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FACT POSITION PAPER:

2016 FALL SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLES 35 THROUGH 39

FACT is a non-partisan civic organization advocating for transparent, effective, and ethical decision-making in the government of Framingham.

FACT's goals are to:

- Provide useful, objective, research-based information to the public and policymakers about transparent and effective practices in local government;
- Represent the citizen's interests before policymakers; and
- Encourage citizens to vote and be actively involved in local government decisions

After thoughtful discussion and deliberation, FACT supports these positions on 2016 Fall Special Town Meeting articles sponsored by the Government Study Committee. The full text of these articles is in pages 18-20 of the Warrant, which can be found here: www.framinghamma.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=1324.

ARTICLE 35: Number of Town Meeting Members

All precincts deserve full and fair representation on Town Meeting, and voters deserve meaningful choices on the ballot when it comes to representation. Town Meeting currently falls short of these standards because it has a significant number of vacant seats, seats that are filled outside of the regular election process, and seats that are filled with single-digit vote counts. To promote greater voter choice, FACT believes that the full reduction in members should occur at the next municipal election, not staggered as proposed.

Although FACT believes six members per precinct would provide more balanced representation among precincts and increase accountability to voters, FACT supports this article as a first step toward that goal. Town Meeting can make further changes at in a future meeting and review other reforms, including changes to Standing Committees.

ARTICLE 36: Town Meeting Quorum

FACT supports this article.

ARTICLE 37: Amend General By-laws: Article III – Conflict of Interest

FACT would prefer a more enforceable conflict-of-interest measure for all town officials. However, we believe that this article represents an essential first step, and strongly support this article.

ARTICLE 38: Amend General By-laws: Article III, Section 1.4 and 1.13.6 – Winter Special Town Meeting

FACT supports this article. A winter town meeting will expedite town business that would otherwise be delayed until April or May and will help reduce the number of articles in the fall and spring town meetings.

ARTICLE 39: Amend General By-laws: Article III – Precinct Organization and Responsibilities

FACT believes that the having “Precinct Night,” a dedicated night for precinct meetings, provides a foundation for more well-informed town meeting members, greater accountability of Standing Committee representatives to precincts, stronger connection to precinct voters, and better representation of precinct interests. We support this article.