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October 24, 2014

To: Town Meeting Members

From: Board of Selectmen

Re: October 27, 2014 Town Meeting, Article 6

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We are writing to explain the purpose of Article 6 of the October Town Meeting warrant because a few Town Meeting Members have asked questions about the article.

In 1954, with authorization from Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) took by eminent domain a parcel of 31.842 acres of land on Randolph Avenue for use as a municipal dump. Such land was used for the former Town dump/landfill for a few decades until it was capped and closed in the late 1990s. The Town has leased much of the land to Quarry Hills Associates, Inc. for use as a golf course. A few acres that were part of the parcel acquired in 1954 are not currently being utilized but are still designated to be used only for municipal dump purposes. In order for these acres to be used for any other purpose, Town Meeting must vote to transfer the land from the care, custody and control of the BOS for municipal dump purposes to the care, custody and control of the BOS for general municipal purposes.

The reason that the BOS submitted Article 6 to this Fall Town Meeting is that the Milton Animal League (MAL), which operates the animal shelter located at the Town Farm (Governor Stoughton property), has asked the BOS to identify an alternative site on which to locate a new animal shelter. The building that now houses the shelter at the Town Farm is in very poor condition and continues to deteriorate. MAL has raised a considerable amount of money for the construction of a new animal shelter. Whether the shelter could remain at the Town Farm is uncertain and, at best, subject to delay. Because the Town Farm land is held in trust for the benefit of the poor, the BOS, acting as trustees of the Governor Stoughton trust, would be required to obtain approval from the Office of the Attorney General and the Superior Court in order to sell or lease the land to the MAL.

The Town-owned land on Randolph Avenue has been suggested as a possible location for a new animal shelter. However, there is no guarantee that the land on Randolph Avenue will in fact be used for a shelter. Many issues need to be negotiated and worked out by the BOS and the MAL before a decision can be made. These issues include but are not limited to the allocation of financial obligations, the ownership of the building and the day-to-day operation of the shelter. The BOS and the MAL are working on a draft memorandum of understanding that would frame the subsequent discussions.

An animal shelter would require approximately one acre of land. There are no definitive plans at this time for the use of the remaining acres. Any future use of the property – whether for an animal shelter or something else – would be the subject of discussion and vote at public meetings. Thus, Article 6 is essentially a housekeeping article that would change the purpose for which the land can be used from one that is no longer contemplated (i.e., a municipal dump) to one that will enable the BOS to consider using a portion of the land for a new animal shelter and perhaps other purposes in the future. There is no point in the BOS and the MAL engaging in discussions for the use of land as a new shelter site if such land can only be used for a landfill.

We ask for a “YES” vote on the recommendation of the Warrant Committee under Article 6.