



## Preparing to Pass an Article at Town Meeting

### 1. Do your homework:

- a) Get your Board's approval for your idea. You need it to move forward.
- b) Gather statistical data and be prepared to explain your rationale for the article.
- c) For example: **Property Tax Article**  
How many seniors are paying Real Estate Taxes in your community?  
Approximately how many seniors would be eligible for your program?  
How does your Town's senior property tax relief compare to neighboring towns?
- d) Decide what the potential impact will be financially to the Town.
- e) Determine who will back the article. What people will speak up to defend it?
- f) Who will oppose the article and why?

### 2. Types of Articles:

**a) Petition Article:** Local residents can sign a petition and submit the article to the Board of Selectmen. Check with your Town Clerk to see how many signatures are needed in your Town. Town departments usually submit articles through the Board of Selectmen in the form of a sponsored article.

**b) Sponsored Article:** The Council on Aging can submit an article to the Board of Selectmen to obtain their support for the article.

### 3. Check the time-frame for the opening of the warrant articles:

Each town holds their Annual and Special Town Meetings on different dates. The Town Clerk and Board of Selectmen can give you the proper date information.

**This date information is very important!** Once the closing date for warrant articles ends, no new articles can be submitted. In some cases special consideration from the Board of Selectmen will allow articles to be added, but the normal practice is not to allow articles after the warrant has been officially closed. In most communities the Finance Commission sends out a notice of the scheduled Public Hearing for all articles.

### 4. Obtaining support for the article:

Support for the Article is critical. Without strong support your article may not pass.

- a) Assign special volunteers to call supporters and give them the dates and times for all public hearings.
- b) Have other seniors who can not attend the meetings write letters of support for the article and send the letters to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Commission.

- c) Get the local press actively involved with the article. Create a human interest story. People like to hear stories about why the article is so important and who it will assist.
- d) Write an explanation of the Article in your monthly newsletter.
- e) Speak about the Article at your Friend's Meeting and other local Senior group meetings.
- f) Get as much positive press as possible.
- g) Get your Article on your local cable station.
- h) Always offer transportation to meetings. (Car pools, vans etc.)

#### **5. Determine when the Board of Selectmen will review the article:**

The Board of Selectmen normally reviews all articles before they go on to the Finance Commission. Your article will be placed on the agenda at a Board of Selectman's meeting. Call their office to get the date and time information.

In most cases the C.O.A. Director is responsible for making a presentation in reference to the article. Arrange for seniors to accompany you to the meeting. Their presence will be noted and recognized. Depending on their agenda time frame, some Boards of Selectmen like to hear from the seniors and seniors can become very vocal explaining just why they want the article to pass. Make sure that you speak to the press covering the meeting after your presentation.

#### **6. Determine when the Finance Commission schedules their public hearings:**

The Board of Selectmen will send their recommendations for all articles on to the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission will review all of the articles at their scheduled posted Public Hearings. In most Towns they send out a notice to all Town residents listing all of the articles and the dates of the Public Hearings. Their meetings are extremely important. Your supporters should attend and voice their strong support at all meetings. Most Finance Commissions hold two meetings.

The Finance Commission recommendations will make a big difference at the Town Meeting. In many cases the voters listen to the recommendations of the Finance Commission and then decide which way to vote.

In any case, it is wise to obtain the support of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Commission.

***Note: In a City, you ask the Mayor or City Manager and City Council to take action. You still need to do your homework and build support for action.***