

Selectmen's Perspective on 2015 Town Meeting

Some major advances, some lessons learned

Duncan Coolidge, Board of Selectmen

Andover Town Meeting 2015, our Legislative Body made up of the citizens of Andover who attended the meeting, demonstrated its concern for and commitment to the town. That was reassuring, but I was disappointed that more people weren't there. Apathy and cynicism do not serve the community and do not help to guide its development. We need participation at all levels of our local government with an ongoing commitment of time and well-considered and productive thought.

The positive vote for a beginning Town Road Crew under the direct supervision of our Road Agent was a giant step forward, particularly in getting better control of our labor costs and equipment rental expenses. John Thompson, along with Jim Delaney, Marj Roy, Dennis Fenton, and the Selectboard worked diligently to present a well-considered and supportable plan.

Sophie Viandier's presentation in an up-to-date format made what would otherwise have been challenging to understand very straightforward. Undoubtedly there will be challenges in instituting the plan, but your vote of confidence was encouraging.

Road-related warrant articles presented a number of issues that need to be addressed. They were not vetted by the Planning Board, and that would have been a much simpler pathway for addressing the various road issues raised.

Two of the three warrants were probably unnecessary and could have been resolved at the Planning Board level. The third really required considerably

more understanding of the complex history involved before coming to Town Meeting for consideration. All three of the road warrant issues will be reviewed by the Planning Board.

The Town budget was passed with limited discussion, thanks to the hard work of our Budget Committee under the chairmanship of Arch Weathers. Again, it would be to the advantage of the community to participate more actively in the budget hearings, where fine points, details, and questions are better answered. Town Meeting is not the time for microscopic examination.

The balance of the meeting went quite well. I do think that how we communicate during the meeting is important. The formality of addressing the Moderator with questions or statements avoids arguments on the floor which can deteriorate into shouting matches.

However, it is important that everyone who wishes to speak be heard. That poses some difficulty for the Moderator in allowing dynamic communication about issues while giving everyone a chance to speak to their concerns about the warrant articles. One or two people cannot be allowed to dominate the floor, but at the same time open discussion cannot be unduly restricted.

It is a challenging process to manage, and I do not have an immediate answer to the problems. Admittedly, the meeting showed room for improvement.

In summary, we got some major things accomplished, learned some lessons, and are challenged to do better. Thank you everyone for your support of our local government, your personal contributions, and your expression of trust.

Please get involved! Help build our town.

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going to do is to move the gates.

Mark Stetson: The Town already owns the right-of-way through the bridge.

Jim Danforth: Two or three years ago the state told us no, we don't own it; it's a private road. When we asked for a remedy to the problem, they said that this warrant article was it.

Steve Barton: What's the benefit of getting this as a Town road? All I see is more maintenance cost.

Jim Danforth: Since RP Johnson and Son has moved off the property, the private road makes no sense. In the long run it will benefit the town to have those buildings better utilized, and we've been told by the owner that the private road is a handicap. If we get those buildings better utilized and get some more jobs in town, we're all going to benefit.

Duncan Coolidge: The owners will pay for patching and culvert work and get it into shape.

Andy Guptill moved to amend the article by adding language about bringing the road up to Town standards, as approved by the Road Agent, at the cost of the landowner. Nancy Tripp moved to amend the amendment to use the word "expense" rather than "cost." The amendment to the amendment passed. The amendment passed.

Paul Currier: Is there a record of having made Johnson Lane private?

Jim Danforth: Yes. Paul Currier: Will there be a deed transferring the road to the Town? Jim Danforth: You'd have to ask legal counsel.

After much further discussion about boundaries, statutes, etc., Stacey Viandier moved to table Article 19 "until we're sure we're not getting into a legal hornets' nest." The motion passed, and Article 19 was tabled.

Article 17 Reconsidered: A motion to reconsider Article 17 (Hoyt Road) was discussed and passed, and discussion turned to Article 17 again.

Toby Locke: This reconsidering is the kind of underhanded stuff that happens after a third of the people leave. This was overwhelmingly passed earlier. The taxpayer should have access to his property. He still has to go through all the legal rules and permits before he uses it. Let's amend this article to remove mention of the turnaround, since that's going to be built in the Town right-of-way anyway; it doesn't need to be in here.

The amendment passed. The amended article was defeated on a show of hands, 14 to 19.

Hearing concern that the count was incorrect, Moderator Dan Coolidge called for another show of hands. Article 17 passed 24 to 20 on the second show of hands.

Article 20: To enter into a 10-year lease with the Andover Horseshoe Club for 45 Monticello Drive. With no discussion, Article 20 passed unanimously.

Article 21: To authorize the Con-

servation Commission to expend funds for contributions to "qualified organizations" where the Town will retain no interest in the property.

Mary Anne Broshek, chair of the Conservation Commission, explained that this article would remove the requirement that the Town have a financial interest (and therefore a potential liability) in an easement property before the Conservation Commission could help make that easement happen.

Toby Locke asked if the Selectmen would say whether this is beneficial for the town or not. Duncan Coolidge: It's in our best interest to vote for this. It keeps us out of financial obligations in the future.

Article 21 passed unanimously.

A motion was made to take Article 19 (Johnson Lane) off the table. The motion failed.

Article 22: Any other business.

Leighton Terwilliger: I beg you to get the building at Blackwater Park finished. [Applause]

Duncan Coolidge: I'd like to embarrass Toby by publicly saying "Thank you!" for all the work that you obviously put into Town Meeting, having read everything and read everything well before-hand, and then asking a lot of good and solid questions. [Applause]

Toby Locke: Where did the money come from for the compactor, and for the building bought from RP Johnson for the Transfer Station, and for the sand shed at White Oak? I don't understand how all that happened without us voting on it at Town Meeting.

Jim Danforth: The Transfer Station stuff came out of the Transfer Station Capital Reserve Fund. The plan was discussed at Town Meeting after waiting to see what would happen with the trash co-op's plan to build a Single Stream Recycling (SSR) plant. When that fell through, we decided against going with Cassella and we went with our own SSR.

Toby Locke: Isn't it costing us \$90 per ton for SSR?

Jim Danforth: All the projections we were given were that it would be \$45 per ton and would therefore be our best option. The Selectmen have come up with a plan with new options that will be presented soon.

Sophie Viandier: The pole barn at White Oak was an EPA requirement. It will also house Town equipment and the new Town truck.

Toby Locke: The pole barn was inadequate before it was built. It's too small.

John Thompson: It was intended just to get us started and keep just the salt under cover. I know it's inadequate to our total needs, but it's what we could afford.

Wood Sutton: I'd like to commend the Road Agent and his crew on keeping the roads clear during a very difficult winter this year. [Applause]

With that, the meeting was adjourned.

Positions Available

Woodcrest Village is now accepting applications for the following positions:

COOK
(Part-time)

20 Hour Part-Time to include every other weekend.
Please send email of interest to Steve: sjohnson@woodcrestvillage.com or inquire within to complete an application.

RESIDENT ASSISTANT

(LNA Certification NOT Necessary)(Part-time)

Per Diem Resident Care 5-20 hours per week possible.
Contact: nurse@woodcrestvillage.com or inquire within to complete an application.

All candidates must possess a high level of customer service skills, be a team player and enthusiastic.

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