

# Municipal Budget Committee article cut to two words

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RINDGE — Voters won't be deciding in March on whether to have a Municipal Budget Committee after a vote at Saturday's deliberative session effectively removed the petition warrant article from the ballot.

Article 25 asked if the town should adopt the provisions of RSA 32, which defines a Municipal Budget Committee. If adopted, the committee would have had the authority to develop the town budget and would have replaced the current Budget Advisory Committee.

The petition to place the article on the warrant, initiated by resident Arthur Fiorelli, had 128 signatures. But on Saturday, voters who attended the deliberative session chose, by a 29-24 margin, to uphold an amendment to delete the entire text of the article after the words "To see."

As a result, any vote on the article will have no effect.

"This is Town Meeting by mischief, which is what the

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official ballot system allows," said Moderator David Tower at the conclusion of the meeting.

Scott Douglas, a former selectman, proposed the amendment, and Tower said he might have called Douglas out of order if not for a 2008 court decision. In the case of *Grant v. Town of Barrington*, the court decided a similar amendment met the requirements of the official ballot, process as defined in RSA 40:13. The RSA says simply, "Warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot."

"I've seen some articles today that I would have liked to delete, but I haven't made up my mind on this one," said Jim Qualey of Meadow View Road. "I think the town would benefit from another month of consideration."

Fiorelli said afterward it was unfortunate that such a small number of people, including department heads who might have faced stricter scrutiny under RSA 32, were able to kill the article.

Attendance at the meeting was initially more than double the number who voted on the article, but the audience dwindled steadily as the day wore on.