

THANK YOU, DENNIS.

By Vicky Mishcon
Andover Board of Selectmen

These are the remarks with which Vicky opened Town Meeting.

As some of you know, our chairman [of the Board of Selectmen], Dennis Fenton, is retiring after tonight's meeting. He said he would like to go out quietly, but I'm afraid there's no chance of that happening.

I won't say he's retiring from public service, because I have a suspicion that he'll find ways to continue serving this community without being on any of the boards. He assures us that if we need to contact him, he'll be on his deck chair overlooking Highland Lake.

Dennis followed a strong example of public service from his parents and grandparents – his grandfather, also named Dennis, first served as selectman in 1912, and I believe he told me his mother was one of the first members of the newly-formed Planning Board. I hope Tyler [Fenton, Dennis' grandson] knows we have high expectations.

Dennis began his service to the town in 1958, when he was appointed to the Planning Board. He has served on the School Board and the Budget Committee and represented Andover in the formative years of the Concord Regional Solid Waste/Resource Recovery Co-operative. And we enjoy the services of our town administrator thanks to the work of the committee which studied the Administrative Assistant form of government, which Dennis chaired in 1979.

As some of you may remember, Dennis tried retiring from town service in 1991, but was unable to refuse when the town once again needed his services, and he chaired the Board of Selectmen for an additional four terms. During those terms he was the driving force behind the Town Office and Library renovation as well as the construction of the new Police Station.

Dennis' Real Legacy

But Dennis' real legacy is the character he brings to his work. He is patient; he listens carefully to all sides of an issue; he is wise about the mysterious and cumbersome ways of state and federal government; and he and Roger Godwin have been the best mentors I could hope for. (Of course, there were a few things that Roger said that were best forgotten as soon as you heard them.)

Dennis has drilled into my head two things: Do what's best for the town, and just use common sense – a quality that he has in spades. But I have only had the pleasure of working with Dennis for two years, so I thought it best when preparing this speech to talk to other folks who have known him longer. I actually heard some pretty good stories in the process!

But what virtually each person said was this: Dennis always has the town's interest deeply at heart. He argues on behalf of the town, not on behalf of his own interests. In fact he does this to the point where you can't always tell what his personal feelings are on an issue.

And he is a great believer in the democratic process. During our months of preparation for the annual meeting, Dennis would constantly remind us that Town Meeting would eventually do the thing that was right for the town. Trust Town Meeting. I'm sure all of us here tonight appreciate the important work that gets done here, and that the results are almost always in the best interest of the town.

Those are the things that are the real legacy that Dennis leaves. He is the essence of a true town father.

Finally, I'd like to present our gift to Dennis – a captain's chair with an expression of our appreciation. Instead of a Town seal, we had a sketch of the view of Highland Lake from his house engraved on the face of the back rest.

From all of us – thank you, Dennis.



Staff photo: Bob Bussey



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