

March 2020 Town Meeting Ballot Issues - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Welcoming Hartford Ordinance (Article 26 on Town Meeting Ballot)

What is the Welcoming Hartford Ordinance?

- A local law governing the conduct of Town of Hartford officials' interactions with federal agencies with regard to communication of information on persons' citizenship and immigration status.

How is it different that the Hartford Police Department's existing "Fair and Impartial Policing Policy"?

- The existing Fair & Impartial Policing Policy is a departmental procure that applies only to the Police, and was developed uniformly with the State and other law enforcement agencies in Vermont. The Hartford Fair & Impartial Policing Policy is complaint with federal laws.
- The proposed Welcoming Hartford Ordinance applies to all Town officials, which means all employees including police officers, as well as elected and appointed members of boards and committees. The proposed ordinance is not compliant with federal laws.

Does the proposed Welcoming Hartford Ordinance conflict with federal law?

- Yes. It is in direct conflict with federal laws 8 USC §1373 and 8 USC §1644, which prohibit local governments from restricting communication of information regarding citizenship or immigrations status with federal immigration agencies.

But haven't these federal laws (8 USC §1373 and 8 USC §1644) been declared unconstitutional by the United States Courts?

- There have been constitutional challenges in other federal court jurisdictions, but it's the law of the land in Vermont.

What is the harm in attempting to protect undocumented persons from federal agencies?

- Because such protection is proposed to be provided by an Ordinance that directly conflicts with federal law, the Town is exposed to liability and the loss of federal funding.
 - By putting a Town employee in position to enforce a local law and knowingly violate a federal law, a hostile work environment is potentially created. The Town's liability insurance coverage does not protect the Town against such claims for damages when a local law is knowingly adopted in violation of federal law.
 - The Town typically receives project funding of over \$1 million each year from federal grants which require compliance with federal law. Without the ability to certify compliance, federal funding is denied. To complete the projects, the Town would have to replace federal grant revenue with local tax revenue equaling 10¢ or more on the property tax rate, or \$250 annually for an owner of a property assessed at \$250,000.

For additional questions, see presentation linked on Town website here: <https://www.hartford-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/2371/Welcoming-Hartford-Ordinance->

Climate Action Initiative (Article 25 on Town Meeting Ballot)

What would be required of the Town?

- By 2027 the Town would need to account for greenhouse gas emissions resulting from all Town activities on an annual basis. This includes direct GHG emissions like those from the operation of Town buildings or vehicles and infrastructure as well as indirect emissions like those resulting from purchased electricity and the extraction, production, and transportation of purchased materials. The Town will need to move away from the use of polluting fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy, energy efficient equipment, and, when necessary, emissions offsets to achieve carbon neutrality by 2027.

What does “carbon neutrality” mean?

- “Carbon neutrality” means annual zero net anthropogenic (human caused or influenced) CO₂ emissions by a certain date. By definition, carbon neutrality means every ton of anthropogenic CO₂ emitted is compensated with an equivalent amount of CO₂ removed (e.g. via carbon sequestration). For example, if a Town plow truck emitted X tons of CO₂ in a year, the Town would have to balance those emissions by taking X tons of CO₂ out of the atmosphere. This could be achieved by planting trees, investing in carbon free energy, or taking another action that lowers or avoids emissions by an equivalent amount. The Town could implement projects such as these or invest indirectly by purchasing carbon offsets.

How will we achieve it, and how much will it cost the Town?

- There are many, well understood actions that the Town can take to achieve carbon neutrality, like weatherizing its buildings and transitioning to low-emissions vehicles and equipment where feasible. In many cases, reducing energy demand (through conservation and efficiency measures) can lead to savings. There will be costs associated with making the transition to clean, efficient technologies as well. The solutions (technologies, etc.) available to the Town will likely improve in the coming years; i.e. more options can be expected and at a cost that makes them more economically feasible. Additionally, the Town plans to hire a consultant to advise it on the most cost-effective strategies for achieving the goal.
- The Town government saved \$46,000 on energy costs last year as a result of energy efficiency and solar, and these savings will grow as the Town does more to conserve energy and use cleaner, more efficient technologies.

For additional questions, see presentation linked on Town website here: <https://www.hartford-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/2828/Climate-Action-Warrant-Article-FAQs-long-version>

Municipal Pool Bond (Article 24 on Town Meeting Ballot)

What will the proceeds from the \$3,300,000 bond buy?

- A replacement outdoor pool at the existing Sherman Manning Pool location on the Hartford High School campus. The new pool design will incorporate some of the design features requested through community wide surveys, such as:
 - Zero entry (beach front design) pool to an 8ft depth.
 - Spray features within zero depth area.
 - Separate spray pad with deck features.
 - Lap swim area for exercise, lesson and general recreation play.
 - Slide feature into pool.
 - Deck shade structures with pool deck furniture.
 - New entry structure for access controls. Includes two family changing rooms to accommodate need for bathrooms when field house returns to late summer school usage.
 - Grassy areas surrounding pool deck space.
 - Rehabilitated filtration room with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access for staff and first aid.
 - Continued usage of field house during non-school operation.
 - Replaced perimeter fencing.

If approved, what are the ongoing annual operating costs for this pool?

- An average of \$200,000/year in debt service costs for 20 years
- Program costs of approximately \$100,000 would be resumed (these ceased when the former pool closed in 2017).
- At the current tax rate, these annual costs will approximately equal to 2¢ on the tax rate, or about \$50/year for the owner of a \$250,000 property

If approved, when would it be built?

- Bond proceeds would be available from the Vermont Bond Bank later this year. Construction would be coordinated with the School calendar and begin and be substantially completed in 2021, with a proposed opening in the Spring of 2022.

Who will be able to use the pool?

- It will be open to all.

For additional questions, see presentation linked on Town website here: <https://www.hartford-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/2369/Pool-Bond-Informational-Meeting-21320>

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Bond (Article 23 on Town Meeting Ballot)

What is Article 23 about?

- This year's Town Meeting warning will contain a warrant item for \$2,666,600 for the next set of public infrastructure improvements in the White River Junction's TIF District.

What are the voters voting on?

- The voters will be asked to approve the projects, and how the projects will be financed using new tax revenue generated by new private development in the TIF District.

What are the Projects?

- The projects include engineering, design, permitting and construction of public sidewalk, road, streetscape, lighting, water, stormwater improvement, and related costs for two public parking lots on South Main Street, and a roadway section along 87 and 101 Maple Street.

Is there more I need to know?

- Yes. The following link includes the official "Public Information Notice" and presentation which contain very important and detailed information about the proposed projects and financing.
<https://www.hartford-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/2830/TIF-2020-TIF-Project-Detailed-Public-Info-Notice-Update>