

Warrant Article Questionnaire Citizen Petitions Articles

Section III – Questions with Response Boxes – To Be Completed by Petition Sponsor

Article # 29	Date Form Completed: 09/18/2019
Article Title: Adjust Housing Density and Residential Parking Regulations in the Downtown Mixed-Use District	
Sponsor Name: Ganesh Ramachandran & Randy Jackson	Email: Natickgram@gmail.com

Question	
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it is intended to be voted on by the Finance Committee.
Response	Motion A: <u>Move to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by replacing the text “; and” at the end of Article III-E, Section 2, subsection b-1-ii, with “.” and by deleting the entirety of Article III-E, Section 2, subsection b-1-iii, which reads</u> “iii. the total number of multi-family units shall not exceed the number computed by taking the: a. Gross Land Area of the parcel times the Maximum Percentage Building Coverage b. multiplied by the number of floors in the building c. multiplied by the portion of the Gross Floor Area attributable to residential uses in the building d. divided by the Gross Floor Area in the building, and e. divided by 2,500 The portion of the Gross Floor Area attributable to residential uses shall include i) corridors and common areas on residentially used floors, ii) storage areas for residential use, and iii) the proportional share of common corridors and common areas for all uses in a mixed-use building, and (iv) the square footage of residential units” Motion B: <u>Move to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by deleting the following text in Article V-D, Section 3, subsection b:</u> “In a DM district there shall be one (1) space for a studio apartment, two (2) spaces for a 1 or 2 bedroom unit, and three (3) spaces for units having three (3) or more bedrooms, all of such spaces to be provided on-site. (Art. 45 S.T.M. April 7, 1987)”

2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the required Motion?
Response	❖ Encourage a mix of housing types and sizes, at a range of affordable price points ❖ Increase housing options for single-person households, empty-nester couples, veterans, persons with disabilities, and long-term Natick residents who seek to downsize while remaining in Natick ❖ Encourage car-free, or minimal car ownership households proximate to the Natick Center Commuter Rail station to reduce new demand on traffic and parking ❖ Support new businesses with a walkable neighborhood that enlivens Natick Center and provides desirable restaurant and retail alternatives for residents and visitors. This article will achieve these objectives by removing a density formula that limits opportunities for beneficial development and re-development in our Town center, and by removing a requirement that promotes greater offsite parking than is required elsewhere in Natick.
3	What does the sponsor gain from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion?
Response	I do not have any commercial or equity interest from a positive action by Town Meeting on the motion. As a licensed planner certified by the American Planning Association, I believe it is also my professional responsibility to advocate for policies that are in the general interest of my community here in Natick
4	Describe with some specificity how the sponsor envisions how: the benefits will be realized; the problem will be solved; the community at large will gain value in the outcome through the accompanied motion?
Response	I envision a Natick Center with a rhythm of life beyond 9am-5pm, which offers the opportunity for the residents to live, work and thrive. I envision a transformation from a token “Downtown Mixed-use District” to a truly inclusive “Downtown Neighborhood” that provides a range of accessible and affordable housing choices for a town where more than 20% of residents are over 55 years of age. By providing opportunities for appropriately scaled, mix-use development, we encourage investment in both residential solutions for people with few housing choices, such as Natick’s seniors, people with disabilities, and young singles and couples who have limited choices if they want to remain in our community. In addition, by scaling back on-site parking requirements so they are not greater than what is required outside of the DMU, we do make DMU development more cost-effective and less automobile-dependent.

5	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations
Response	The proposed motion and its implementation will further the collective goals of the Town residents as established by the Natick 2030 Master Plan. As one of the Master Plan Advisory Committee members who helped shape the Master Plan over a 12-month period, I am confident that this proposed motion is aligned with the Master Plan.
6	Have you considered and assessed, qualified and quantified the various impacts to the community such as:
Response	I have not undertaken any quantitative analysis for this motion. However, as a planner and an urban designer I have led and facilitated downtown revitalization and neighborhood development efforts in towns such as Cambridge, MA, Somerville, MA, Dublin, OH, Mountain View, CA, Palo Alto, CA, Alexandria, VA among others – all of them grappling with similar issues of growth, housing affordability, traffic, and lack of sufficient smaller housing stock for the aging boomers and single-family households. While each of the above cities, towns and suburbs are unique in their own right, the article furthers “Smart Growth” principles advocated by the US Environmental Protection Agency, The American Planning Association, Congress of New Urbanism, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.
7	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion? To this point what efforts have been made to involve those participants who may be accountable, responsible, consulted or just advised/informed on the impacts of executing the motion?
Response	Community & Economic Development, Town of Natick; Downtown Business Owners; Local Developers and Natick Residents.
8	What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that: • Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process, that • Appropriate town Boards & Committees were consulted • Required public hearings were held
Response	I have already presented to the Board of Selectman and received a favorable response. I am scheduled to present to the Natick Affordable Housing Trust (of which I am a member) and to the Planning Board

9	Why is it required for the Town of Natick AND for the sponsor(s)?
Response	The recent fire has been devastating to the businesses that have lost their home. It's going to be extremely challenging to rebuild the site (and develop others) with current density restrictions. Furthermore, it will be a missed opportunity if rebuilding proposals end up adding to Town's luxury condo stock instead of enlivening the downtown with smaller, less car-dependent units that are accessible and affordable, and with the first-floor retail/restaurant establishments that are in public demand.
10	Since submitting the article petition have you identified issues that weren't initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	The article petition factors all pertinent issues that I am aware off.
11	What are other towns and communities in the Metro West area, or the Commonwealth of MA doing similar to what your motion seeks to accomplish
Response	Almost all "Housing Production Plans" developed for Metro West towns and communities (Wellesley 2018, Wayland 2016, Sudbury 2016, Southborough 2015, Ashland 2014), highlight need for housing options for single-person households, empty-nester couples, veterans, persons with disabilities, and long-term residents who choose to "age-in-place".
12	If this Warrant Article is not approved by Town Meeting what are the consequences to the Town and to the sponsor(s)? Please be specific on both financial and other consequences.
Response	If this Warrant Article is not approved, the current density regulations is likely to encourage the production of larger luxury condos in the Downtown Mixed-use District. Any developer who chooses to work with strict limits on unit density, will seek to maximize the as-of-right developable area with larger units, making them more suitable for households with school-age children increasing automobile traffic in the downtown area. Such developments will come at a deep societal cost of a missed opportunity to implement regulations that favor the production of smaller units compatible with the needs and budgetary limitations of long-term Natick residents who choose to "age-in-place", persons with disabilities and Veterans seeking permanent housing solutions.