

Elements of a Complete Review in Preparation for Town Meeting

To be effective, Advisory needs to be thorough and prepared. Advisory needs to have carefully considered all the issues and angles that may raise concerns at Town Meeting. This can be particularly challenging for non-budget articles, which can be more varied and less standardized in their presentations. The following elements should be considered in the course of a complete review and analysis of non-budget articles being proposed at Town Meeting:

1. An understanding of the problem to be solved – is it clearly defined?
2. A sense of whether the proposed solution is workable and effective.
3. An enumeration of the pros and cons of the proposal, including both long- and short-term benefits, overlaps or gaps with other Town projects or services, and benchmark comparisons with other Towns where appropriate.
4. An understanding of who benefits and who pays.
5. A full understanding of the cost implications, both operating and capital, and immediate and long-term.
6. An assessment of the impact on the Town's infrastructure (traffic, parking, etc.).
7. An assessment of the impact on the neighbors (noise, traffic, etc.).
8. An assessment of the impact on the environment and green issues (energy conservation, pollution, trash, encouraging walking and biking, etc.).
9. Process issues: assurance that interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process, that required public hearings were held and all appropriate town Boards were consulted.
10. Consideration of how the proposal fits with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial plan, comprehensive plan, and values as well as relevant state laws and regulations.
11. Identification of issues that weren't considered in the development of the proposal.

In addition to assuring that proposals have been thought through, Advisory can assist the Town Meeting process by helping proponents use clear communications, effective presentations (including pictures and graphs), and avoiding jargon. It is very helpful to avoid inconsistency between the Advisory Report and the Town Meeting presentation.