

Voter Information Bulletin

Town of Douglas

OCTOBER 2004

Special Town Meeting
Monday, October 25, 2004 at 7:00 PM
Douglas High School Auditorium

Message from Finance Committee:

This Special Town Meeting of October 25, 2004 involves important articles that should be of interest to all residents; from funding a new Library and Accounting software to re-zoning for economic development to fiscal year 2005 budget revisions, additions and clarifications. The Finance Committee voted on articles that have financial implications and they are included in this flyer. We will vote and present our recommendation for Article 5 at the Town Meeting.

In reviewing Article 1, the Library project, the Finance Committee declined to recommend it to Town Meeting at this time. Since this is a large project that has been moving forward for about four years, some explanation seems appropriate. The final vote by the Committee was 2 for recommendation, 3 opposed to recommendation. The rationales for negative votes were costs to the taxpayers, timing of the project and excessive size. The cost is estimated to add approximately \$ 0.60/\$1000 to the tax rate; this equates to \$150/year on a house valued at \$250,000. Senior citizens on fixed-incomes and others who are barely making financial ends meet, have no ability to absorb this increase within their budgets. The timing of this debt was questioned since the implications of the School Project debt has not yet been fully realized in the tax rate. Is this the correct time to move forward with this particular Capital project? The proposed addition will add 12,000 square feet to the 4,000 square foot existing facility; this new 16,000 sq. ft. facility is the recommended size by the granting authority for a \$1.8 million dollar grant approval. The cost of staffing and operating this size Library is estimated to be almost double the current yearly cost of \$150,000. Finally, in regards to the Library, the cost cannot be funded inside of our Proposition 2 ½ limit and must be voted as a Debt Exclusion in the form of a ballot vote. This vote would be scheduled before the deadline approval date of May 2005 in order to receive the above mentioned State Grant.

Ultimately, the taxpayers and citizens of Douglas will vote and decide on these matters.

*****ARTICLES FOR TOWN MEETING*****

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| 1. Library Construction Project | 7. Engineering for Route 16 Project |
| 2. Re-codification of Zoning Bylaw | 8. Payment to School for engineering of Route 16 Project |
| 3. Amend Zoning Bylaw – Rezone and Amend existing Zoning Map | 9. Reallocation of Funding Source |
| 4. Transfer of Land for Route 16 Project | 10. Accounting Software |
| 5. Acceptance of Laurel Heights – Jepherson Drive | 11. Part Time Clerical Wages for Water & Sewer Department |
| 6. Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School Budget | 12. Salary Adjustments |
| | 13. Reserve Fund |

Article 1. Library Construction Project:

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money to pay costs of constructing an addition to the Simon Fairfield Public Library, and also to pay costs of remodeling, reconstructing, making extraordinary repairs, and to furnish and equip the Simon Fairfield Public Library; including the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine whether this appropriation should be raised by taxation, by transfer from available funds, by borrowing or otherwise, provided, however, that no amounts shall be borrowed or expended hereunder, except for such amounts as are necessary to pay for the costs of designing the improvements described herein, unless and

until the Town shall have voted to exclude the amounts required to repay any bonds or notes authorized hereunder from the limitations imposed by Chapter 59, § 21C of the General Laws (Proposition 2 ½); or to take any other action relative thereto.

Finance Committee: Not recommend

See explanation in message above.

Article 2. Re-codification of the Douglas Zoning Bylaws:

To see if the Town will vote to re-codify the Douglas Zoning Bylaws in their entirety as originally petitioned by the Master Plan Implementation Committee and subsequently modified by the Planning Board during the Public Hearing process for the petition (copies available for public inspection at the Town Clerks Office), or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee voted to give no recommendation.
This article has no financial implication.

Article 3. Amend Zoning Bylaw - Rezone and Amend existing Zoning Map:

To see if the Town will vote to amend its Zoning Bylaw to rezone and amend the existing Zoning Map of the Town of Douglas as follows:

By removing the following area from the Commercial and RC-II District and establishing the same as an Industrial (I) District:

The area bounded westerly by the Town Line with the Town of Webster, easterly by the area currently designated and zoned as SFOS (State Forest Open Space), northerly by the northern side of the presently existing highway layout for Route 16 (Webster Street), and southerly by a line running parallel to the northern side of the presently existing highway layout for Route 16 (Webster Street) a distance of 5,280 feet (1 mile) due south from said highway layout, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee voted to give no recommendation.
This article has no financial implication.

Article 4. Transfer of Land for Route 16 Project:

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the transfer of land shown on a plan on file at the Worcester County Registry of Deeds as Plan Book 811, Plan 47 and further shown as "Parcel A" on said plan from the control of the Douglas School Department to the Douglas Highway Department, for general municipal purposes or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

This vote, while retaining the land as Town property, gives control to the Highway Department. This is required by the State to expend Grant funds for improving drainage and safety and add turning lanes to the High School.

Article 5. Acceptance of Laurel Heights - Jepherson Drive:

To see if the Town will vote to accept as a public way "Jepherson Drive" as shown on the plan entitled "Layout Plan of Jepherson Drive" in Douglas, MA, property owned by White Development Corp, Auburn, MA which plans are dated October 2, 2002, prepared by Guerriere & Halnon, Inc. Whitinsville, MA, and laid out by order of the Board of Selectmen and filed with the Town Clerk, and will further vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by gift, purchase or eminent domain an easement to use said way for

all purposes for which public ways are used in the Town of Douglas, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee will vote and give recommendation at Town Meeting.

The Town will determine if any future costs are likely to be incurred if road construction does not meet appropriate standards.

Article 6. Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School Budget:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$61,612 to meet the Town's assessment to the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School Budget, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

A majority of B.V.R.V.T.H.S. members voted to approve the FY05 budget presented in May. Douglas must fulfill it's obligation to fund at the level approved by the majority.

Article 7. Engineering for Route 16 Project:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$16,200 to pay for engineering services for the Route 16 Project, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The Engineering/ design services for the improvements to Route 16 project involving the turning lanes and drainage changes are in excess of the previous estimate.

Article 8. Payment to School for engineering of Route 16 Project:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$52,000 to the School Department for reimbursement of the payment for engineering services related to the Route 16 project, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The Town, in order to secure over \$900,000 in Grant funds, opted in 2001 to request and borrow money from the School Revolver funds for design of the project with the stipulation that it be repaid. The Town was required to pay for the design before being allotted the Grant.

Article 9. Reallocation of Funding Source:

To see if the Town will vote to amend the funding source for Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Annual Town Meeting of May 17, 2004 by rescinding the transfer of \$95,000 from Fund Balance Reserved and authorizing the transfer of an additional \$95,000 from Free Cash, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The source of funds was misidentified as revenue at the FY05 Annual Town Meeting and this correctly changes the source to Free Cash.

Article 10. Accounting Software:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$70,000 for the purchase of Accounting Software, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The financial software for the Town will be updated and will add more integration possibilities between the Town and the School; saving time, effort and improving accounting format.

Article 11. Part Time Clerical Wages for Water & Sewer Department:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$5,522 for part time wages for clerical support for the Water & Sewer Department, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The Town is providing support to an Enterprise Fund and the costs should be reflected as an expense to that Fund.

Article 12. Salary Adjustments:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$3,009 to the following General Fund Salary Accounts:

Senior Center Director Salary	\$446
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Outreach Coordinator	\$565
Senior Center Clerical	\$356
Health Agent Salary	\$336
Assessors Lister	\$537
Highway Clerical	\$769
TOTAL	\$3,009

or take any other action in relation thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The amounts reflect mathematical errors and oversight for 4 categories. The Health Agent Salary is considered a Stipend and remains a policy issue as to whether these type of salaries should change as a result of Personnel Board recommendations, COLA, etc.

13. Reserve Fund Transfer:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$12,000 to the Reserve Fund, or take any other action in relation thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend

The Reserve Fund has been reduced in the early part of this fiscal year due to the unforeseen circumstances of the School Audit requested by the Board of Selectmen. These funds should be replaced for the possible remaining needs of the year.



Town of Douglas
29 Depot Street
Douglas, MA 01516

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RESIDENT

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Douglas High School Auditorium