

Statement on Article 40 (by Petition), Neonicotinoids Prohibition on New Leases of Town Land

In view of a recent ruling by the Massachusetts Pesticide Board, in which neonicotinoid pesticides were recategorized as 'restricted use', and other conditions were placed on their usage throughout the state, the Concord Agriculture Committee has decided to come out against moving Article 40 forward to the Town Meeting. Article 40 contemplates a municipal-level interdiction of neonicotinoid usage on town parcels that are newly licensed to agricultural operators. It explicitly doesn't include license renewals for farmers who have been using town parcels previously. The Agriculture Committee had originally determined to remain neutral on the Article—members were generally dubious of the propriety of trying to regulate pesticides on a local level and of the potential effectiveness of the particular article in achieving the goal of reducing local neonicotinoid usage and, thereby, providing some protection to pollinator populations, but some members felt that the Article could have some symbolic relevance and impact. We feel that the action of the State Pesticide Board has superseded and obviated any purely local or symbolic gesture—the Board's action has effectively removed neonicotinoid pesticide from garden centers and hardware stores, putting them out of reach of anyone except licensed applicators, and even landscapers with pesticide credentials will need to get explicit permission from land owners before using them. The Agriculture Committee believes that state rather than local action is more appropriate to the regulation of pesticides, and promises to be far more effective than any local action could be, given substantial practical and legal limitations on any local initiative.

- The Concord Agriculture Committee