

**TOWN OF DOUGLAS
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
VOTER INFORMATION BULLETIN
Monday, November 17, 2025
Douglas High School Auditorium
7:00 PM**

FINANCE COMMITTEE MESSAGE

Fellow Citizens,

In the months that follow the annual town meeting in May various expenses and other financial issues arise that must be dealt with in the fall, and many of the articles on this warrant are of that nature.

We encourage you to read the warrant carefully, and we look forward to a productive town meeting on November 17th.

We value your input, and as we look ahead to working on the budget and the town meeting in May, we encourage you to attend or watch the meetings of your various town boards and committees.

Sincerely,
Your Finance Committee

Dick Vandenberg, Chairman	
Robert Leonardi, Vice Chair	Michael Hutnak
Howard D'Amico	Sandy Kuipers
Carol Gogolinski	Heather Morin
Ryan Hogan	Lynne Mussulli

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Please keep in mind, Town Meeting is a legislative session, and registered voters in town are the legislators. Some articles at this Special Town Meeting have the potential to increase attendance beyond the capacity of the auditorium. As such, registered voters will be given priority seating in the auditorium, while non-registered voters will be directed to the cafeteria. If and when space is available, non-registered voters will be invited into the auditorium. **Please plan to arrive 30 minutes early to expedite the start of the meeting.** Thank you!

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Article 1.	Citizens Petition - Adopt a Right to Farm Bylaw
Article 2.	Citizens Petition - Create an Agricultural Commission
Article 3.	Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Transfers / Amendments
Article 4.	Capital Improvement Supplemental Budget
Article 5.	FY26 Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund Budget Amendment
Article 6.	Waterways / Douglas Dive Rescue Team Account
Article 7.	Zoning Bylaw Amendment / Warehouse Overlay District
Article 8.	Deed in Lieu of Tax Foreclosure / 67 Gilboa Street
Article 9.	Cemetery Commission / Signs
Article 10.	Demolition of 19 Main Street Parcel 198-4
Article 11.	Demolition of 103 Shore Road Parcel 300-18
Article 12.	Demolition of 104 Main Street Parcel 171-24

Article 1: Citizens Petition / Adopt a Right to Farm Bylaw

To see if the Town will vote to adopt a Right to Farm Bylaw as printed in the warrant; or take any other action relative thereto.

Petition to Adopt a Right to Farm Bylaw

Town of Douglas, Massachusetts

We, the undersigned, qualified voters of the Town of Douglas, petition the Selectmen to put the following article on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting of _____.

"To see if the Town will vote to adopt the following Right to Farm Bylaw under the authority of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 21 and Chapter 40A, Section 3.

The purpose of this bylaw is to reaffirm the Town's commitment to agriculture, support local farmers and small landowners, and protect agricultural operations from nuisance complaints, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A and c. 243, § 6.

Proposed Town Meeting Article:

Right to Farm Bylaw

Section 1. Purpose and Intent

The Town of Douglas hereby adopts this Right to Farm Bylaw pursuant to Article 89 of the Massachusetts Constitution and in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 21 and Chapter 40A, Section 3. This bylaw is intended to reaffirm the Town's support for agriculture and farming and to notify residents that Douglas is a Right to Farm community. This bylaw seeks to maintain and preserve agricultural lands, promote agricultural-based economic opportunities, and protect the rights of commercial farmers and residents engaged in hobby farming for enjoyment, education, and/or self-sufficiency.

Section 2. Definitions

"Farming" or "agriculture" shall include, as defined in M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A, farming in all of its branches and the cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, the production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural or horticultural commodities, the growing and harvesting of forest products upon forest land, the raising of livestock including horses, the keeping of horses as a commercial enterprise, the keeping and raising of poultry, swine, cattle and other domesticated animals used for food purposes, bees, and any forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer, who is hereby defined as one engaged in agriculture or farming as herein defined, or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with such farming operations, including preparations for market, delivery to storage or to market or to carriers for transportation to market. It shall also include on-farm

marketing and signage, storage, and processing, as well as disposal of agricultural byproducts.

“Farming” shall encompass activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- operation and transportation of slow-moving farm equipment over roads within the Town;
- harvesting of crops according to generally accepted agricultural practices;
- control of pests, including, but not limited to, insects, weeds, predators, and diseased organisms of plants and animals in regulation with state guidelines;
- conducting agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities including agritourism provided that the activities are related to marketing the agricultural output or services of the farm;
- tillage, cultivation, and application of manure, fertilizers, and pesticides;
- processing and packaging of the agricultural output of the farm and the operation of a farmer’s market or farm stand including signage thereto in accordance with local and state regulations;
- maintenance, repair, or storage of seasonal equipment, or apparatus owned or leased by the farm owner or manager used expressly for the purpose of propagation, processing, land management activities, or sale of the agricultural products;
- on farm relocation of earth and the clearing of ground for farming operations in accordance with local and state regulations;
- construction and use of farm structures and facilities for the purpose of: storage of animal wastes, farm equipment, pesticides, fertilizers, agricultural products; season extension or hydroponic production of agricultural product; sale of agricultural products; construction and maintenance of fences; all as permitted by local and state building codes and regulations.

Section 3. Right to Farm Declaration

The Right to Farm is hereby recognized to exist within the Town of Douglas. The right to farm includes the right to undertake agriculture and related activities in accordance with generally accepted agricultural practices, even if such operations may cause incidental noise, odors, dust, or other impacts traditionally associated with farming. Agricultural activities may occur on holidays, weekends, weekdays, and by day or night as needed. It is hereby determined that whatever impact may be caused to others through the normal practice of agriculture is more than offset by the benefits of farming to the neighborhood, community, and

society in general. The benefits and protections of the By-law are intended to apply to those in both commercial and non-commercial agricultural and farming operations and activities conducted in accordance with generally accepted agricultural practices. Moreover, nothing in this Right to Farm By-Law shall be deemed as acquiring any interest in land, or as imposing any land use regulation, which is properly the subject of state statute, regulation or local zoning law. This bylaw does not supersede private covenants.

This right includes, without limitation:

- Operation of farm machinery;
- Composting and manure management;
- On-farm processing and marketing of products in accordance with state and local laws;
- Raising of livestock to include but not limited to horses, cows, swine, ratites (such as emus, ostriches, and rheas), camelids (such as llamas and alpacas), bees, chickens, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, goats, and sheep, in accordance with state and veterinary welfare guidelines. (Note that the current Board of Health regulation on no more than 4 swine on less than 5 acres remains in effect. A special variance from the Board of Health is possible with a public hearing.);
- Agricultural waste management

Section 4. Protection from Nuisance Claims

No agricultural or farming activity conducted in accordance with M.G.L. c. 111, § 125A and consistent with M.G.L. c. 243, § 6 shall be considered a nuisance. Agricultural activities that are conducted in compliance with applicable state laws and regulations, and according to generally accepted agricultural practices, shall not be deemed nuisances due to changes in surrounding land use. This right to farm bylaw protects equally properties above and below 5 acres of deeded land.

Section 5. Notification to Buyers

Any person selling or transferring real property in Douglas shall include in the sale agreement and transfer documentation the following disclosure:

“It is the policy of the Town of Douglas to encourage the maintenance and expansion of agriculture and farming. This property is located within a town that has adopted a Right to Farm Bylaw. Agricultural activities occur in the town and may cause noise, odors, dust, and other effects associated with farming. Buying and residing in this town means acceptance of the potential impacts resulting from agricultural operations as consistent with the Town’s policy to support the Right to Farm.”

This notification shall also be provided by the Town to applicants for residential building permits.

Section 6. Conflict Resolution

In the event of disputes arising from agricultural operations, the parties are encouraged to seek resolution first through mediation or informal arbitration. Should valid issues continue, a formal complaint may be submitted to the Board of Health and the Animal Inspector for further investigation. Should there be a valid concern noted by the Animal Inspector, the Board of Health will take steps to help the property owner in remedying the issue and provide educational resources. Should valid issues continue without the property owner fixing or attempting to fix the problems, the Board of Health may decide on further action at a public hearing. If there are multiple non-viable complaints where documentation by the Animal Inspector has shown there to be no problem, the property owner will be given a written record of all complaints and reports to determine if they wish to open a civil case for harassment. Should an Agricultural Commission Board be created in the Town of Douglas, this board would take over the handling of agricultural related complaints from the Board of Health unless it is deemed the issue is a public health concern.

Section 7. Severability

If any part of this bylaw is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the remainder.

Section 8. Effective Date

This bylaw shall take effect upon approval at Town Meeting, approval by the Attorney General, and proper publication.

Supporting State Statutes Referenced

- M.G.L. c. 40A, § 3
- M.G.L. c. 128, § 1A
- M.G.L. c. 243, § 6
- M.G.L. c. 111, § 125A
- M.G.L. c. 40, § 21
- Article 89 of the Massachusetts Constitution"

The Finance Committee makes no recommendation on this article. If this article passes, there will be minimal financial impact on the town.

Article 2: Citizens Petition / Create an Agricultural Commission

To see if the Town will vote to create an Agricultural Commission as printed in the warrant; or take any other action relative thereto.

Petition to Create an Agricultural Commission

Town of Douglas, Massachusetts

We, the undersigned, qualified voters of the Town of Douglas, petition the Selectmen to put the following article on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting of _____.

“To see if the Town will vote to establish a municipal Agricultural Commission in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8L.

Purpose and Justification:

Agriculture is a vital component of Douglas’s heritage, economy, and land use. The creation of an Agricultural Commission will:

- Support local farmers, small landowners, and hobby farmers;
- Promote agricultural economic development;
- Protect and encourage agricultural land use;
- Educate the public on agricultural issues;
- Serve as a resource and advocate for farmers in municipal matters.

This Commission will be a proactive body representing the farming community in Douglas and will act as a liaison between farmers and town boards.

Proposed Town Meeting Article

Agricultural Commission Establishment Bylaw:

The Town of Douglas hereby votes to establish an Agricultural Commission under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 40, § 8L. The purpose of the Agricultural Commission shall be to represent the Douglas farming community, promote agricultural activities and enterprises, mediate conflicts involving agriculture, and support municipal decisions that sustain agricultural resources.

The Commission shall:

- Serve as a local voice advocating for farmers, farm businesses, and farm interests;
- Promote agricultural-based economic opportunities in Douglas;
- Educate the public on farming practices and the value of local food production;
- Be responsible for the drafting and implementation of any livestock animal regulations;

- Be responsible for complaints from citizens against commercial or hobby farms;
- Educate the citizens on Douglas's Right to Farm Bylaw and good animal and agricultural practices;
- Act in an advisory capacity to town boards, committees, and departments on issues involving agriculture.

The Commission shall consist of five (5) members appointed by the Select Board for staggered three-year terms. Initial terms shall be adjusted so that not more than two appointments expire in any year. The majority of the Commission shall be actively engaged in farming or have a background in agriculture. The Select Board may appoint up to two associate (non-voting) members, especially youth or non-farming residents with an interest in agriculture. Members of the Commission shall not be voting members of any other Town Board or Commission.

The Agricultural Commission may, with Select Board approval, apply for, accept, and expend grants or gifts to further its mission."

The Finance Committee makes no recommendation on this article. If this article passes, there will be minimal financial impact on the town.

Article 3: Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Transfers /Amendments

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, and or transfer from available funds such sums of money as are necessary to fund the following amendments to Article 2 of the Annual Town Meeting of Monday, May 5, 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

Increase Selectmen Expenses	\$10,000
Increase Town Audit	\$4,000
Increase Zoning Board of Appeals Expenses	\$2,000
Increase Public Building Maintenance Expenses	\$15,000
Increase Town Report Expense	\$1,000
Increase Town Hall Office Expenses	\$3,000
Increase Police Wages	\$25,000
Increase Fire Expenses	\$10,000
Increase Tree Warden Expenses	\$50,000
Increase Highway Admin Expenses	\$15,000
Increase Highway Maintenance Expenses	\$15,000
Increase Streetlighting Expenses	\$3,500
Increase Board of Health Wages	\$1,210
Increase Board of Health Expenses	\$2,500
Increase Animal Inspection Wages	\$3,447
Increase Animal Inspection Expenses	\$1,000
Increase COA Wages	\$8,500
Increase Library Expenses	\$5,000
Decrease Police Cruisers	\$15,000
Decrease Highway Wages	\$50,000
Decrease Library Wages	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$105,157

Explanation: This article authorizes routine financial transactions that have occurred since town meeting in May.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 4. Capital Improvement Supplemental Budget

To see if the Town will vote to approve the following as submitted by the Capital Improvement Committee and to raise and appropriate, and or transfer from available funds the sum of **\$905,400** to fund the following Capital Projects; or take any other action relative thereto.

Highway Dept. Hotbox and all associated costs	\$50,000
Ductless Replacement for Historical Records Area and all associated costs	\$4,000
Fire Station Repairs/Improvements – Amend Art. 14 11/18/24 STM to include building system repairs and upgrades; including electrical and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and any design and/or general contracting services required to complete those repairs and upgrades and all associated costs.	\$763,900
Ambulance and Equipment Purchase Amend Art. 10 5/5/25 ATM and all associated costs	\$60,000
Highway Trailer Purchase (currently being leased by Highway Dept.)	\$27,500
Total	\$905,400

The funds necessary for this article shall include a transfer in the amount of \$59,694 from Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation, and the following transfers from previously approved capital projects, with the remainder transferred from free cash as noted:

PO/Sr. Ctr. Parking Lot	Art. 10 ATM 5/2/22 & Art. 5 STM 5/6/24	\$14,550.89
Municipal Ctr. B/U Generator	Art. 10 ATM 5/6/19 & Art. 10 ATM 5/15/21	\$61,270.85
Muni. Ctr. Roof Project	Art. 10 ATM 5/15/21, Art. 10 ATM 5/1/23 & Art. 2 STM 11/6/23	\$32,986.36
Post Office 10 Ton HVAC	Art. 10 ATM 5/16/24	\$12,825.00
Muni. Ctr. HVAC Units	Art.10 ATM 5/6/24	\$36,110.00
Police Cruisers	Art. 2 ATM 5/6/24	\$11,607.77

Fire Station Elec. Upgrade	Art. 10 STM 11/8/21	\$208,741.82
FD/EMS Lucas CPR Device	Art.2 STM 11/18/24	\$306.00
Highway Department Lawn Mowers	Art. 10 ATM 5/6/24	\$2,506.00
Transfer from Previously Approved Projects		\$380,904.69
Transfer from Ambulance RRA		\$59,694.00
Transfer from Free Cash		\$464,801.31
Total Transfer from all Sources		\$905,400

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to fund items that are consistent with the recommendations of the Capital Improvement Committee.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 5. FY26 Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund Budget Amendment

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$144,000** from Water/Sewer Retained Earnings to fund the following amendments to Article 6 of the Annual Town Meeting of Monday, May 5, 2025; or take any other action relative thereto.

Expenses	\$132,000
Capital	\$12,000
Total	\$144,000

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to transfer money from the Water/Sewer Retained Earnings account to supplement Article 6 of the May Town meeting.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 6. Waterways – Douglas Dive Rescue Team Account

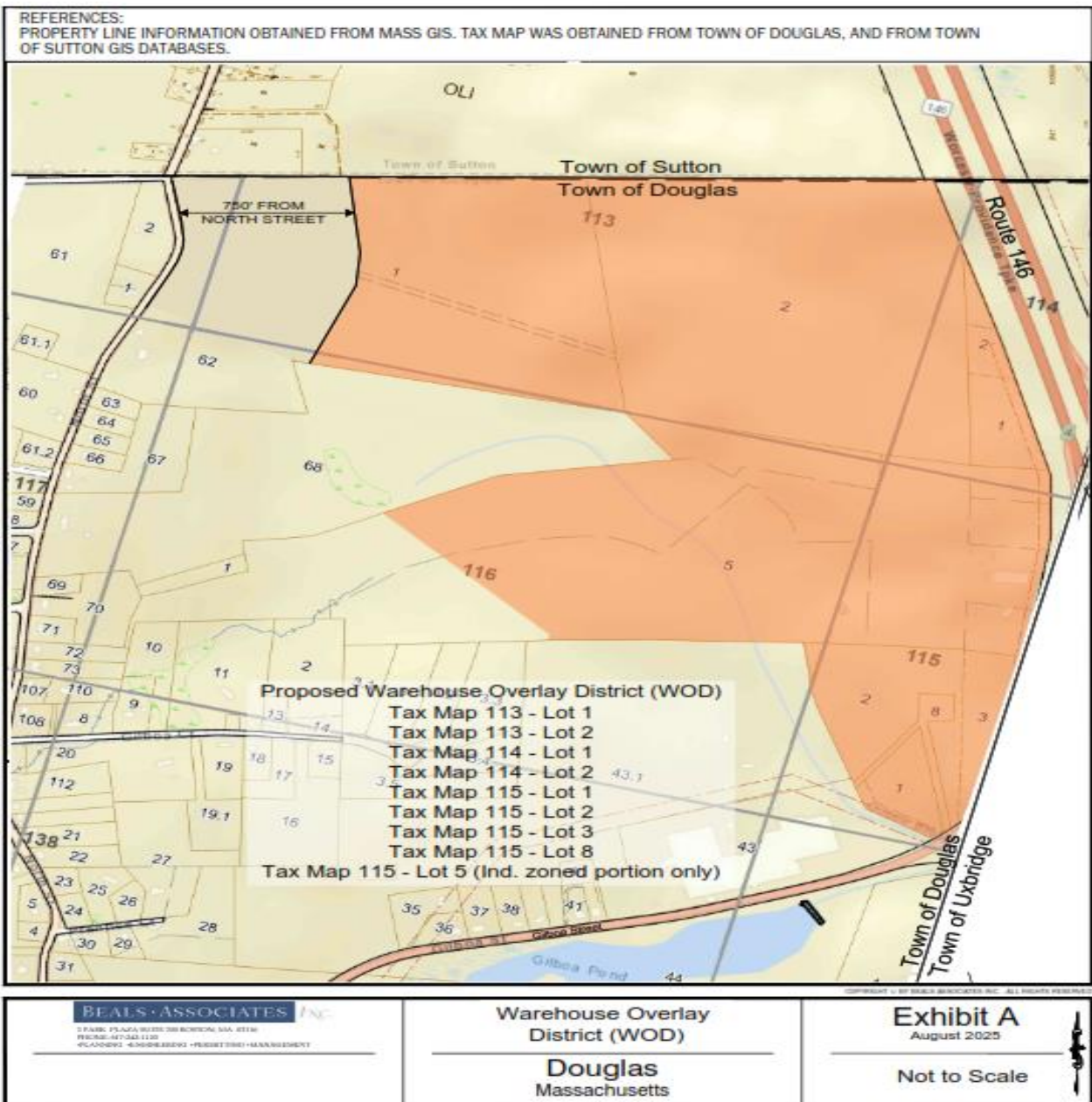
To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$8,000** from the Waterways Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Account for the purpose of funding equipment and maintenance/repairs pertaining to the dive rescue boats and dive rescue/water rescue activities; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to transfer funds for reasons described in the warrant.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 7. Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Warehouse Overlay District

To see if the Town will vote to consider amendments to Section 2.2 “Overlay Districts”, Section 2.3 “Map”, Section 3.1.3 and Appendix A “Table of Use Regulations”, and Section 4.1.3 and Appendix B “Table of Dimensional Regulations” of the Zoning Bylaws by creating the Warehouse Overlay District over Parcel 115-8, Parcel 115-5, Parcel 115-3, Parcel 115-2, Parcel 115-1, Parcel 114-2, Parcel 114-1, Parcel 113-2 and a portion of Parcel 113-1. Taken together, the above parcels are commonly referred to as “Pyne Sand & Stone”; or take any other action relative thereto.

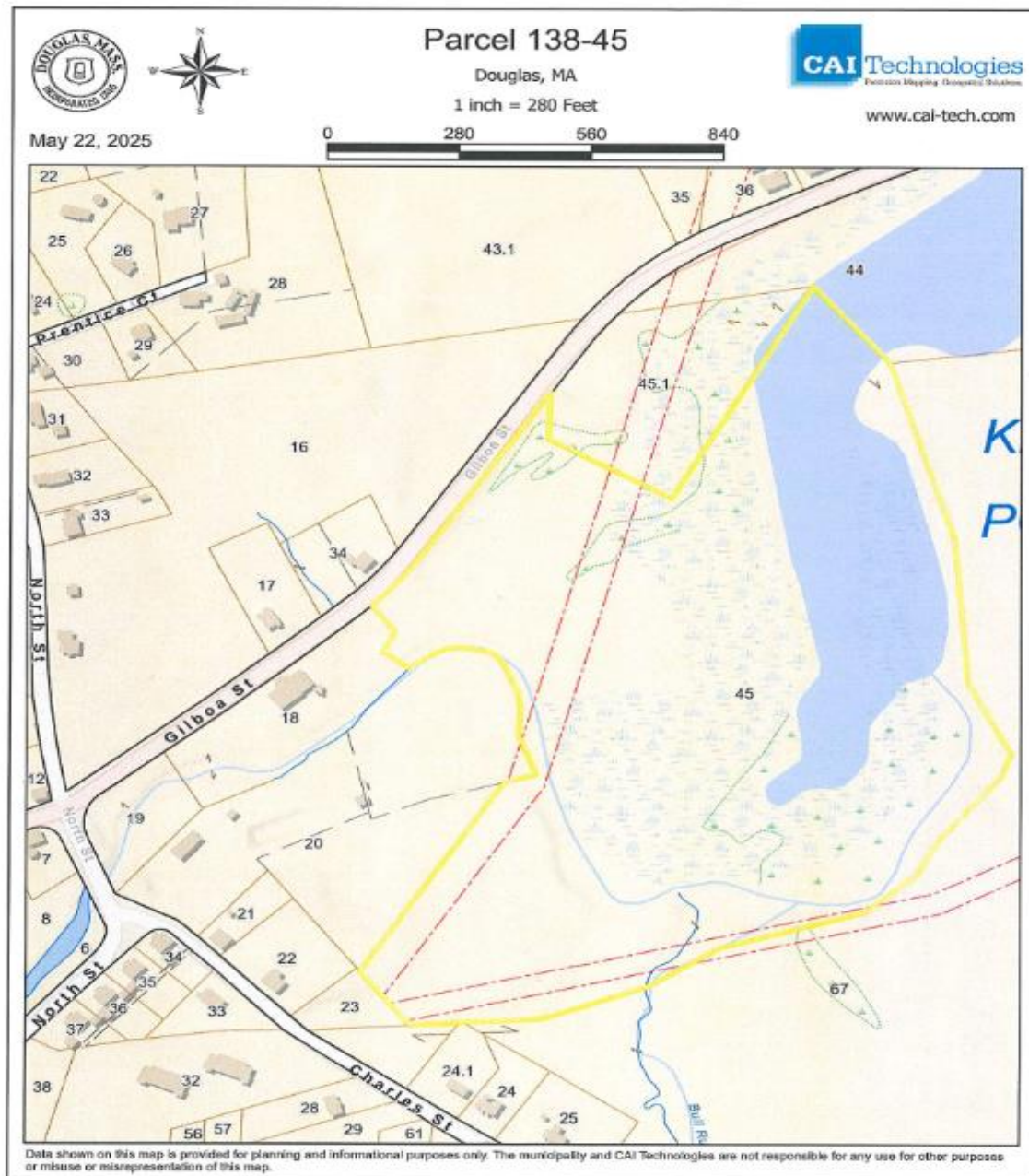


Explanation: This article authorizes the town to make changes to zoning requirements for the area near Route 146 and Gilboa Street in order to facilitate economic growth.

FinCom voted to recommend this article (6 yes, 1 abstain)

Article 8. Deed in Lieu of Tax Foreclosure – 67 Gilboa Street

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept a deed in lieu of foreclosure under MGL Chapter 60 Section 77C for the parcel of land and buildings located at **67 Gilboa Street**, and more specifically identified as **Assessors' Map [138], Parcel [45]**, and to approve the satisfaction of any and all outstanding taxes, fees, and charges owed to the Town related to said property; or take any other action relative thereto.



Explanation: The acceptance of this deed will extinguish the outstanding municipal taxes and charges on the property. The parcel will be treated as a tax possession parcel and can be later sold or repurposed by another town meeting vote.

FinCom voted to recommend this article (4 yes, 3 abstain)

Article 9. Cemetery Commission / Signs

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$4,540** from the Sale of Lots Receipts Reserved for Appropriation account, for the purpose of purchasing identifying signage and accompanying mounting posts for Douglas Center Cemetery, Pine Grove Cemetery (Cemetery St.) and South Douglas Cemetery (South St.); or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to transfer funds for reasons described in the warrant.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 10. Demolition of 19 Main Street Parcel 198-4

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$50,000** from free cash for the demolition of structures located at 19 Main Street, parcel 198-4, including environmental remediation, demolition and disposal costs; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to fund the demolition of a building that has been deemed structurally unsound and poses a risk to public safety.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

Article 11. Demolition of 103 Shore Road Parcel 300-18

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$50,000** from free cash for the demolition of structures located at 103 Shore Road, parcel 300-18, including environmental remediation, demolition and disposal costs, in accordance with the order of the Land Court; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: After years of litigation concerning zoning and building code violations at this property, the legal process has concluded. The courts have issued a final demolition order and all appeals have been exhausted. This article authorizes the town to proceed with demolition in order to resolve this long-standing issue, and ensure the property is brought into compliance with town regulations.

FinCom voted to recommend this article (5 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain)

Article 12. Demolition of 104 Main Street Parcel 171-24

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$200,000** from free cash for the demolition of structures located at 104 Main Street, parcel 171-24, including environmental remediation, demolition and disposal costs; or take any other action relative thereto.

Explanation: This article authorizes the town to fund the demolition of a building that has fallen into disrepair and is unsafe. The necessary repairs to the building would be cost-prohibitive for the town.

FinCom voted unanimously to recommend this article (7 yes, 0 no)

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Town of Douglas
29 Depot Street
Douglas, MA 01516



CURRENT RESIDENT
DOUGLAS, MA 01516