

## How to Submit an Article for the Warrant

Residents interested in submitting articles to be placed on an upcoming town meeting warrant need to use the approved forms. The [Office of the Select Board](#) will have the Warrant Article Submission Packet available on their website or it can be picked up in person. Staff will offer instruction on how to fill out the form and acquire the necessary signatures. Please note that each warrant is only open for specific dates and times as voted by the Select Board and submissions will only be accepted during that time.

The form asks for a description of the desired action and talking with Town Counsel well before the deadline to submit can help ensure a smooth process. The wording of an article is important because once the form is submitted the wording cannot be changed. If the wording is too broad or too narrow, it can create problems. The action the article proposes must conform to State law, Town by-law, and be an action Town Meeting can take.

An article is the agenda item and not the final language Town Meeting will vote on. However, once the article wording has been established the actual details that make the change have to be consistent. The article can be a sentence describing a change, but Town Meeting will ultimately vote on the complete details that accomplish the requested change. The actual wording of the formal vote language is worked out during the hearing process.

Some examples:

**Proposed Article: To see if the Town will create a recycling committee.**

What Town Meeting will have to vote on are the complete details of the committee. The mission, the number of voting members, how many members make up a quorum, who will appoint the members, and so on. If you as the presenter appear at the hearing with a draft of the mission statement, the proposed work the committee should do, and who the members should be, Town Counsel will be able to assist with the final wording. The problems come when the wording of the article makes it impossible to write out the details correctly.

**Proposed Article: To see if the Town will change the Town Bylaws to reduce late fees for renewing a dog license to \$15.**

Once this wording is submitted and the signatures are verified, the article is on the warrant. After that every detail of the final wording of the proposed bylaw change must agree with the above wording.

During the hearing, staff might explain a problem they see with enforcing that revised bylaw. Late fees are charged to owners who don't renew their dog license on time and to owners who don't license a new dog on time. Because the wording of the article mentions only renewing, that's the only change that could be made and the Select Board could object to charging two different late fees because it's confusing and possibly unfair. The Select Board might

recommend to Town Meeting that despite everyone agreeing that the current fine of \$40 is too high, the article should not be approved.

**Better proposed wording: To see if the Town will change Title VIII, Article 2, Section 4 of the Town Bylaws to reduce the fines related to licensing dogs.**

This slightly broader wording leaves room for Town Counsel to adjust all the fines fairly depending on the circumstances.