

Sanctuary Town Status – Fact Sheet

A warrant article has been filed for the spring 2017 Annual Town Meeting to discuss Arlington declaring itself a Sanctuary Town. This document has been created to provide detail on both the process by which this decision will be debated and ultimately made, as well as to provide certain facts and information regarding the matter.

Process

- A warrant article has been filed to prompt the discussion of whether Arlington wishes to declare itself as a Sanctuary Town. This warrant article was brought forth by the Human Rights Commission and Town residents after several months of discussion. The warrant article officially serves notice that Town Meeting will be discussing a resolution on this matter. The resolution will not propose to create new local laws or appropriate any funds. Rather, the resolution will allow discussion about a non-binding, but important policy position of the Town.
- Before coming to Town Meeting, this warrant article will be discussed at a hearing held by the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen will ultimately make a recommendation to Town Meeting on this matter. The Board's hearing is currently scheduled for February 27th at 7:15 p.m. The meeting will be aired live on local cable access and streamed at acmi.tv. Board agendas are posted here - <http://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/all-boards-and-committees/board-of-selectmen/agendas-minutes>
- 2017 Annual Town Meeting begins on April 24th at 8 p.m. Town Meeting is in session every Monday and Wednesday until all warrant articles are voted upon. Any recommendation by the Board of Selectmen will be considered by Town Meeting, and amendments by members of Town Meeting can be introduced.

Facts/Information

- In general terms, Sanctuary Town status refers to police policy in relation to enforcement of federal immigration laws. Communities that have declared sanctuary status do not use their local police resources to check or report on the immigration status of those they encounter in routine interactions. However, if someone is arrested for committing a crime in a sanctuary community, their immigration status will be checked. Sanctuary Town status does **not** provide any protection for felons or violent criminals. Several communities in Massachusetts have adopted similar policies or resolutions regarding sanctuary status, but there is no uniform or generally accepted definition or implementation.
- Arlington's Police Department policy on this matter parallels that as described above and has been in place for many years. This is consistent with Arlington's community policing philosophy.
- Sanctuary Town status does **not** mean that services, housing or other accommodations are offered to undocumented immigrants because of the sanctuary designation.
- Over the last 1,000 criminal arrests made by the Arlington Police Department, only one had an immigration detainer, and in this instance, federal officials chose not to pursue it.
- Since the filing of the warrant article, an Executive Order has been signed, threatening to cut federal funding to sanctuary communities.
- The federal government cannot coerce local authorities into implementing federal programs. Moreover, the majority of legal opinions on this matter asserts that only funding related to immigration or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs could be affected. However, there remains a risk that the present administration could test this principle.
- Arlington receives approximately \$4,500,000/year in federal grant funding. 55% of that funding is for education and 45% is for services provided to low income residents, seniors, and for affordable housing. Arlington receives no funding for DHS programs or immigration enforcement. Reimbursements related to disaster relief are passed through DHS.

This document was produced by the Town Manager's Office in coordination with the Police Department, Town Counsel & the Health & Human Services Department. Any questions you have in regard to this matter can be directed to the Town Manager's Office at 781-316-3010.