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To: Reading Town Meeting members
From: Moderator Alan Foulds and Town Manager Bob LeLacheur
Date: March 26, 2020
RE: Plan for 2020 Annual Town Meeting

Greetings Fellow Reading Residents,

We have been working together to plan out the best approach to our Annual Town Meeting. This has involved state legislation passed recently that: allows more flexibility to set a meeting date, and approves some annual municipal requirements (such as authorizing revolving funds) and even to fund the Town and School budgets beyond July 1, 2020 in the event that Town Meeting has not yet met and passed a budget by that date.

Yesterday Governor Charlie Baker closed all public schools through May 4th, which is a date one week beyond our planned start for 2020 Annual Town Meeting. Thus, it is very likely that our Annual Town Meeting will be delayed. We are working with the Board of Health, Town Counsel and the Select Board to determine the best path forward on rescheduling Town Meeting safely and will advise you as soon as possible.

In the meanwhile, we have agreed to some changes and also have a plan to streamline the meeting in case we need to be done quickly.

First, the Moderator requests that all Reports to be given under Article 2 be sent to the Town Manager (townmanager@ci.reading.ma.us) in writing by Monday April 20th. This would include the State of the Town by Select Board Chair Mark Dockser, the Financial update from Finance Committee Chair Eric Burkhart, and the RMLD update from General Manager Coleen O'Brien and the Board of Commissioners. These written reports will be provided to Town Meeting members in advance of a meeting, saving considerable time and keeping personal exposures to a minimum.

Second, the Moderator, would like all instructional motions under Article 3 to be presented to the Moderator and Town Clerk (lgemme@ci.reading.ma.us) also by Monday April 20th in writing. These will also be provided to members in advance.

Third, the completed Warrant Report is now available online on the Town's website:

https://www.readingma.gov/sites/readingma/files/uploads/complete_2020_annual_town_warrant.pdf.

We would ask members to review this document thoroughly over the next few weeks so that Town Meeting may move at a brisk yet responsible pace. **Any questions or comments in advance of the meeting should be sent to the Town Manager by Monday April 20th.** Please include your name and Precinct number with any correspondence. The questions, comments and responses will be gathered and sorted by Warrant Article and replies will also be provided to Town Meeting members in advance. As soon as we can safely print and distribute hard copies of the Annual Warrant Report we will do so. If you have no way to access the report online, please email the Town Manager as soon as possible.

In case we need to meet in a bare minimum of time, we have divided up Town Meeting Articles into three groups, with the first group being most urgent to address and representing a 'Town Meeting light' version.

They include:

Priority #1 Articles

Article 4 – amending the Capital Plan last approved at November 2019 Town Meeting. This will allow current year and next year capital expenditures to be made.

Article 5 – amending the current year FY20 budget. There are some draft thoughts shown in the Warrant Report online, but as we explained to the Finance Committee the Covid-19 Town response is impossible to predict and amendments on the floor of Town Meeting are certain.

Article 10 – approve debt authorization for a Sturges Sewer Station improvement project. There are many debt authorizations in this Town Meeting Warrant, but this one is the most crucial.

Article 16 – Authorize FY21 Chapter 90 Expenditures – this will allow us to claim almost \$600,000 in road funds from the state.

Article 17 – adopt a budget for FY21.

Priority #2 Articles

Article 7 – Appropriate Funds into the OPEB Trust

Article 8 – Approve FY21 revolving funds (this may be done by state legislation pending)

Article 9 – Approve annual Affordable Housing Allocation Trust Plan

Article 11 – Approve debt authorization for Water system improvements at Gazebo Circle

Article 12 – Approve debt authorization for MWRA Water system loans for de-leading services

The remainder of the Articles are not crucial to be addressed at this Annual Town Meeting. The remaining debt authorization Articles may be left to do at November 2020 Subsequent Town Meeting.

We are at an unprecedented time in our community as we all struggle with the Covid-19 virus. The Town's website <https://www.readingma.gov/> is one resource to use to stay informed on impacts to the Town of Reading. Please also remember our neighbors, and reach out to help them, following safety protocols. If you know of anyone that needs assistance, please email the Town Manager or dial 911 if more urgent.

Town Meeting is a fundamental underpinning of our democracy in New England. While vitally important, Town Meeting will not be called until it is safe to do so. Please be well!