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City Council passes resolution in support of ROE Act



The Greenfield City Council during a July meeting at the John Zon Community Center in Greenfield. During the council's Sept. 18 meeting, councilors passed a resolution to keep abortion safe. STAFF PHOTO/DAN LITTLE » [Buy this Image](#)

By [MELINA BOURDEAU](#) (/byline?byline=By_MELINA_BOURDEAU)

Staff Writer

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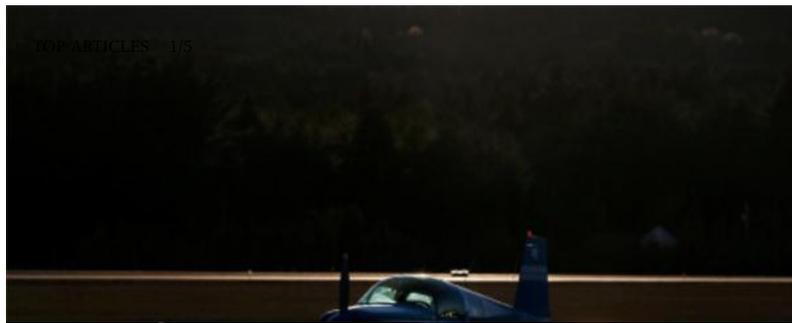
GREENFIELD — With five votes in favor, two opposed and three abstentions, the City Council passed a resolution to keep abortion safe during its meeting last week.

The resolution was contentious among the council, as well as those who came to speak during the public comment period and several people holding signs in the audience at the John Zon Community Center on Sept. 18.



Councilors Sheila Gilmour, Mark Berson, Timothy Dolan, Otis Wheeler, Douglas Mayo and Norman Hirschfeld voted in favor; Verne Sund and Wanda Pyfrom voted against the resolution; and Isaac Mass, Brickett Allis and Council Vice President Penny Ricketts abstained.

The resolution voices support for the ROE Act (S 1209/H 3320), filed at the state level to “remove obstacles and expand abortion access.”

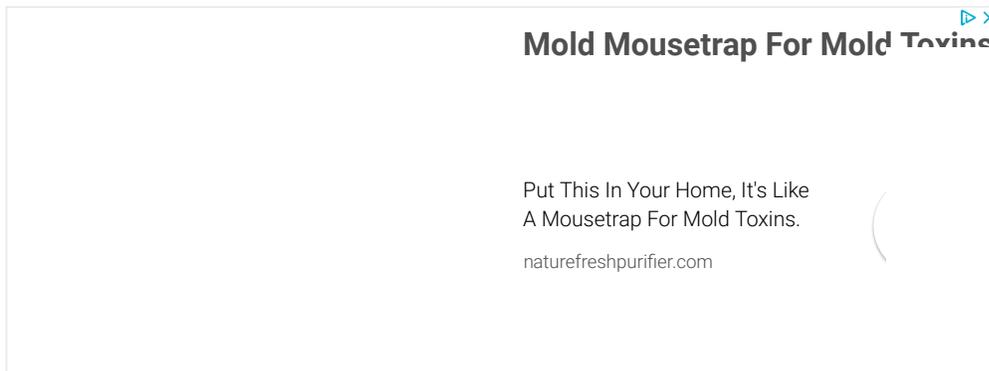


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The ROE Act was filed by Massachusetts Senate President Emerita Harriette Chandler, Speaker Pro Tempore Patricia Haddad and Rep. Jay Livingstone in January, and has been referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary since a June joint hearing.

If enacted, the ROE Act would:

- expand abortion access after 24 weeks of pregnancy in cases of fatal fetal anomalies or when necessary to protect the patient’s health;
- eliminate the requirement that minors get parental consent or go before a judge to access an abortion;



- strengthen coverage for abortion care, regardless of a person’s income or legal status;
- and remove outdated language from and codify reproductive rights into state law.

The City's Council's resolution, in addition to stating support for the ROE Act, affirms that the council "hereby states its commitment to the protection of abortion rights, reproductive health care rights and individuals' rights to make reproductive decisions about their own bodies."

Having passed, copies of the resolution will be sent to Gov. Charlie Baker, as well as to Chandler, Haddad and Livingstone, and to state Sen. Jo Comerford, D-Northampton, and state Rep. Paul Mark, D-Peru.

Opinions of the resolution — both among councilors and members of the public — were mixed. During public comment, the Rev. Timothy Campoli of Greenfield's Blessed Sacrament Church said he was appalled by the City Council's resolution.

"I don't believe in this," Campoli said. "When I think of Greenfield, I think of the wonderful things that have happened in this town, and many of them because of the (City) Council, their hard work and so forth. I know that many of our churches support things that promote life. We give food out to people every single week, we provide as much as we can, support for those who are homeless, community meals — everything to support life. I really think this is going to send the wrong message about our beautiful town."



On the other hand, Alyssa Valbona, who works in the health care field, spoke in favor of the ROE Act and the changes it would make to abortion regulations.

"This resolution will show our state legislators that we support them," Valbona said. "This act ... it does a few key things. First of all, to say abortion is legal in the state of Massachusetts, it's not going anywhere. But what this act will do is remove outdated language, many provisions not enforced."

When the City Council returned following an executive session that was unrelated to the resolution, councilors weighted in on the topic.

Mass said he would abstain from voting.

"I do not believe that my personal views — which have changed over the course of six terms — are representative of this community. I don't know what the community's views on this particular issues are because I have not thought of it as an issue that was a matter that belonged before the city, so I haven't engaged people," Mass said. "I don't believe I can represent the will of the community."

Pyfrom said she doesn't believe the resolution is the council's business and does not support the resolution.

"First of all, being a woman and a mother, I don't feel that we need a resolution in Greenfield to support safe and legal abortion. We already support that with a Massachusetts law and a federal law," Pyfrom said. "As a mother and a woman, this is none of the council's business and we need to step away from stuff like this. We need to focus more on our town and town business."

Berson, on the other hand, said he wholeheartedly supports the resolution, which he put forward.

"This is what we do — we speak to basic freedoms and basic rights no matter what level we are at," Berson said. "I have supported the woman's right to choose since 1971 and I do so today with no apology. ... This is fundamental to individual rights. I respect the person's right to wave or burn the flag, and I also believe that a woman's right to choose must be put forth by public officials throughout the commonwealth."

Reach Melina Bourdeau at 413-772-0261, ext. 263 or mbourdeau@recorder.com.

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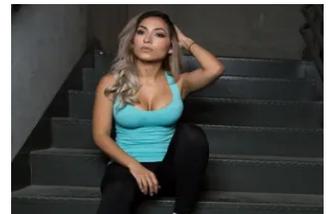
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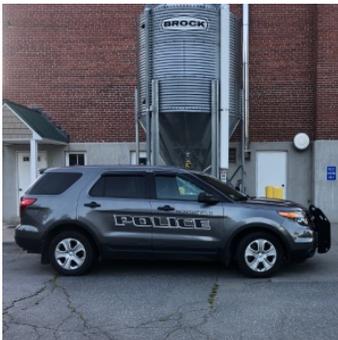


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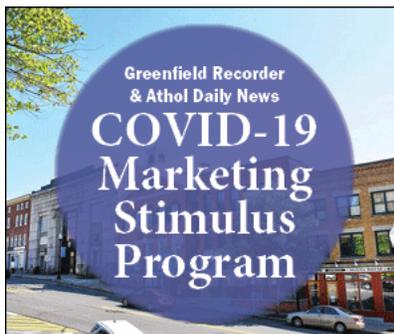
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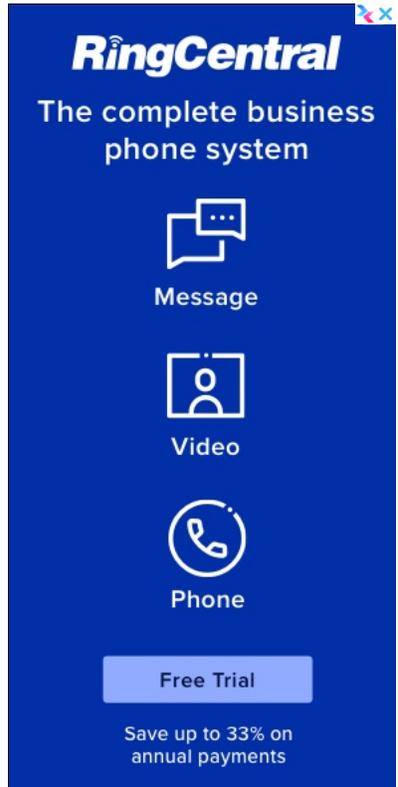
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