

Article 15 Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by Town Manager, Police Chief, and Legal Department

What does the article do?

This article is about who can perform police details, in this case whether retired police officers will be allowed to do so.

This article is not about whether the Town will continue to use police details. A “No” vote will not affect the Police Department’s details strategy.

Why is there an article on the warrant?

The article is on the Town Warrant because it is necessary to enact a law specific to Arlington, through a home rule petition to the State Legislature, in order to allow retired police officers to perform details.

The idea of using retired officers in details arose during the Town’s negotiations with the Ranking Officers Association, which represents the Police Sergeants, Lieutenants, and Captains. At the request of the union and as part of the latest contract settlement, the Town agreed to put this article before Town Meeting.

Both the Union and the Town believe allowing retirees to work details is a win-win situation for the retirees, the Town, and the other officers on the force. It gives the Town more officers to fill the numerous detail slots; the retirees have been trained by the Town in its police methods and they know the Town after having worked here for many years.

Does the Police Department need details?

Yes, for two categories: construction projects affecting roadways, as required by law, and events to control traffic to protect public safety, such as road races, park events, Town Day, parades, July 4th, etc. At present, the volume of details is more than Arlington Police Department officers can meet, so it must hire active officers from other cities and towns. Detail officers ensure safe and efficient traffic flow traffic. They are in uniform and have all their equipment, including first aid kits and portable radios to monitor service calls. They have performed CPR and first aid to community members who had medical emergencies, intervened and assisted officers during bank robberies, located missing children, and assisted in many other emergency situations.

Why not use flaggers?

Flaggers are limited to construction details on low-speed roadways, must receive their own extensive training and certification, do not possess first responder training, and do not present significant cost-savings for the Town.

Do other communities use retirees?

Eleven of our 12 comparable communities allow retirees to work details, as well as Cambridge, Somerville, and Lexington. Medford is presently considering similar proposals to the one before our Town Meeting.

Do other communities use flaggers?

Few neighboring communities use flaggers. Lexington employs flaggers, although it also uses retired police officers as contemplated by this Article, and it bears noting that some Lexington flaggers are, in fact, retired Arlington Police Officers.

Do officers rely on details for their pay?

Yes, detail pay and overtime are important supplements to base pay. Officers work detail in addition to their regular hour and count on this pay when calculating their total compensation.

Does detail pay affect their pensions?

No, pensions are based on “regular compensation,” such as salaries and recurring stipends. Detail pay and overtime do not affect pensions.

Training requirements.

Retirees will have years of service to the Town and have received training in de-escalation, mental health first aid, procedural justice, and Fair and Impartial Policing. Retirees would be required to attend, at their own expense, CPR, first aid, firearms, and diversity, equity and inclusion training, plus any training that the Chief of Police mandates. Retirees would also be held to all policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the department

Limits on hours.

State law limits the number of hours a retired officer can work for a municipality to 960 hours per year. Active police officers cannot work more than 16 hours in a 24 hour period, including details and/or overtime.

Why are Arlington retirees better at details than others?

After working in Town during their careers, retired Arlington police officers are familiar with the community, road networks, and key locations. They are trained in our specific policies.

Chief’s discretion to hire a retiree.

All appointments are at the discretion of the Town Manager upon recommendation by the Police Chief. There are limits set forth in the legislation with respect to age, fitness, and good standing. The Manager or the Chief may decline appointment or recommendation for any non-discriminatory reason

Can an officer retire from Arlington, work for another department for five years, then take Arlington details?

This is unlikely since once an officer retires, he/she cannot work for another Massachusetts town.

Would using flaggers require us to bargain with the Police unions?

Yes. The contracts with the two police unions contain provisions relative to details and officers’ availability for details. Changes would require agreement from the Town and the Unions.

Could savings from flaggers be used to boost officer pay?

No. Payment for most details comes from utilities, contractors, or grants. Those funds cannot be transferred into the salary of the Police Department.

What are the detail rates (internal and external)?

The detail rate is \$51.58 per hour for a detail requested by a utility company or contractor. The rate for a Town detail varies between \$42.00 and \$54.00 per hour depending on the police officer’s rank and pay level.