

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ARTICLE 17

QUESTION:

If, at the October 4, 2020 Special Town Meeting, Article 17 is "referred back" to the Select Board, as the Select Board has recommended, does the Select Board commit to bring the article back at the Spring 2021 Town Meeting without a new citizen's petition?

ANSWER:

The Select Board voted that the subject matter of Article 17 be referred to the Select Board and that the Select Board shall report back to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting or sooner.

QUESTION:

Why is it necessary to have all of the "Whereas" statements incorporated as part of the warrant article? A simple request as outlined in the "therefore" statement should be sufficient.

ANSWER PROVIDED BY PETITIONER:

Thanks for your questions. To respond to the first, it is my understanding that the "whereas" section posits a list of conditions to which the "be it resolved" section responds, as the natural outcome of those conditions. Considering systemic racism exists as a complex issue on both the macro and micro scales, we sought to thoroughly and adequately elaborate the premise so as to appropriately contextualize the broad scope of investigation that we outline in the "be it resolved" section. While the research undertaken by the Needham Unites Unites Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) Working Group will be focused on Needham and what lies within the scope of agency of our public institutions, our town does not operate in a vacuum, and what we see instantiated here is intrinsically influenced by the race and class dynamics of the greater Boston area and beyond. Racism and injustice in our town should be handled seriously and with specificity of intent; the language we use encourages specificity and accountability, should the town not live up to these obligations. Broader and less specific language requires broader and less specific action, and less accountability from town leadership. In short: we outline the complex issue in the "whereas" section to establish the scope of and undergird the desired response in the "be it resolved" section. We do not expect Needham town leadership to solve police brutality and de facto segregation; we do want town leadership to consider possible parallels to other towns and proactive measures we could take to better embody our values.

Additionally, this Article will serve as a historically significant document for our town that testifies to this moment in history, and we hope that Town Meeting will vote to name these root causes and affirm our town's values in response. We believe that affording the Town Meeting body the opportunity to officially voice its stance on this issue upholds and embodies the Democratic ideals of our town and country.

For more information, visit: <https://equaljusticeneedham.org/this-happens-here>

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