

Questions about the Town Manager's Report to Town Meeting

6/4/2020

Why are there some articles that occur in several Town Meetings such as Transportation Network Fees and the Senior Corps Program? Why do they remain on the list for multiple years? Are the amounts outstanding? Why are projects that are completed still on the list? What is the status of the listed project amount? Is the amount held for the project and will it be returned to Free Cash?

Response:

There are a number of items that are included in the Town Meeting Warrant as financial warrant articles rather than embedded in the operating budget. Typically, this is because the purpose for which the funds have been requested will not be complete in one fiscal year.

For example, the Transportation Network Fees are provided to the Town by the Commonwealth. They are dedicated to a specific purpose (pedestrian, bicyclist and roadway safety) and must be used for that purpose. The Town is in the process of securing agreements with various departments within the MBTA to create covered bike parking at commuter rail stations. When those agreements are reached, and there is sufficient funding built up to complete the work, the funds will be spent. The second example is the senior corps program, in which elderly and disabled homeowners may work for the Town in return for property tax relief. The intent of the program is to build up a sufficient reserve to serve a population of participants that ebbs and flows. There is no request for funding in FY2021, as there is a sufficient balance in prior articles.

The General By-law requires that the Town Manager report annually to Town Meeting on projects that are not complete. In order to keep Town Meeting informed, the report always includes a description of all articles passed since the prior Town Meeting, even for those that are complete.

The amount listed for each article is the appropriation approved by Town Meeting. When projects are complete, funds will be returned to Free Cash, CPA Free Cash, or Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings, depending on the source of the funds. On occasion, funds are reallocated by vote of Town Meeting from one article to another with a similar purpose. Finally, articles funded by debt that are not fully expended will simply not be borrowed.