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*Office of the Town Clerk*

**Town of West Boylston**  
140 Worcester Street  
West Boylston, Massachusetts 01583

Sept. 28, 2016

Selectboard  
140 Worcester Street  
West Boylston, MA 01583

Re: Special Act to Establish an Appointed Town Clerk

Honorable Selectmen,

The Oct. 17, 2016 Semi-Annual Town Meeting Article 15 is asking for authorization to petition the Legislature to amend the Special Act to establish an Appointed Town Clerk.

The position of Town Clerk in West Boylston is currently an elected office. Because the town clerk oversees the elections within the town, some have suggested that it should be changed to an appointed position and remove it from the electoral process. Others would state that there is no valid reason to take this responsibility and right away from the People, and that power **should not be** taken out of the hands of "the Many" and placed in the hands of "a Few." Elected Town Clerks have served the towns of the Commonwealth admirably for many years.

Elected clerks are department heads, they are independent in their actions, and are able to appoint an Asst. Town Clerk of their choice to assure the independence and integrity of both the office and the work involved. The Town Clerk knows what the staffing needs are and is best qualified to make such appointments. Assistant Town Clerks may be called upon, in the absence of the Town Clerk, to act as the Town Clerk would. In the role of Registrar of Voters it is vital that the sanctity of the ballot be maintained.

Electing a Town Clerk avoids the cronyism, or "politics", of having an appointment made by the Selectmen. Furthermore, Clerks have a sensitive role in the administration of elections and town meetings that would be ill-served by being beholden to those who are seeking re-election.

Historically, the elected municipal clerk has been charged with carrying out important town administrative functions such as records retention, distribution of public information, vital statistics, licenses and elections. In the future, the municipal clerk will be an electronic archivist as computer imaging grows in popularity. In the end, appointed municipal clerks provide the municipality with flexibility and accountability, with a cadre of skills and services which can be evaluated.

The number of the elected clerks in the future will continue to decrease. Elected department heads, such as the town clerk, are tough to manage and the changes coming to municipal government will make it impractical and inefficient for cities or towns to continue this practice of electing people to a position only to have it become the alter ego of the manager and elected selectmen or councilors.

The Town is aware of all of the recent increases in the position's complexity, and that technology is rapidly changing. The skill level needed to perform the duties of the Town Clerk have increased and as a result many communities are now leaning towards appointed clerks. This change will not affect the current Town Clerk but **will** facilitate in succession planning. For this reason it is better to safeguard the towns interest to ensure after the position is vacated by the sitting town clerk, a qualified individual can step into the position.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim D. Hopewell". The signature is written in black ink and includes a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Kim D. Hopewell  
Town Clerk