



"WARRANT LITE" VOTER GUIDE

Articles — Each of these is asking “Should the town...?”

1. Set aside funds for compensated absences?

This is for maintaining a balance in our established fund so the town has money available to pay out accrued personnel benefits in the event of termination of employment or retirement.

2. Approve a line to line transfer of \$3,074 from the Police Department salary line to the Police Department expenses line for equipment and training?

Simple line to line transfer; excess funds in the salary line due to personnel changes will be moved to a different line for police department expenses.

3. Approve borrowing \$1.5 million to pay for emergency deficit spending for town road repairs? 2/3rds vote required.

While state aid *may* be coming to help cover the costs of July 2023 storm damage, we can't count on it. Because we have already expended town funds on road repairs, the treasurer estimates the need to borrow at minimum \$500,000 for three (3) months beginning January 1 in order to meet our fiscal obligations. If town meeting authorizes up to the maximum, there will be no need for additional special town meetings if the treasurer needs to incrementally borrow more (with Selectboard approval). The running balance of deficit spending will be posted online under the Town Administrator's webpage.

4. Allow the Selectboard to convey the property at 0 off Ashfield Road by deed?

This is the final step in transferring a tax-foreclosed property that was already sold at a town auction to private ownership (and Town tax rolls).

5. Establish a property tax work-off program for taxpayers who are veterans or qualifying low-income seniors?

Many towns in Massachusetts have programs that allow low-income seniors and veterans to perform work for the town, such as filing, gardening or working with students, with a reduction in their tax bills in lieu of compensation. A yes vote would allow Conway to establish such a program, with parameters established by the Selectboard, effective July 1, 2024.

6. Appropriate \$7,000 for software, hardware and training to allow Assessors to enter information into a tablet on site during home assessments?

A yes vote would save the assessors time by allowing them to do much of their evaluation work in the field; final cost is likely to be less than \$7000.

7. A. Approve \$7,825 from CPA funds for Veterans Memorial Park habitat restoration with native plants?

This funding is requested to cover the costs of a project previously approved by the Selectboard to provide plants and related supplies, such as watering donuts for efficient and cost-effective plant hydration during the establishment period, along with support and funding for plant installation, removal of large trees (where approved and deemed appropriate) and educational signage and labeling of plants.

7. B. Approve \$14,074.80 from CPA funds for archival storage of the town's vital records in the Town Clerk's office?

Vital records (birth, death, marriage) from 1900 and up desperately need saving—both for legal reasons and to preserve the history of the town. A yes vote will allow these records to be both *scanned* for digital access and *physically archived* for posterity using museum-quality materials .

8. Amend its General Bylaws to make *Town Meeting Time* the official manual for conducting town meetings?

Never heard of it? That's because the handbook *Town Meeting Time: A Handbook of Parliamentary Law*, published in 1962 by the Massachusetts Moderators Association, is some of the dullest reading in the history of literacy. Nevertheless it focuses specifically on the operation of town meetings; this bylaw would codify that as the operational manual for town meetings for Conway residents.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **BOH** - Board of Health
- **COLA** - Cost of living adjustment
- **CPA** - Community Preservation Act - a 2000 law that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing and develop outdoor recreational facilities through a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property
- **FCSO** - Franklin County Sheriff's Office
- **Free Cash** - funds the town 'receives back' which is certified annually in September. These funds come from what is not spent out of the previous year's budget, plus funds when revenues exceed what was predicted, among other sources.
- **FROG** - Franklin Regional Council of Governments - a regional service organization and the former county government, which was abolished in 1997 and re-established as a voluntary membership organization
- **MGL** - Massachusetts General Law
- **OPEB Trust Fund** - Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund - fund for town employee retirement benefits
- **Revolving fund** - a fund or account that remains available to finance a town's continuing operations without any fiscal year limitation
- **Stabilization fund** - a mechanism set up by governments to insulate budgets from large and unexpected expenditures, like capital improvements or purchases

