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## ***Town Meeting, +/- 160 Members, Finishes Over Half of Articles***

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Staff Writer

May 2, 2017 -- Traffic calming on Hayden Rowe, sidewalks on Chestnut Street, bathrooms at the Fruit Street Field Complex, the definition of restaurants, and the proposed moratorium on marijuana establishments all garnered heated debate among town residents last night.

The traffic calming on Hayden Rowe (Article 24) received backlash from residents worried about their property being cut down in order to expand roads and parents worried about cars queuing in front of the middle school, high school, and soon to be Marathon Elementary school.

The proposed design included a stop light at the intersection of Chestnut Street and Hayden Rowe and right and left turn lanes on Chestnut at the intersection. The plan also included a sidewalk expansion that would extend down Hayden Rowe to the intersection with Chestnut Street.

“This design will probably take land from my lawn,” said Hayden Rowe resident Nancy Haines. “I’m wondering why I wasn’t notified of this and why no public hearing was held?”

The head of the Department of Public Works (DPW) John Westerling, insisted that the plan did not intrude into Haines’ yard and that the plan was using the road already in place.

Haines was hesitant to accept Westerling's response.

“So you're telling me you would expand Chestnut Hill and Hayden Rowe without taking land from my yard? I don't think that's possible,” Haines said, who voted against Article 24.

Parents who drive their kids to the high school and middle school in the morning expressed concerns in regards to the already unmanageable traffic in the morning. This plan also omitted any traffic control for the middle school at the intersections of Grove Street and Pleasant Street.

Article 24 passed with a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of 152 to 20 with an estimated cost of \$1,050,000.

Article 25, a citizen's petition, also requested a sidewalk extension down Chestnut Street to connect residents on Chestnut Street and Springwood to a network of sidewalks.

“There was another accident that people have not acknowledged tonight,” said a resident of Chestnut Street. “There was a little boy who was struck by a car walking home from school last January,” the resident said. “We need to do something about it before someone else gets hurt. A sidewalk would be much appreciated by the residents of Chestnut Street and Springwood.”

The town cited a lack of planning by the residents and lack of funds by the town and did not endorse their petition. The town did say that they wanted to work with the petitioners and help present a proposal for the next town meeting in May of 2018.

“I can report that I did speak directly with the petitioners; we will get together with them and walk them through the process to present an article to a town meeting,” said Selectman Norman Khumalo. “As part of that discussion we will also talk about how to involve other town boards in their proposal,” Khumalo said.

The resident who presented the petition said that they were simply trying to raise awareness and will propose a final plan in 2018.

Planning Board member Frank D'Urso was a vocal opponent of Article 31, clause h, which requested an additional \$500,000 of funds for the Fruit Street bathroom and concessions facility. The money requested would have supplemented the \$400,000 already requested for the project the previous year.

The measure passed with a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority despite criticism from D'Urso.

“This is \$900,000 for a bathroom, I've seen other projects and none of them have ever cost this much,” D'Urso said.

The allocating of these additional funds had supporters, such as Parks and Recreation Commissioner Dan Terry.

“When we rent (The Fruit Street Complex) to outside organizations, there is an expectation that we have bathrooms and other facilities,” Terry said.

Another resident said that this building would provide shelter from the sun on hot days and during afternoon thunderstorms, as well as food for spectating parents.

Selectman Chair Brian Herr also supported this article, saying that when he brings his kids to other sports complexes, it is a standard that they have bathrooms and other facilities.

Planning Board Chairman Ken Weismantel [Photo, left], who originally opposed the plan, voted in favor of the measure.

Article 33, which discussed the definition of Restaurant, passed. There were concerns that this article would lead to fast food chains moving into town. Weismantel disputed these claims.

“Do not be fooled by what you have seen online and on Facebook,” Weismantel said. “ This article does not make it easier for a McDonalds to come into town.”

Residents, including Muriel Kramer, who is running against Weismantel for a planning board position with two other candidates, said that she was concerned about a dedicated industrial area that would not require restaurants to close at a certain time, creating the opportunity for 24 hour restaurants to come to Hopkinton.

There were also claims made by residents that this article would lead to the reopening of debate about building a freestanding Dunkin Donuts on West Main Street.

Article 38, which proposed a Moratorium on Marijuana Establishments from opening in Hopkinton, received backlash from members of the community, but passed nonetheless.

“This can create good jobs for the community,” said one resident. “I think with all these surrounding towns passing similar pieces of legislation, we have an opportunity to be proactive and attract this new business in ways that benefit our town, so we aren't playing catch up later,” said the resident.

Resident Kevin Shea [Photo, right], known for his quick wit, said he had studied the subject in college, bringing a room full of laughter.

Director of Youth and Family Services for the Town of Hopkinton, Dr. Denise Hildreth, made a heartfelt plea in favor of passing the moratorium.

“We are the folks on the frontlines of what this means for our youth,” Hildreth said. “All of my clients who are heroin addicted, or folks who have had issues with a number of other types of drugs, will tell you that it started with smoking marijuana.”

Town Meeting adjourned until Tuesday, May 2, at 7pm.