

Nantucket held a Special Town Meeting on October 10 primarily to address the soon-to-end moratorium on the sale of recreational marijuana. Since the state has legalized marijuana, each community must come up with a plan for medical and recreational facilities under state regulations. Nantucket voted to limit the number of recreational stores to 2 on the island. This number represents 20 percent of the number of licenses for year-round liquor stores. The article was amended by a citizen to require that the stores must be a minimum of 2,000 feet apart, which passed. Dispensaries cannot be located within 500 feet of a school or day care center. An amendment was proposed, that subsequently did not pass, to dictate the same distance from a “public park, playground, or recreational facility or personal services establishment providing activities or services primarily for children”. One of the applicants, called Green Lady, for a recreational facility is well along in the permitting process.

Unfortunately, there was a lack of quorum at the meeting which meant that the articles that dealt with spending money were not able to be voted on. Most of these had to do with traffic and road improvements on Old South Road and they will be brought back to a future town meeting. These spending articles are on the November 6th ballot for voters to decide.

Voters decided they wanted to have a say on erosion control measures on Town-owned beaches. In the future, such proposals will be decided at Town Meeting, instead of only by our Select Board. Supporters of the article felt that citizens should have a more direct voice; opponents felt that Town Meeting is not the most sensible venue to decide such complex issues and that adding this step could prevent the Select Board from dealing with erosion emergencies in a timely manner.

Voters also supported regulating single use plastics, beginning in June of 2020, such as plastic bottles, nip bottles, plates, drinking cups and lids at the commercial level, meaning this would apply to stores and restaurants and not individual users. Islanders have been working hard, with leadership from the Select Board, to eliminate the use of plastic straws on island. Single use plastics are a hazard to our environment.

There is a general feeling on the island right now that development is out of control and that citizens need to become more actively involved in slowing down and regulating the pace of growth. At the Special Town Meeting there was a citizen’s article that would have changed the zoning at the controversial Surfside Crossing 40b development from 2 acres to 1 acre zoning which failed to garner enough votes to pass. It would not have stopped the pending 40b application but may have given the developers an incentive to do a less dense build out. The initial application was for 156 units; it has been scaled back to 100, a mixture of single family homes and condominiums targeted towards market rate and affordable housing.

A second citizen’s article required that future installation of private sewer lines beneath Town streets will require Town Meeting approval. Although the article passed at Town Meeting, it must still pass muster with the state attorney general. Another issue is that the majority of the streets on Nantucket that are located outside of Town are, in fact, County roads, not Town roads so that the article, if legal,

would not affect the majority of roads on island. It is clear that the citizens want to be more involved going forward, which can only be a good thing.