

**Truro Board of Selectmen
Part Time Resident Summer Meeting
Wednesday, August 9, 2017
Truro Community Center, 7 Standish Way, Truro**

Members Present: Chair Paul Wisotzky; Maureen Burgess, Jay Coburn, Robert Weinstein, Janet Worthington

Present: Town Manager Rae Ann Palmer; Town Counsel John Giorgio

Chair Paul Wisotzky called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. He welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the meeting: direct communication with the part-time residents. Chair Wisotzky also recommended communicating through e-mail and the Town website. There were five main topics of discussion on the meeting's agenda: Environmental Projects, Staff Introductions, Town Permitting Procedures, Bicycle Safety, and Residential Property Tax Exemptions. In addition, there was time planned for public input on these and other topics of concern.

Update on Environmental Projects

Assistant Health and Conservation Agent Emily Beebe and DPW Director Jarrod Cabral gave updates on five environmental projects. These included the Pamet River Restoration, Eagle Neck Creek and Millpond, the East Harbor culvert and salt marsh restoration, Little Pamet River assessment, and the culvert on Old County Road. Rae Ann Palmer answered a question from the audience about the computers that gather information on site.

Staff Introductions and Changes

Rae Ann Palmer introduced the staff: Assistant Town Manager Kelly Sullivan Clark; COA Director Susan Travers; Assessor Kathy Fryxell; Recreation Director Damion Clements; Town Accountant Trudi Brazil; Town Clerk/Treasurer/Tax Collector Cynthia Slade; Fire Chief Tim Collins; Library Director Tricia Ford; Harbor Master/Shellfish Warden Tony Jackett, IT Director David Wennerberg; Acting Police Chief Craig Danziger; Sergeant Steven Raneo; Executive Assistants Nicole Tudor and Noelle Scoullar; and Custodian Jeff Falk.

Update on Changes to Town Permitting Procedures

Jarrod Cabral and Kelly Clark explained changes in obtaining permits for the Transfer Station. There is now license recognition in use at the Transfer Station. Rae Ann Palmer discussed a new option of a six-month sticker for the Transfer Station. From the audience, Rachel Carter commented negatively on the costs at the Transfer Station.

Bicycle Safety

Robert Weinstein gave information on bicycle safety including a report on the recent Pan Mass Challenge. He cautioned the audience that Truro roads were not designed to handle the summer increase in traffic. He noted the designated bike lanes on Route 6.

Additional Introductions

Paul Wisotzky introduced some committee members who were also present at the meeting: Bob Panessiti, Chair of the Finance Committee; Carl Brotman, Chair of the Housing Authority and Cathy Haynes, Chair of the Bike & Walkways Committee.

Residential Property Tax Exemption Presentation

Chair Wisotzky gave the background explanation of the use of a residential property tax exemption and the steps the Town has taken so far. The application deadline for an exemption is August 15, 2017. He said that a residential property tax exemption is an option allowed by Massachusetts General Law.

Rae Ann Palmer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the workings of a residential tax exemption and the possible rates. The statistics and values used were from Fiscal Year 2017, she said. There was a spreadsheet that broke down tax increases by assessed values of primary residences.

Response from the Part-time Residents

There were many questions about the residential tax exemption proposal. Micky Morin asked how to qualify as a full-time resident. Kathy Fryxell gave a number of criteria: tax return address, driver's license, car registration and excise tax, inclusion in the census list and being a registered voter. Dan Katz asked about use of tax returns. Nancy Osborne asked about the big picture. Tim Richards questioned the rationale for the whole program. Warren Green asked about projected revenue. Rae Ann Palmer said it does not add revenue; it provides relief to year-round residents of the Town. It changes the tax rate, Ms. Palmer said. Elaine Gaglio asked about the qualifying process, and Town Counsel John Giorgio reviewed Mass General Law. Susan Lichenstein asked if the non-residents would be paying more. The Town Manager said the tax rate would be set according to the exemption applications. Woody Kaplan asked about giving a break to people based on need rather than full-time residency. Christen Arroo asked about the voluntary nature of the program.

Rachel Carter was the only speaker who said she supported the effort.

There was a predominance of sentiment against the proposal. Karl Forrester said he considers it a money grab and that the option makes him feel like a second-class citizen. Kevin O'Flaherty said he actually supports redistribution of wealth but disagrees with a distinction between part-time and full-time residents for taxation.

Town Counsel John Giorgio that an examination of the Mass General Law section on exemptions reveals there are many exemptions allowed for a variety of reasons. Attorney Giorgio said the purpose of offering the exemption was to make a vibrant year-round community that actually helps the part-time residents. There are other exemptions available to Truro tax payers who are elderly, low-income and veterans. Jennie Cohen asked about other possible exemptions that would keep the community together because the proposed option was divisive. Selectman Jay Coburn commented on the problem of housing affordability for the year-round population of workers. Paul Wisotzky said the Selectmen, Affordable Housing and the Planning

Board have been working on solutions for affordable options. He said Aspen and Stowe have models for the residential tax exemption plan.

Other speakers made further observations. John Winn said the proposal was meant to have the part-time residents become full-time ones. Kevin O'Flaherty said it was passing the burden onto part-time residents. He said constitutionally the Town is not allowed to charge one group more than another. The plan is fundamentally unfair, he said, and creates an "us against them" attitude. Part-time residents want to help with solutions for affordability, he said. Dick Hirsh said he would like to see a plan that is equitable and did not consider the residential tax exemption optimal. Ann Greenbaum said she had provided the Selectmen with a list of options for providing tax relief for needy. She asked if the Selectmen would really consider what the part time residents are saying. Paul Wisotzky said her list has gone to Town Counsel.

Rae Ann Palmer said the Classification Hearing needs to be held on August 22, 2017 in order to set the tax rate for next year. John Giorgio said the Town has been examining many options. He says it's a mistake to say this is an "either or" scenario. Frank Corhaus disagreed, saying what was before them presented an "either or" situation. He mentioned a method used in Wellfleet to provide tax relief to the needy.

Speakers continued to give their perceptions. Sue Goldstone asked about having more say in how the matter is taken care of. Ed Sargent said the communication of the idea has been poor from the start, despite emails and other efforts by the Selectmen. John Marksbury, a full-time resident, said it's a mistake to go forward with the plan because of the ill will it generates. Dan Katz said he was against the plan although he had come to the meeting in favor of it, not realizing that it was based on residency. He thought it was for people who needed tax relief and suggested there were other Town expenses that could be reduced. Karen Parachio asked about attitude of full-time residents towards adding affordable housing and asked if there were any studies on how part-time residents help Truro's economy. Larry Cetrulo opposed to the plan. He asked for evidence that goal would be achieved by the policy.

Wrap-up

Rae Ann Palmer said the hearing will be held on August 22, 2017 for setting classifications and the residential rate. It then goes to the Department of Revenue, who actually sets the tax rate. David Sawicki implored the Selectmen to delay a residential tax exemption plan for a year if possible.

Paul Wisotzky closed the meeting with thanks to all for their participation.

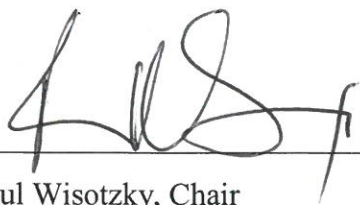
Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

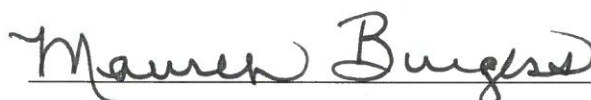
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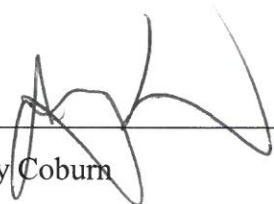
Mary Rogers, Secretary



Paul Wisotzky, Chair



Maureen Burgess, Vice-chair



Jay Coburn



Janet Worthington



Robert Weinstein, Clerk

Public Records Material of 8/9/17

Information sheets on Residential Tax Exemption