

**TOWN OF NORWELL**



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**WARRANT FOR SPECIAL TOWN MEETING**

Monday, May 8, 2023

At Seven Thirty O'clock in the Evening  
At the Norwell Middle School, Henry E. Goldman Gymnasium, Main Street

**ARTICLE 7:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds and/or borrow the sum of \$5,000,000, or any other amount, to pay costs of purchasing the condominium office building located at 93 Longwater Circle, Unit 2, Norwell, MA. for use as a new Town Hall, as well as to pay costs of furnishing and fitting-out the building, costs of moving from the existing Town offices to this building and all other costs incidental to accomplish the purposes of this Article; and further to authorize the Select Board to acquire said property by purchase, or otherwise, or take any other action relative thereto.

Requested by the Select Board

**The Advisory Board voted to favorably recommend this Article, 6 members voted in the affirmative and 2 members abstained.**

**The current building used as Town Hall is seventy-three (73) years old and was deemed insufficient for use as a school over 40 years ago. One third of the building is in disrepair and has not been utilized since Town Hall moved from the Cushing Center to 345 Main Street in 1984/1985 (38 years ago). The building has been in a failing condition for well over a decade. A study was done back in 2003 and three additional studies have been conducted since 2010 regarding space needs and renovation. Options ranged from \$5 million to \$16 million when we were looking at scenarios to either combine or renovate Town Hall and School Administration years ago, in the end there was inadequate space to house both in either building. The February 2020 Special Town Meeting approved \$360,000 for design and engineering of renovations to the current Town Hall, at that time the total cost of the project was estimated at \$5 million. The project was delayed by COVID until 2021, when the Town engaged an owner's project manager and an architect. After examining the condition of the building, the consultants estimated the cost to bring the building into compliance with current codes to be between \$10 and \$13 million. This was partly attributed to the changes in the cost of construction and materials, but also to the difficulty in renovating a building with so many substandard systems and conditions.**

**The Select Board suggested prior to seeking additional funds, an assessment of the current Norwell commercial office space market should be done. Per Massachusetts General Laws, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in August 2022. This is required, as a municipality we are not able to "shop" on the open market, we must solicit bids.**

The Town received one response from the owners of 93 Longwater Circle, a two story office condominium building constructed in 2006 consisting of 20,600 gross square feet of office and utility space. The owners allowed the Town to inspect the property over several visits by the Town's project manager, architect, facilities director, building inspector, health agent and public safety chiefs. The building is in good condition and meets all the Town's requirements. The building is fully accessible (there is an elevator) and meets all current building and fire codes (a path will be needed to make the patio in the rear fully accessible).

**The costs to repair identified conditions in the building are reasonable.**

**The concern has been expressed that the building is not centrally located. While it would be preferable to have a centralized location, no other existing owner of commercial office space responded to the RFP and the pool of existing office space with a footprint large enough to be utilized for a Town Hall is limited.**

**There is no suitable available office space in Norwell that is centrally located. A central location would require the Town to purchase privately owned land or use current open space. Either alternative will incur the added costs inherent in public construction, which would likely be *at least* three times more costly than the monetary request under this Article and require a debt exclusion or override.**

**This purchase can be done under the levy and will not require an override or debt exclusion. The owners and the Town have agreed to a purchase price of \$4,450,000 million. The additional money sought in the Article will address costs of relocation and updating the building. Funds included in previously approved Articles can also be used to address these costs. This office building would be an asset to the Town. The building could be sold after the bonds are callable, most likely after the typical 10-year mark. If the Town decides to construct a Town Hall at some point in the future, proceeds from the sale after the note is paid off, could be used to offset the cost of new construction.**

**The current Town Hall would need to be demolished. It is not suitable for any other use. It was built as a bomb shelter and a school seventy-three years ago. There are too many challenges to list in terms of any type of renovation or fit outs. The Select Board will present options to the Town, but ultimately it will be up to the residents to decide what they would like to do with this property moving forward.**

**The purchase of 93 Longwater Circle will finally address the longstanding need to provide suitable space for the Town to conduct its business. It is the last of your Town buildings to be addressed.**