

Article 4: Citizen's Petition, Amend By-Laws Chapter Section 1 Recording of Public Meetings

Youtube is an incredible tool for democracy that allows for automatic captioning, translation and transcription. It also offers indexing, filtering, and search over transcript text. It can speed up video allowing residents and town officials to comprehend meetings in half the time.

Such features can both save town officials' time listening to meetings and save residents' time exercising their rights and duties. Recording all meetings will make our government more accessible to parents, working people, the hearing-impaired, the immunocompromised, and non-english speakers in addition to making our town officials more efficient and productive.

The recording equipment costs to enable such access are minimal, requiring \$2268 in one-time IT expenditure that already fall under the "Town Website Upgrade" and "Computer Servers/Workstation Replacement" Free Cash appropriation. Uploading the videos is a simple process that even a child can accomplish and would require no more than 1 hr per week of town official time in order to comply with this bylaw.

Like other by-laws covering government procedures, no enforcement mechanism is specified and de facto, the only mechanism of enforcement is the very high hurdle of recall. The Selectboard and Fincom believe residents have no desire for meeting recordings but passing this article would demonstrate otherwise. They recommended that the Bylaw Committee consider this action, but Town Meetings are far more deliberative and democratic. Law-making is an adaptive, agile, iterative, learning process and if this by-law creates any operational issues, the Selectboard can always call a special town meeting to amend the law and fix them. Government by its very nature is slow and needs a nudge occasionally by its citizens. Please give it a nudge and vote in favor of Article 4.

Article 10: Citizen's Petition to Appropriate to the Schools Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Appropriations

Democracy, in general and specifically our town's charter, separates powers between the executive branch, i.e. the Selectboard, and the legislative branch, Town Meeting, for a very good reason, because errors and biases are more likely to be caught when power is spread across many sets of eyes and minds. For many years now, Town Meeting has rubber-stamped the Selectboard's proposed budget and we have suffered the adverse consequences from this overconcentration of power. It doesn't have to be this way.

Maynard's government is not an oligarchy of those very few residents able to make the time commitment required to be a Selectboard member. By our charter, The Selectboard is a budget advisor NOT the budget authority. Ultimate budget authority rests with Town Meeting which can be far more democratic, accessible and representative of the will of our residents and this article is a call for Town Meeting to not be a rubber-stamp and to exercise its lawful budget authority to rectify the mistakes and biases contained inside the Selectboards budget proposal

Article 10 (Continued)

Among the errors in the Selectboard's proposals is the mismanagement of free cash in Article 8 that will lead to significant financial losses in real (inflation adjusted) dollar amounts. Our Stabilization fund has an effective annual interest rate of 1.85%. Inflation is now at a rate of 8.3% growth per year. Effectively we are losing roughly 6% per year to inflation in this fund and we are paying our bank just to hold our money for us. If this inflation were to continue, \$100000 invested today into stabilization funds would only be worth \$53861 a decade from now in real inflation adjusted dollars. A far more prudent financial policy would be to invest this money towards finding new revenue generating or cost reducing opportunities.

The remaining unfunded items on the school's wishlist accomplish just that. Included in these unfunded items are an athletic trainer to avoid paying other towns EMT's for required services as is current practice, an athletic director experienced in running athletic sponsorship programs and field maintenance of which very little expertise currently exists in the schools, clerical services to document and apply for reimbursements from the federal government for certain special education services, and finally recess support to allow our teachers 30 more minutes of class time today which stand a very good chance of mitigating our out of control out-of-district education costs as detailed in the mailed meeting packet.

The town executive branch including the Selectboard suffers from a common bias that prevents it from seeing benefits from funding the schools. It is quite common for managers to have a biased favoritism towards departments and employees that they themselves have hired or supervise. This bias is quite apparent when on multiple occasions observable on Youtube, the executive branch utilized bad faith, bait and switch negotiation tactics with the schools when negotiating the very budget proposal they bring before us today. This is why separation of powers is essential, as the legislative branch, Town Meeting, has a far less biased view of the town and can mitigate the excesses of the executive branch.

In addition, there are inconsistencies in how the executive branch has dealt with Town Meeting as this free cash bonanza that they are asking us to appropriate today was funded largely by school budget cuts that the Special Town Meeting approved last fall. Last fall, at a Special Town Meeting, Article 10, the Selectboard was pleading poverty, claiming that school budget cuts were necessary to balance the budget and accommodate revenue lost to the pandemic. Yet, now when those fears have proven to be unfounded and we enjoy an embarrassment of free cash riches, they suddenly list multiple reasons why Town Meeting cannot restore the free cash which the executive branch de facto pillaged from the schools.

None of the reasons the selectboard lists are borne out by the evidence. The town has ample lines of credit to respond for emergencies that unlike the stabilization funds don't hemorrhage money every year to inflation. Furthermore, there are numerous towns with higher bond ratings than Maynard that also have a significantly lower stabilization fund / operating budget ratio. In fact, any investor with even a smidgeon of financial experience, would look dimly on what would be our poor financial decision to pay our bank 6% real, inflation adjusted interest to take our money off our hands when in fact they should be paying us for that privilege. They would look more favorably instead should we decide to invest our money into actions with a very high chance to generate new revenues or cost reductions such as those proposed by the schools. Please opt for the latter option and vote yes on Article 10.