

https://www.newburyportnews.com/news/local_news/rowley-residents-reject-mbta-zoning-at-town-meeting/article_6410c67e-0c9e-11ef-a278-8fbf3328c2f2.html

Rowley residents reject MBTA zoning at Town Meeting

By Matt Petry | mpetry@northofboston.com

May 8, 2024



ROWLEY — Residents made their voices loud and clear Monday night, shooting down proposed MBTA zoning at a Town Meeting that lasted over two hours.

Town Clerk Catie McClenaghan said 311 registered voters attended the annual event, which wrapped up at 9:23 p.m.

Of the 32 articles on the warrant, 30 passed. The only two articles not to pass were Article 27 and Article 32 (MBTA zoning).

McClenaghan said Article 32 was the only article to generate much debate.

Article 32 asked residents to vote to amend the Rowley Zoning Map to create the MBTA Communities Multifamily Overlay District.

As part of a new state zoning law, all communities served by the MBTA must have at least one zoning district for allow for multifamily housing. The guidelines were issued Aug. 10, 2022.

The state's criteria requires a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre and that the zone be located no more than a half mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station.

In total, 177 MBTA communities are subject to the new requirements of Section 3A of the zoning law.

The proposed MCMOD would have been comprised of two zoning overlay subdistricts, the Station District and the Western District.

The Station District would have consisted of approximately 35 acres and included 401 Main St., 397 Main St., 393 Main St., 395 Main St., 387 Main St., 381 Main St., 383 Main St., 22 Deerfield Lane, 23 Deerfield Lane, 30 Deerfield Lane, 29 Deerfield Lane, 34 Deerfield Lane, 1-12 Depot Way, and Railroad Avenue.

The Western District would have consisted of approximately 47 acres and would have included 909 Haverhill St., 915 Haverhill St. and 935 Haverhill St.

McClenaghan said the vote was so decisively against the article that no tally was needed.

The state has been very clear about the consequences of failing to comply with this new mandate.

Communities that do not comply with the MBTA Communities Act automatically lose certain state funding, including funding for local infrastructure generally, such as road, bridge, water and sewer improvements; for local infrastructure projects that support housing; for Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHLC) grants to communities with a “Housing Choice” designation; and state funding under the Local Capital Projects Fund, according to the state’s website.

In addition, the Healey-Driscoll administration has notified communities that compliance with the MBTA Communities Act will be considered when dispensing certain discretionary local aid.

Also, intentional or persistent noncompliance may result in an enforcement action

against the municipality by the attorney general. Any such action would seek a court order requiring the community to comply with the law.

Most communities must submit their zoning ordinance or bylaw for EOHLIC approval by Dec. 31. Certain smaller adjacent communities have until Dec. 31, 2025.

Article 27, the only other article rejected on the warrant, sought to help support the town's recently established Affordable Housing Trust by transferring into it \$800,000 from the Community Preservation Affordable Housing Fund and the Undesignated Fund.

Approval of this article would have provided seed money to build up the trust and for affordable housing projects in town, according to the explanatory note attached to the article.

Other than Article 32, McClenaghan said the night went by without much excitement.

"Mostly housekeeping items," McClenaghan said.

Among the articles to pass was Article 16 which saw voters approved \$230,000 worth of capital improvements, including town-wide computers for \$23,800, equipment for the police and fire departments for \$67,274, improvements to the Council on Aging facility for \$10,000, and new vehicles including a new patrol boat and a COA van for \$128,720.

Article 17 also saw residents approve \$8,000 to be taken from the capital stabilization fund for the cost of a dump truck with a plow and sander.

Matt Petry covers Amesbury and Salisbury for The Daily News of Newburyport. Email him at: mpetry@northofboston.com.

Matt Petry covers Amesbury and Salisbury for The Daily News of Newburyport. Email him at: mpetry@northofboston.com.

Trending Video

Newburyport News Events

 See All Events  Add your event

Tue, May 14

Fri, May 10

Fri, May 10

Fri, May 10

Fri, Ma



Pokemon Club!

Newburyport Public...



FRI
10

SAT
11

Deadwick's Ethereal Faire

Castle Hill on the Crane...

SUN
12

MON
13

TUE
14

Fortunate Youth

Bernie's Beach Bar

WED
15

THU
16

FRI
17

The Breakers

Blue Ocean Music Hall

SAT
18

SUN
19

MON
20

TUE
21

The F

Hamp

Matthew Petry