



**Declaration and Continuance of the December 19, 2020
Town of Wareham Special Town Meeting**

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 39, § 10A, I Claire L. Smith, do hereby declare on this day of January 4, 2021 that the Town of Wareham Special Town Meeting scheduled for Saturday December 19, 2020 which was further **recessed and continued until Saturday, January 16, 2021** at Wareham High School **be further recessed and continued until Saturday February 13, 2021**, then **further recessed 30 days until March 13, 2021**. In consultation with the Board of Selectmen, Public Safety Officials, and the Board of Health, I have determined that a public safety emergency prevented voters from attending the meeting on Saturday, December 19, 2020 and still will prevent voters from attending on January 16, 2021 or February 13, 2021.

The nature of the emergency is the continuous threat of the Coronavirus ("COVID-19") and the notice of a new virulent strain. In making this Declaration, I note that on December 22, 2020 Governor Charles D. Baker declared further restrictions in the Commonwealth and prohibited gatherings of more than 25 people throughout Massachusetts. Although the Governor's orders explicitly exempt municipal legislative bodies (in other words, town meetings), the turnout for town meetings regularly exceeds 25 individuals and the exemption does not diminish the health risk to those attending a town meeting. The expectation of a large voter turnout due to the nature of the warrant will put voters at risk.

In addition to consulting with the Selectmen, Public Safety Officials, and Board of Health, I have reviewed guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Given the rapid spread of the disease and the increasing up-swing of cases in Wareham, the present lack of containment, and the risk to vulnerable populations inherent in public gatherings, I conclude that delaying the Special Town Meeting until it can be safely held, is in the best interest of the Town and its citizens. Thus, under the statute, I do not have the authority to continue the Special Town Meeting for longer than 30 days but I do have the authority to issue further continuances.

M.G.L. Ch. 39, §10A mandates that the moderator "shall announce the declaration of recess and continuance as far in advance of the town meeting being continued as possible."

It is highly unlikely that the COVID-19 emergency will have abated by January 16, 2021 therefore I declare a Declaration of Continuance until **February 13, 2021**, and an additional 30 day continuance to **March 13, 2021 at 12:00 PM (noon)** when it can be held safely outdoors on the field of Wareham High School due to the expectation of a large number of voters anticipated to be in attendance given the nature of the warrant.

Claire L. Smith
Town Moderator

Posted by: *Michelle Besonette* Date: *Jan 4, 2021*
Wareham Town Clerk

WAREHAM TOWN CLERK
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