

ARTICLE 21: Acceptance of M.G.L. ch. 54, 16A – Election Vacancy Appointments

Acceptance of M.G.L. ch.54, §16A
Election Vacancy Appointments

ARTICLE 21. To determine whether the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws chapter 54, section 16A authorizing the town clerk to fill vacant election officer positions if an election officer is unexpectedly absent at the time the polls open for voting, or take any other action relative thereto.

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M.G.L. ch.54, §16A : Vacancies; appointments to fill

Section 16A. In any city or town which accepts this section, if the warden, clerk or inspector or the deputy of any such officer, if any, is not present at the opening of the polls, the city or town clerk may appoint a person to fill such vacancy who shall be an enrolled voter of the same political party as the absent officer, if any competent person enrolled in such party is present and willing to serve.

Adoption of this article would:

Allow the Town Clerk to appoint substitute election officers for election day due to last minute cancellations in order to keep elections running smoothly.

Purpose of Article

- To ensure full staffing at the polls on election days.
 - Forty election officers needed (7am-8pm):
 - Four checkers/inspectors, one Warden, one Clerk, and two talliers/closers per precinct
 - Most election officers do not work the entire day
 - More may be needed for busier elections

Reason for Article

- Last minute cancellations by Election Officers due to illness or family emergency can lead to staffing shortages on election day.
- Staffing shortages result in longer lines at the polls and more stress on the Election Officers.
- Select Board meetings do not always coincide with elections to allow for last minute appointments.

Limitations of Article

- This article is limited to substituting for election officer vacancies on election day and only for that day.
- The substitute election officer must be of the same party as the absent officer.
- This only applies if a vacancy arises and the next Select Board meeting is scheduled after the election.

Benefits of Article

- This article would allow the Town Clerk to recruit and appoint substitute election officers right up to the beginning of someone's shift on election day.
- The Select Board remains the appointing authority for Election Officers at all other times.

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