Warrant Article 17

“The discharge of any firearm on Town-owned land other than during the course of lawful hunting shall be prohibited. This prohibition includes (but is not limited to) target shooting, gun siting, recreational shooting, or shooting competitions”
Summary

• This article has the support of the Conservation Commission and a diverse group of citizens
• The need for this article is ensuring safety and enjoyment for the many groups that use Town land (hikers, bikers, walkers, equestrians, kids, grandparents...everyone!)
• The Town has a legal right to make these restrictions (confirmed by Attorney Drescher and Select Board)
• Many other towns and entities like NHF&G restrict target shooting on their lands
WHAT THIS WARRANT ARTICLE DOES NOT DO...

• Does NOT change or restrict any lawful hunting anywhere

• Does NOT change any citizen's right to lawfully shoot on their own private property

• Does NOT impact any citizen's right to lawfully purchase or own firearms

• Does NOT have anything to do with snowmobiling or other permitted activities on Town-owned land
Strong support for this warrant article

- Conservation Commission voted 5-0-4 on 1/15/20 to support this warrant article
  - 2 of the 4 abstainers signed the petition as individuals
- 91 petition signatures gathered in <1 week. Diverse set of individual supporters including
  - Lifelong residents and relatively new arrivals
  - Wildlife officials (in their capacity as private citizens)
  - Previous owners of Town-owned land
  - Local businesses (farms, retail, services)
  - Republicans and Democrats
  - Gun owners including NRA "Life Members"
Two relevant RSAs HPD enforces for shooting on Town-owned land

- **RSA 644:13**
  - Limitations around parks and public gathering places (e.g., Nichols Field)
  - 300' setback from buildings in other locations

- **RSA 207:3-c**
  - 15' setback from class I-V roads (note: this is essentially Hollis DPW maintained roads)

There are currently NO enforced restrictions on target shooting near...or even directly on...trails
Significant difference in ammunition maximum range for typical shooting activities (illustrative)

- **Turkey hunting**
  - Shotgun (No 6 shot)  
  - 750'

- **Revolutionary War**
  - "Pennsylvania" musket  
  - 1200'

- **Deer hunting**
  - Shotgun (410 slug)  
  - 2800'

- **Target shooting**
  - Pistol (44 magnum)  
  - 7500'

- **Target shooting**
  - Rifle (30-06)  
  - 17000'

*Source: Hollis Police Department*
A real example shows the clear safety issues without restrictions

- Shooting uphill
- Unsafe backstop
- Not making sure of what is beyond target

When consulted, HPD NEVER indicated the shooter was being safe, just that they were obeying ordinances they enforce

Numerous incidents raised, very few reported
We have the right to restrict shooting on Town land (confirmed by Town Attorney and Select Board)

- RSA 31:39
  - Towns may make bylaws for: (a) The care, protection, preservation and use of the public cemeteries, parks, commons, libraries and other public institutions of the town

- RSA 41:11-a
  - The selectmen shall have authority to manage all real property owned by the town and to regulate its use

Essentially the Town would be regulating as a landowner, similar to a private landowner
RSA 159:26 is relevant but specifically allows for other statutes

- "Except as otherwise specifically provided by statute, no ordinance or regulation of a political subdivision may regulate the sale, purchase, ownership, use, possession, transportation, licensing, permitting, taxation, or other matter pertaining to firearms, firearms components, ammunition, or firearms supplies in the state"

RSAs 31:39 and 41:11-a are statutes that give the Town this right to set regulations on its property
RSA 159:26 intent was about concealed carry and never intended to control target shooting

• Intended to address a "...restrictive patchwork and complex local ordinances thrust upon an unsuspecting citizenry that...do nothing but confuse the law-abiding citizen as he travels about freely in our great State of NH." (legislation sponsor)

• "The whole idea is, if it is a state issued license, it should be good everywhere. The individual who holds that license has been screened and deemed a suitable person to carry a firearm concealed. That should be the end of the story right there." (legislation supporter)
Many other entities in NH restrict target shooting

- NH Fish & Game, a strong advocate for hunting, restricts target shooting on all ~60K acres it manages
  - "Except in accordance with FIS 904, no person shall discharge a firearm on such lands except while lawfully engaged in hunting or trapping activities"

- Example towns in our area that restrict target shooting on town-owned land
  - Brookline – "All BCC parcels prohibit target shooting (firearm and archery) due to safety concerns. Those abutting BCC lands are also asked to conduct their target shooting in a manner ensuring BCC land user safety"
  - Also, Amherst, Mont Vernon, Merrimack, Peterborough
Select Board and HCC have previously revised Town land use ordinances (for existing plots) to prohibit:

- Alcoholic and malt beverages
- Camping
- Fires
- ATVs
- All motorized vehicles

It is natural to evolve use ordinances over time...
We made multiple attempts at a compromise

• Original ask for the Select Board to have a Public Hearing and weigh all opinions
• Joint meeting including representatives from Trails Committee, Conservation Committee, Town Forest, and Select Board
  - Multiple options offered to opposition and unilaterally rejected (setbacks, designated plots, etc.)
• After our warrant article submitted, multiple meetings with opposition…but last minute rejection
  - Even jointly visited and approved a designated plot for target shooting
Summary

• This article has the support of the Conservation Commission and a diverse group of citizens
• The need for this article is ensuring safety and enjoyment for the many groups that use Town land (hikers, bikers, walkers, equestrians, kids, grandparents...everyone!)
• The Town has a legal right to make these restrictions (confirmed by Attorney Drescher and Select Board)
• Many other towns and entities like NHF&G restrict target shooting on their lands
Let's protect our land for mixed passive recreation
Warrant Article 17

“The discharge of any firearm on Town-owned land other than during the course of lawful hunting shall be prohibited. This prohibition includes (but is not limited to) target shooting, gun siting, recreational shooting, or shooting competitions”