

TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN - BOARD OF SELECTMEN

- *QUARTERLY PUBLIC FORUM* -

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2004

JUDGE WELSH HEARING ROOM

Chairman Mary-Jo Avellar opened the meeting at 6:00 PM noting the following attendees:

Board of Selectmen members: Mary-Jo Avellar, Michele Couture, Sarah Peake, Richard Olson

Excused Absent: Cheryl Andrews (On vacation.)

Other attendees: Town Manager Keith Bergman

Recorder: Secretary to Board of Selectmen Vernon Porter

The following are meeting minutes, in brief.

Chairman Avellar explained that the purpose of this meeting is for the public to be able to speak to the Board of Selectmen and engage in dialogue. Anything that is worthy of decision-making will be scheduled for an agenda item at a future Board of Selectmen meeting.

Discussion ensued on the following topics.

Rick Murray

Water rates. We're using less water but our rates are going up. We need to come up with an equitable way to charge for water for commercial and residential users. We are paying for lack of vision. People who live here all year long are finding it hard to survive. Wasterwater Treatment - are the nicest people to work with.

We need to look at our financial situation and some people might not like it but some tough financial decisions need to be made soon.

Housing Task Force - what about the High School Annex. Can't it be used for community housing for seasonal workers - May through September.

Sarah Peake - great comments. On water rates issues. To clarify my position - I am looking to cut the rate structure. We already reduced it from 39K to 30K then back to 39K. What this Board did was to support and look at what we could do to tailor a remedy that specifically addresses the needs of the group of people we want to address.

Keith - we may want to look into two peak period bills.

Sarah Peake - We are committed to spending wisely. We are on top of things and we're fiscally astute.

Mary-Jo Avellar - Appreciate your comment. We are going to be making some really tough decision in the coming weeks.

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Steve Roderick

Police, Fire & DPW deserve a lot of recognition and thanks for all the work they have done this past weekend. They were everywhere all weekend.

Water fees - agree with Rick in looking at the elderly and low income. Business community has been hit with a substantial number of fees in the past year. We are out-taxing ourselves and need to be careful how we are doing that.

Two-Tier tax rate - The Commercial turnover is not as frequent as residential and for year the business owners were over assessed - so we're finally catching up to their proper assessment - but homes continue to soar. When you're looking at new ways of generating revenue there has to be other way we can do it ... and the flip side is, "how are we going to cut our expenses?" I'm hoping that everyone can sit at a table in terms of goal setting and work together to

become fiscally conservative. We're going to be asking some strong questions on town floor this year. While we continue to develop these wonderful new things and say that the Pier is going to be self-sustaining and the Library is going to raise all of its own money and the Cape End Manor is going to be self-supporting - the reality is that taxpayers are going to pay for many of those things in the end.

Disclosure - *Mary-Jo Avellar disclosed that her husband is Assistant Harbormaster and she is waiting for an opinion from Town Counsel as to whether she can participate in Pier Corporation matters but not Harbormaster matters.*

John Baldwin

Resident of town, Commercial fisherman and Director of PROFISH. Directors are concerned that the Pier Corp is not assuming their responsibilities to collect the dockage fees as stipulated in the agreement. A letter was drafted by PROFISH to the Pier. The fishermen are really feeling the brunt - on the Federal level they are going to lose Stellwagan plus all these days at sea that the Federal Government has taken out of the fishermen's hands. The State is after the lobstermen to limit their fishing effort and on the town level we feel at a loss and getting killed by the Public Pier Corp. We've spent over \$70K for a lawyer. Is the Pier Corp working in our interest? We don't think so.

Michele Couture

Certainly empathise with them. I voted against the increase in fees in the first place - rather than a gradual increase.

Sarah Peake

Cheryl Andrews and I have been the point people who have been working on the lease and sub-lease negotiations and have been following that progress. I have read your letter and have not had a chance to contact anybody from the PPPC. We understand and certainly empathise with you. To the extent that we can help you - we are there to help you and we share a level of frustration with the whole environmental situation as well as taking care of the business on the Pier. Nobody was more heartbroken than members of this Board when all the finger piers were damaged. But we will get back on that and get things working more effectively between the PPPC and PROFISH. We all want to see it work out there.

Mary-Jo Avellar

What bothers me the most is that the money was given in order to improve a Pier for the fishing fleet. It seems to me the fishing fleet isn't benefiting at all. First of all you lost your berthing. The priority should be the fishing fleet.

John Burke

1) Regarding what Steve & Rick said before re: the prices of Real Estate for houses increasing at such an alarming rate. We have to realize, however, that if it were not for the businesses the housing rate would not be going. There needs to be something to encourage business to come and stay. 2) I want to commend again the Police Department, the DPW and Mr. Porter for their responsiveness. My biggest complaint is that people don't respond. These people go above and beyond, and I really appreciate it.

James McGowan

1) Every time this town gets involved in a Capital Project nobody explains what it is going to cost us. Why don't we have, in our hands at town meeting, the cost of a project, its future costs and what we might collect from it? (i.e., the new Library, the Pier.) 2) Water is killing every business in this town - we conserve and we pay more. We pose the questions and we don't get the answers. The telecommunications revenue over the next 20 years - where is it going? Is it going to go to Affordable Housing? To lower the water rates? To run the sewer plant? 3) Pier is a mess - get everything off the Pier. 4) Why don't we tie our rate increases to inflation. 5) Town government is out of control with growth. 6) Affordable Housing - government should keep their nose out of private enterprise.

Steve Roderick

No walking away tonight with a good feeling about the Pier Corporation. Hope before you enter into a long-term agreement that these issues are resolved.

Sarah Peake

In response to Steve Roderick. What you don't hear tonight is the Pier Corporations side of the story. Stay tuned - we are on top of it and the Town Manager is on top of it - but let's remember we have only heard from one party. None of us are privy to their meetings - we don't know what the struggles are on that side of the equation. There is a lot that is new - Pier Corp - Profish and the Pier. And there are going to be some bumps in the road, but I for one, want to give everyone a fair shake and dedicate ourselves to making this work.

James McGowan

When you go to meetings where there are Boards that are either elected or appointed there are numerous town employees sitting at these tables with these boards orchestrating, as I call it. I feel that we should not have any town employees sitting on these boards or participating in them except from the audience. We close downstairs every day from 3 to 5 PM to get caught-up but I can come to a meeting and find as many as three employees from downstairs sitting at this table while a board is having its meeting. Think that all town meetings should be held in town hall and at a time when the general public can attend. All boards should have minutes of their meetings and should not have their next meeting until the minutes of the previous meeting have been submitted for approval.

Rick Murray

The cooperation between business and the government as a whole - in order for us as a community to thrive - we need to work together - it can't be adversarial. We're asking you, as private citizens and business owners to have more fiscal restraint. Think of things before you make decisions. Try not to make decisions on an emotional basis.

Mary-Jo Avellar

From my longevity, this has been the most cooperative government and Board of Selectmen with whom I have ever served. The willingness that we have to keep our differences at this table and not hold them over outside the meeting has made a big difference in the way that people perceive the general operation of the government. The public has had a lot to do with that too. I feel the public is very well educated in the way the government works and we don't have these bursts of outrage. I appreciate the people with whom I serve and I appreciate the people whom I serve and look forward to these Public Forums.

Richard Olson

Note that people want to have more information - more backup, more study of things, more presentations - and at the same time want to slash or criticize what is believed to be a bloated beauracy downstairs. You can't have it both ways.

Michele Couture

To echo Richard 's comments. I don't think that we operate in a vacuum. One of the reasons why we do have so many meetings and Board of Selectmen's meetings is that we do value input from citizens - hence these Public Forums where we can have checks and balances. It's going to be a difficult budget season and I am certainly not looking forward to some of the decisions we are going to have to make. We definitely do value everyone's input and want to say thank you for showing up.

Mary-Jo Avellar

Thank you all for participating in our Open Forum and we look forward to seeing you again in four months.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Selectmen vote, pursuant to MGL C.39, §23B, clause 6, to go into executive session to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property; and not to convene in open session thereafter.

Roll Call: Michele Couture -Yes Richard Olson - Yes Sarah Peake - Yes Mary-Jo Avellar -Yes

Motion by: Michele Couture Seconded by: Richard Olson Yea 4 Nay 0

Motion to adjourn by Michele Couture at 8:00 pm.

Minutes transcribed by: Vernon Porter, Secretary
February 5, 2004