

Dear fellow Town Meeting Members,

[Article 17](#), the Right to Pet Companionship in rental housing, was voted “No Action” by the Select Board which cited several issues it found to be problematic.

Since then, proponents of Article 17, in their [revised substitute motion](#) and amendments [here](#) and [here](#), have addressed those issues, resulting now in the support of many who originally opposed it.

Working with the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and with real estate and legal professionals, Article 17 now provides a finely tuned balance between the interests of pet owners, landlords and affordable housing authorities.

In particular, Article 17 would exempt from its provisions condominiums and condo associations, furnished rental units, as well as owner-occupied dwellings. It also provides landlords with the ability to seek an exemption from the Board of Health when the pet allergies of other tenants are impacted.

The Article 17 [Revised Substitute Motion](#) allows landlords to require that companion pets be sterilized and vaccinated, that tenants obtain pet insurance and that tenants pay an adequate security deposit. It allows landlords to enforce reasonable rules to protect the rights of all tenants and to limit the size and number of pets a tenant can have.

Why is Article 17 needed?

One of the major drivers behind the creation of Article 17 is an effort to find a solution to the ongoing practice of the euthanasia of thousands of cats and dogs in animal shelters which are abandoned when tenants seeking housing are prohibited from keeping their pets. Animal shelters report that their main source of abandoned pets are renters who are told by prospective landlords that pets are prohibited.

Article 17 would also help alleviate the severe shortage of available rental housing by adding housing that is otherwise foreclosed to pet owners. Studies have shown that as many as 25% of homeless people have pets, with many

choosing to keep their pets rather than accept housing which prohibits them. In short, Article 17, as amended and revised, is good for animals, good for our housing crisis and good for renters who find enormous comfort in the companionship that a pet provides.

Finally, the revised and amended Article 17 is endorsed by the MSPCA, the Animal Rescue League of Boston, and the Animal Defense Fund. Almost all of the animal rescue organizations that endorsed [Article 16](#) are in support of Article 17 as well. If you voted for Article 16 (restricting the retail sale of pets in Arlington) I urge you to support Article 17 as well.

Sincerely,

Jordan Weinstein
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