

Submitted by Nancy Bloom, TMM Precinct 18

## Why to NOT vote Yes on Special Town Meeting Article 5

To the Members of Arlington's Town Meeting,

Arlington Town Meeting is being asked to vote on a ceasefire resolution, in a land many thousands of miles away. Many of us would and can agree that the war between Israel and Hamas is awful, and that the warring parties have done and are doing hateful things on both sides. We as a community are watching from afar. But that does NOT mean that we should be voting on this. Only a tiny fraction of our federal taxes go to pay for anything that relates to this war - and certainly we have no impact on how the United States, let alone Israel, Hamas or other foreign entities, spend their monies. Arlington's Town Meeting can and should promote values of peace, equity and justice in Arlington. And we can try to figure out a way to reduce hate and bigotry in our town. But Article 5 does not relate to anything concrete that Arlington can do about injustice in *Arlington* - it only speaks about what we do not like about one (of several) foreign wars occurring thousands of miles away. The letters of support for a ceasefire resolution, the discussions of the awfulness of Israel's and Hamas' actions, does not help our community, but rather divides us into warring camps. Yes, we can agree that war is terrible, and that it should cease. We, however, cannot do much to change what is happening in Gaza. We may all be hurting for the many, many thousands of people who have been taken hostage, killed, and/or displaced - on both sides of this conflict. But Town Meeting is not the correct forum for figuring out what to do. Negotiations are occurring in the Middle East and discussions are ongoing among foreign governments and diplomats around the world. Putting pressure on people in Washington, Israel, Hamas, Iran and elsewhere is not our job - that job belongs to the negotiators trying to help people from two radically different cultures figure out how best to protect themselves, their families and their region.

Arlington's Town Meeting is responsible for setting salaries and pension benefits, voting on budgets to best serve the residents of our town, and voting on by-laws regarding zoning and other things that impact our town. We can talk about how to work to reduce the temperature of the rising tensions here in Arlington by trying to reduce bigotry, antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and other forms of hate in our schools, in our town, among our own residents - but that would be a very different article. This article does not help Arlington, nor does it help anyone in Gaza or Israel. It might make us feel better to vote for this resolution, but it does NOTHING to change what is happening in the Middle East.

The Select Board listened to what residents had to say, read (and likely listened) to the Human Rights Commission, who endorsed this article. The Select Board decided not to

recommend a yes vote on this article. They left it up to Town Meeting to decide what to do. It would be best if Town Meeting did NOT vote "Yes" on this ceasefire resolution.

Thank you for reading this.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bloom  
TMM, Precinct 18