



**Town of Arlington  
Legal Department**

Douglas W. Heim  
Town Counsel

50 Pleasant Street  
Arlington, MA 02476  
Phone: 781.316.3150  
Fax: 781.316.3159  
E-mail: [dheim@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:dheim@town.arlington.ma.us)  
Website: [www.arlingtonma.gov](http://www.arlingtonma.gov)

To: Board of Selectmen

Cc: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager  
John Leone, Town Moderator  
Fred Ryan, Police Chief  
Christine Bongiorno, Director of Health and Human Services  
Arlington Human Rights Commission

From: Douglas W. Heim, Town Counsel

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. W. Heim", written over the printed name.

Date: March 18, 2016

Re: Annual Town Meeting: Re-hearing on Warrant Article #24

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I write to provide the Board of Selectmen supplementary information regarding Warrant Article 24, the proposed bylaw to prohibit camping on public lands in Arlington. Following the Board of Selectmen's initial hearing on this warrant article on February 8, 2016, individual Members of the Board, the Office of the Board, and a variety of Town officials received significant input from Town Meeting members, representatives of Town committees such as the Arlington Human Rights Commission, and community groups and stakeholders, including local faith-based organizations expressing concerns about the impact the proposed bylaw would have upon the homeless in Arlington.

Among the diverse concerns presented, a number of stakeholders believe the bylaw submitted may go too far in disallowing the unsheltered from camping on State and Town owned properties of Arlington before we adequately understand the extent and nature of the challenges

facing persons in presently known encampments. The Police Department and Health Department are receptive to these calls for additional study of the issues facing both the homeless and the community-at-large, and would value additional to opportunity to both share and receive perspective and strategies for assisting Arlington's unsheltered before further action on a camping bylaw.

As such, based upon numerous meetings with stakeholders and town personnel, it is recommended that the Board consider a "No Action" vote on this matter coupled with the creation of a Task Force to Study the Encamping Unsheltered. The Task Force, as a body created by the Selectmen, should investigate and report on the issues, resources available, challenges, and profile of homelessness in Arlington before reporting to the Selectmen findings and recommendations in advance of next year's Annual Town Warrant. Particular focus should be placed on homeless encampments in the Alewife Brook and Thorndike Field areas. Based upon the dialogue to date, a Task Force which includes Town residents, representatives of relevant Town departments, and the AHRC is recommended. Furthermore, it will also be valuable to continue consultation with relevant personnel from neighboring communities and the Somerville Homeless Coalition. I look forward to providing further detail on a potential Task Force at the Board's Meeting should the Selectmen favor such a revised proposal.