

Annual Town Meeting

Select Board Article 32

DIGITAL-ONLY LEGAL NOTICES

Article 32, Motion 1

Digital Only Legal Notices

- Massachusetts General Law requires that certain legal/public notices be published in a newspaper of “general circulation” (MGL c. 40A § 11)
- Most people today do not get their news from print newspapers, thereby missing the published notices altogether
- Wellesley seeks to publish notices online to ensure maximum visibility for its residents in the most cost-effective manner possible (cheaper to post digitally than it is to pay for print notices)
- Special legislation – two successful bills last session (Lincoln and Arlington) signed by Gov. Healey earlier this year (Jan. 2025)

Alternative Legal Notice Process

- When would a digital notice be used?
 - If a law, bylaw, or judicial order requires newspaper publication,
 - If approved by a majority vote of the public body, OR
 - If decided by a municipal official responsible for posting
- Acceptable Publication Methods: Print & Digital
 - Print newspaper of local or general circulation (if available)
 - Newspaper's website
 - Recognized local news websites
 - Statewide digital repository for notices
 - Town-maintained website for notices

ARTICLE 32. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board, on behalf of the Town, to petition the General Court for passage of a special law substantially as provided below. The Legislature may make clerical or editorial changes in form only to the bill, unless the Select Board approves amendments to the bill before enactment by the Legislature. The Select Board is hereby authorized to approve amendments that shall be within the scope of the general public objectives of this petition or take any other action in relation thereto.

AN ACT ALLOWING “PRINT-FREE” DIGITAL LEGAL NOTICES FOR THE TOWN OF WELLESLEY

- **SECTION 1. Purpose.** The purpose of this act is to allow the Town of Wellesley, including the Select Board, the School Committee, the Planning Board, and all other elected or appointed boards and committees, or municipal officials, to satisfy the legal notice requirements entirely by digital publications in light of the lack of an available adequate print newspaper in the community.
- **SECTION 2. Process.** Where legal notice in a newspaper or a newspaper of general circulation is required by statute, bylaw, or judicial order, alternative means of posting such notice, as specified in section 3 of this Act, may be used if approved by a majority vote of the public body or at the discretion of the municipal official legally required to post such notice.

- **SECTION 3. Means of Legal Notice Publication.** Notwithstanding Massachusetts General Law c. 4 § 13(b) and subject to Section 2 of this Act, whenever legal notice in a newspaper or newspaper of general circulation is required by statute, bylaw, or judicial order, such notice requirement shall be satisfied by posting notice in one or more of the following places:
 - A print newspaper of local or general circulation;
 - A newspaper's website;
 - Websites reporting local news and opinion which satisfy the criteria for digital publication as set forth in G.L. c. 4 § 13(b);
 - A statewide website that may be maintained as a repository for such notices; or
 - A townwide website that may be maintained as a repository for such notices.
- **SECTION 4. Legal Requirements.** Nothing set forth in this Act shall be construed to alter or amend the timing requirements of the publication of legal notices set forth in the Massachusetts General Laws, bylaw, or judicial order.
- **SECTION 5.** This Act shall take effect upon its passage.

The Select Board requests your
favorable action on
Article 32, Motion 1.