ARTICLE 31: HOME RULE LEGISLATION / CHAPTER 61B EXEMPTION

Town Meeting Handout | Carmine Granucci, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 21

What This Article Does

Authorizes the Select Board to file a home rule petition exempting Arlington from granting Chapter 61B tax classifications to private country clubs. Chapter 61B provides a **75% reduction in assessed value** for recreational land. It was designed for farms and open spaces, but private country clubs have used it to dramatically reduce their tax obligations.

Article 31 preserves the Town's right of first refusal and ability to collect roll-back taxes on existing 61B land. It only affects future applications. Under 61B's 5-acre minimum requirement, **only these two country clubs qualify in Arlington.**

The Tax Disparity (Land-Only, FY2026)

Property	Tax Per Acre	vs. Residential
Belmont CC (61B Exemption)	**~$545**	**1.5%**
Winchester CC (Golf, No 61B)	~$4,495	13%
Arlington Residential (Land Only)	**~$35,258**	**100%**

Source: Arlington Assessor FY2026 data. Residential figure based on land-only assessed values for sample Arlington single-family homes.

Revenue Impact

Scenario	Annual Impact
Belmont CC: additional revenue if 61B removed	**+$18,254**
Winchester CC: revenue at risk if they re-enroll in 61B	**-$24,964**
Total annual revenue at stake	**$43,218**

Revenue estimates provided by the Town Manager's Office and Director of Assessments using the Board of Assessors' land valuation methodology.

Why Act Now: The Revolving Door

61B applications are filed annually. Winchester CC has toggled in and out of 61B multiple times: full 61B (1992–2003), dropped it (2004–2008), split the property to put 40 acres back on 61B at just $150K–$300K (2009–2025), then dropped it again for 2026. **Without Article 31, nothing prevents either club from reapplying next year.**

Institutional Support

Select Board	Board of Assessors
3-1 Favorable Action (1 recusal)	Unanimous Support

Precedent: Belmont passed 229-3 (Nov 2023, filed as H.3970). Swampscott passed March 2024 (H.3917, reported favorably by Joint Committee on Revenue). Arlington would be the third town to act.

A private country club should not receive a 75% tax discount while Arlington homeowners are asked to pay more through overrides. Everyone should pay their fair share. **Please vote YES on Article 31.**