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 22 – Bond Authorization Inflow/Infiltration

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article would appropriate \$669,500 funded from a Bond Authorization. This project is planned for the construction, reconstruction, investigation and design of sewers and related infiltration/inflow improvements. The finance committee believes in maintaining the Town's infrastructure.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 23 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment - Accessory Dwelling Units

Recommend: Approval

7-0-2

This article is intended to address housing needs identified in the Town. The Finance Committee recommended approval of an earlier version of this article when it narrowly missed the required two-thirds threshold at the 2019 Special Town Meeting. The proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment has been further adjusted to address concerns raised at the 2019 STM calling for more abutter input, by adding a site plan review requirement for detached ADUs. Recently enacted State legislation has since set a standard for ADU bylaws, now consistent with all requirements in this amendment.

Based upon past use of the existing ADU bylaw, as well as experiences in comparable towns, the Planning Board projects only a modest increase in newly permitted ADUs on an annual basis, even as few as one or two per year. The size limitations and the owner occupancy obligation, coupled with the high construction cost for a detached dwelling structure, are expected to minimize any interest by investors. Residents seeking more options for extended family occupancy, or aging-in-place affordability, are the likely beneficiaries of this amendment.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 24 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment-Accessory Dwelling Units: Bonus for Universal Design or Enhanced Energy Efficiency

Recommend: Approval

7-0-2

Universal Design and Enhanced Energy Efficiency are targeted goals in Bedford's 2019 Housing Study. Since the upfront costs in meeting these standards are higher, providing modest incentives in Zoning

Bylaws is an effective tool in balancing a homeowner’s short-term interests with the Town’s long-term goals. This article is intended to address housing needs identified in the Town.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 25 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment-Assisted Living Overlay District

Recommend: Approval

8-0-1

Bedford lacks sufficient housing opportunities for seniors to remain in town as they age. Existing Zoning Bylaws do not adequately define Assisted Living facilities, nor allow for them in residential zones. Establishing an Assisted Living Overlay District will not only allow for a proposed property redevelopment on South Road that many residents may find attractive, but may also promote consideration of alternative housing options elsewhere, in a controlled manner, by means of Special Permit.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 26 – Zoning Map Amendment-Assisted Living Overlay District

Recommend: Approval

8-0-1

Assisted Living facilities are residential facilities. For economic efficiency, many Assisted Living facilities cater to large numbers of residents, requiring multi-acre lots. The South Road corridor contains a suitable lot currently used for a non-conforming commercial purpose, as well as several additional lots that meet the minimum size requirements defined in Article 25. The proposed South Road Overlay District is constrained by natural barriers including the Minuteman Bikeway, and the Town Forest, minimizing the opportunity for residential abutters. The district is also readily accessible from the Fire Station for emergency response.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 27 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Site Plan Approval

Recommend: Approval

6-2-1

The Finance Committee is in favor of this planning board proposal to move specific requirements out of the bylaw and into separate regulations. Regulations are more efficiently and effectively maintained than bylaws. An increased reliance on Site Plan Approval in the development process, as a result of the recently established Great Road Zoning Districts, has revealed a need for additional clarification of the process. Given the complexity and changing nature of Site Plan Approval, the Planning Board proposes to move specific requirements out of the bylaw directly, and into separate regulations, as has been the

practice in recent years for other areas of town control. Regulations are more efficiently managed and maintained without the need for direct consent of residents at Town Meeting.

This amendment also empowers the elected Planning Board to apply the increasingly important checks and balances provided by Site Plan Approval in the Town's Zoning Bylaws.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 28 – General Bylaw Amendments - Universal Changes and Housekeeping Changes

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article proposes a number of edits to the Bylaws to improve punctuation, establish gender-neutral language, and streamline the presentation of some information. The Finance Committee is in favor of any changes improve readability, consistency, and approachability.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 29 – General Bylaw Amendments - Clarifying or Substantive Changes

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article presents numerous updates to clarify the responsibilities, fine schedule, processes, or purpose of several of our Town entities, including the Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Council on Aging, Historic Preservation Commission, and Recreation Commission. There are some grammatical corrections as well. It also allows the Select Board to make grammatical, punctuation or spelling changes, that do not alter any meanings, without requiring Town Meeting approval. The Finance Committee believes these changes improve clarity in the Town Bylaws.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 30 – General Bylaw Amendment - Article 49, Control and Management of Hazardous Materials

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article updates hazardous material management procedures related to filing and reviewing a contingency plan and increases the fee for its annual contingency plan review. This will bring the Bylaw in line with current procedures.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 31 – General Bylaw - Proposed New Article, Bedford Arbor Resources Committee

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article would result in the establishment of a permanent committee, adding it to the Town Bylaws and codify its authority, membership, purpose, and responsibilities. The BARC Committee's purpose is to protect, preserve, develop, and manage arbor resources on public owned lands, and encourage preservation of resources on private lands. The Finance Committee believes clarification of the BARC Committee's standing is appropriate.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 32 – General Bylaw - Proposed New Article, Patriotic Holiday Committee

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article would result in the establishment of a permanent committee, adding it to the Town Bylaws and codify its authority, membership, purpose, and responsibilities. The Patriot Holiday Committee has been an ad hoc committee, this article is to transition this committee permanent to better plan town events and patriotic holidays to honor veterans in US Armed Services, as well as advise the Select Board on changes to Veteran Memorial Park and memorials on the Town Common. The Finance Committee believes clarification of the Patriotic Holiday Committee's standing is appropriate.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 33 – General Bylaw - Proposed New Article, Energy and Sustainability Committee

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article would result in the establishment of a permanent committee, adding it to the Town Bylaws and codify its authority, membership, purpose, and responsibilities. The Energy and Sustainability Committee would directly work with the Town manager's office, and help develop energy strategies, policies, and goals. The finance committee believes clarification of the Energy and Sustainability Committee's standing is appropriate.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 34 – Indigenous Peoples Day Recognition

No position taken

8-0-1

The Finance Committee believes this should be decided by vote of Town Meeting.

Article 35 – Disabled and Senior Tax Relief Fund

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

This article if approved would establish a special fund to assist disabled and senior taxpayers with their municipal tax and motor vehicle excise tax bills. This account would be funded through donations at no cost to the town. Disbursements from this account would be approved by the Tax Aid Committee which would consist of chair of the Board of Assessors, Town Treasurer and three at-large residents and would be appointed by the select board. Finance Committee believes that the creation of this fund meets with the character of the Town to support the disabled and senior population.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 36 - Street Acceptance-Irene Road

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 37 – Acceptance of Grant of Open Space-Irene Road

Recommend: Recommendation to be given at Annual Town Meeting

Article 38 – Acceptance of M.G.L. Ch. 41, Sec. 110A

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

The Finance Committee voted unanimously for the approval of Article 38 for accepting Mass General Law CH41 Section 110A. The town clerk can require submissions of materials on a Friday when the deadline for election related materials falls on a Saturday. Historically there is minimal activity on Saturdays. The Finance Committee supports this change which will improve efficiency.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Article 39 – 300th Anniversary Stabilization Fund Appropriation

Recommend: Approval

9-0-0

The Finance Committee voted unanimously to continue supporting an appropriation for the 300th anniversary celebration of the town. The stabilization fund for the 300th anniversary was established at the Special Town meeting in the fall of 2019. The Finance Committee approves the continued funding of this celebration and looks forward to attending.

The Finance Committee recommends approval of this article.

Stephen Carluccio, Chair

Elizabeth McClung, Vice Chair

Karen Dunn, Clerk

Tom Busa

Ben Thomas

Paul Mortenson

Erica Liu

David Powell

Stephen Steele