

Dear Citizens,

The Board of Selectmen's decision to establish the March 9th Public Hearing and the March 10th Referendum was made based on flawed legal advice. Following the cancellation of those two events (due to widespread power outages and impassable roads), the Town Attorney realized that the Board of Selectmen has two options when the Town Clerk receives a valid petition demanding a Special Town Meeting: 1) Schedule a Special Town Meeting event where people will discuss the question and vote on it that night; or 2) Schedule a Special Town Meeting for discussion purposes only and have the question answered via a **machine ballot** event that must take place 7-14 days after the Special Town Meeting. Upon receiving updated/correct legal advice, the Board of Selectmen chose the second option. Specifically, they scheduled a Special Town Meeting on 3/22/18 for purposes of discussion, and they scheduled an April 4th machine ballot event to take place between 6 am and 8 pm (maximum allowable under State law).

The Town Attorney, upon consultation with the Secretary of the State's Office, has informed us that it would be illegal for the Town to allow absentee ballots for a machine ballot event. This is the reason why no absentee ballots will be accepted in conjunction with the April 4th machine ballot event. If this was a referendum event, then absentee ballots would be allowed. A machine ballot voting event is not the same as a referendum voting event. Going forward, this difference can be dealt with by revising the Town Charter. That process takes several months to complete.

The Town Attorney has also advised us that in order for a "yes" vote to prevail at the April 4th machine ballot, two things need to happen: 1) More voters need to vote yes than no; 2) The number of yes votes must be equal to or greater than 3% of the total number of qualified voters. Qualified Voters include both registered voters and voters that are eligible to vote by virtue of the Grand List.

Sincerely,
Christopher Spaulding (First Selectman) & Jonathan Luiz (Town Administrator)