

Letters to the editor for the week of May 27

GateHouse News Service

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WAYLAND — Volunteers needed to serve on Town Meeting Auxiliary Committee

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to a recommendation of the Town Meeting Procedures Review Committee, I have decided, as moderator, to appoint a committee, to be called the Town Meeting Auxiliary Committee, consisting of seven registered voters to consider proposals and to help make town meeting more comfortable and pleasant.

Among other proposals, I would expect the committee to consider the service of food and beverages in the vestibule, child care facilities during town meeting, and entertainment before town meeting. I would also expect the committee to suggest possible changes in the Moderator's Rules and Regulations to make town meeting more efficient and user friendly.

The members of the committee would be expected to serve without pay for one year starting on July 1, although members of the committee may be asked to continue to serve thereafter.

If you are interested in serving on the Town Meeting Auxiliary Committee, please send me your resume by mail to 32 Hampshire Road, Wayland MA 01778, or by e-mail to "pgossels@socialaw.com" no later than Monday, June 21. And thank you for volunteering.

*C. Peter R. Gossels
Town Moderator*

Thank you, Wayland

TO THE EDITOR:

The Wayland Neighbors for Responsible Land Use thank all who showed support for Article 15 regarding the preservation of Dudley Woods. We appreciate your willingness to learn about Dudley Woods, to display lawn signs, and to participate at Town Meeting.

We especially appreciate those of you who have reached out to our group in the days since Town Meeting. Your encouragement has meant a great deal to us. It has been an inspiring process, where lifelong residents met new neighbors, neighborhoods became more cohesive, and there has been a melding of like-minded Wayland citizens.

As the summer progresses, we hope that Wayland residents will come and visit the area, swim in Dudley Pond, and perhaps enjoy a picnic in Dudley Woods. Although Article 15 did not obtain the necessary two-thirds vote, Wayland residents spoke loud and clear regarding their wishes for Dudley Woods. The vast majority of people at Town Meeting (63 percent) agreed that Dudley Woods should remain free of development and retain its natural beauty. The majority of residents at Town Meeting voted to preserve this precious asset of our town. Your desire and opinions will not go unnoticed. Our representatives heard your voice. For that, we thank you!

Again, we hope you will enjoy this land that we have all worked so hard to preserve. If you are interested in a tour of the woods, have questions about our group or just want to talk about Dudley Woods, we invite you to e-mail us at "WaylandNeighbors4rlu@gmail.com" or follow us on Facebook. Again, many thanks for your support and encouragement for the future.

Wayland Neighbors for Responsible Land Use

Confident we will all reach good conclusion

TO THE EDITOR:

We write to commend the amazing work the proponents of Article 15 accomplished to gain attention and support for placing permanent restrictions on land they promoted as "Dudley Woods." Their success reflects the high value that people in Wayland have for protecting Dudley Pond and securing conservation land. Article 15 positioned them to advance both of those causes at one time.

While we are sure that many people are disappointed with the outcome of the vote, we believe that, working together, we will ultimately find ways to benefit the pond, the neighborhood and the town. Those of us who advocate for affordable housing share a commitment to preservation of open space and protection of our water resources. We are, after all, citizens of the town and members of the community – none of us is one-dimensional.

To us, the real work begins now. We consider the vote to be a charge from the townspeople – they are trusting that we will perform the necessary due diligence and develop a responsible proposal for going forward.

We invite Dudley Pond neighbors and non-neighbors alike who are concerned about affordable housing, conservation, Dudley Pond, and the character of our town to lend their time and talents to the job of finding the right uses for this property and balancing the competing interests at play.

Because the land has not yet been professionally examined, we don't know what is possible, and we certainly have different ideas of what is desirable. Nonetheless, we are confident that, with reliable information and through dialogue and engagement, we'll eventually reach a conclusion that we can all live with.

*Mary Antes (chairwoman), Russell Ashton, Bret Francis, Charlie Raskin and Susan Weinstein
Wayland Housing Authority Board of Commissioners*

High tax rate has become major factor in depressing home values

TO THE EDITOR:

I'd like to suggest that the letter from George Harris published in last week's Town Crier ("High taxes do not make Wayland

more desirable") be read as an invocation at every meeting of town boards where budget matters are considered. Mr. Harris contrasts our tax rate of \$17.78 per \$1,000 of valuation with the rates of nearby towns top-rated by Boston magazine including Natick (\$11.67) and Weston (\$11.10). He notes that while our tax rate has been growing, neighbor towns that have tempered their tax increases in the last decade have seen their property valuations grow 59.8 percent while our valuations have only increased 35.3 percent.

He asks the rhetorical question, "Why buy in Wayland and pay higher taxes when your children can get an equally good or better education elsewhere at a lower cost (and your property value will appreciate faster as well)?"

I believe Mr. Harris is correct that our high tax rate has become a major factor depressing our home values. This might be only an irritation for longtime residents like my wife and I who have no plans or desire to move except that we cannot afford to pay this much, particularly when our family HMO premiums have climbed above \$1,400 per month (don't get me started on that!). Friends from other towns can't believe the taxes on our three-bedroom ranch on a third of an acre in Cochituate are now more than \$7,000 per year. If we owned a similarly valued house in Natick, our taxes would be lower by \$4,600. With those savings, we might be able to live the life we pictured in Wayland instead of just living here.

We love our town, and I will admit to contributing to the problem by voting for many of the overrides that seemed so necessary time and time again. But by reaching to fund every service and support so many worthwhile projects, the cumulative effect is that we have outstripped my ability to pay. With our taxes expected to rise still higher when spending for the new High School starts, I am worried for my family's financial future.

One ray of hope is that we passed the Town Meeting article to have an independent review of the school budget. As the largest driver of town costs, the school budget has long been impenetrable by everyone, so I look forward to the ability to implement savings opportunities the study will likely suggest. But we must do more. We need the volunteers who serve on our town boards to be even more hard-nosed about spending so that we can reduce the rate of tax increases.

For example, I can imagine that for officials responsible for North Cemetery, paving those roads is a worthwhile priority.

Similarly, those in charge of the town beach see the need for an improved bathhouse. But I simply can't afford these projects.

We need a multi-decade austerity program to reduce the rate of tax increases so that in the far future, Wayland will be merely a high-cost town instead of ruinously expensive.

*Roger Horine
Maguire Road*

How not to change Wayland town meeting

TO THE EDITOR:

My friend, Larry Krakauer, wants to change Wayland town meeting by eliminating debate about the capital budget ("Town meeting floor is bad place for micro-management," May 20). He says town meeting "is just about the worst possible place to make well-reasoned financial choices." He thinks these decisions should be made instead at meetings of the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee and other boards.

In other words, voters should come to town meeting prepared to rubber-stamp previous board decisions on the budget.

This extraordinary proposal would utterly destroy our treasured town meeting institution and disenfranchise all voters.

Mr. Krakauer on numerous occasions has stated that town meeting is unqualified to deal with certain issues beyond its ken. In those instances, known best by Mr. Krakauer, we should defer to our well-intentioned town officials, even though they may be non-elected (and occasionally imperfect).

First of all, the capital budget this year amounted to \$4,515,000. The \$2 million debt exclusion portion barely passed by 59 votes at the polls. Voting on whether and how to spend \$4.5 million is not exactly micro-managing the capital budget. It is the very essence of town meeting.

But Mr. Krakauer wants this debate to be transferred from town meeting to board meetings. I agree that more public debate at board meetings would be helpful to clarify the issues. No public hearings were held this year on new capital spending requests. By the time various boards go public with the budget, it's a done deal. Mr. Krakauer should prevail on the FinCom to invite active public participation in the budget formulation process, not after it is completed.

Even if it were possible for citizens to interact meaningfully with boards on the capital budget before town meeting, that is an unreasonable burden to place on busy voters who do not have time to track and attend meetings. They have every right under the law to come to town meeting to question or challenge their government's requests for money and power. The purpose of town meeting is not simply to ratify government's proposals. It is to engage in purposeful debate and decision-making.

Article 5 ran into trouble because in this current recession, the FinCom provided inadequate information to justify the capital budget, either in the warrant or in its presentation to town meeting. In its report on page 8 of the warrant, it devotes all of three paragraphs to explaining the \$4.5 million capital budget, most of which is merely a recapitulation of the budget that appears on page 29. The FinCom devoted more space to opposing Article 20, an innocuous proposal to require posting of already existing board policies (at almost no cost), than to explaining and justifying a multi-million dollar capital budget.

Mr. Krakauer also opposes menu overrides. He predicts that a menu override would mean that nothing would ever get done. But didn't we have menu voting under the budget of Article 5? A few items were voted down, but most passed. Mr. Krakauer's dire prediction is baseless.

*George H. Harris
Holiday Road*

Privatize certain town services for efficiency

TO THE EDITOR:

In the last month, I have called the Wayland Department of Public Works five times to request the sidewalks on West Plain Street, Old Connecticut Path and Cochituate Road be cleaned. There is dirt from the spring, sand from the winter and leaves from the fall covering stretches of this route which is popular with runners, walkers and schoolchildren riding their bikes.

Each time I called, whether I spoke to a person or left a message, I gave my name and phone number as requested, but have yet to receive a call back or see this problem ameliorated. It is a safety issue and in addition, the trees and bushes are beginning to grow out obstructing the sidewalks.

So you can imagine how I felt when I saw the hedges surrounding the DPW garage being trimmed two weeks ago and last week the tree out front was being weeded.

Is it any wonder the majority of the American people doubt their government, whether federal, state or local, can deliver

constituent services efficiently or effectively?

Wayland should consider privatizing certain town services as it would ensure competition which promotes efficiency.

*Joseph Barrett
Holbrook Road*

I miss the library

TO THE EDITOR:

It is wonderful our library is being reconstructed and that surrounding libraries are supporting our community with library services, but just in case anyone thinks townsfolk are faring well without a library, I am taking this opportunity to tell you I am not.

I miss the library. I miss the convenience of quickly running over there at a moment's notice. I miss having the ability of riding my bike over with my kids, hanging out in the children's room and seeing them excited to bump into their classmates.

I miss knowing the activity that typically happens there, all the programming and human connection even when I'm not there, that isn't happening. Driving by the library these days is rather depressing. It seems like a lifeless shell of a building even though I know there are people hard at work inside to reopen it.

It is the buzz of community life I miss. Not having a library has made me realize I've taken it for granted. I used to be in the library several times a week so I'm feeling the loss. I know full well how close other libraries are and the services they can provide me. I've always visited them before our library was flooded and will continue using them when our library reopens. But they cannot take the place of my community library where I bump into my neighbors and am recognized by the staff.

I know the library is being rebuilt and I applaud the town for making it happen quickly. I just wanted to let you know I miss the library in case there is a thought in anyone's mind that we could possibly live without it.

*Rachel Sideman-Kurtz
Plain Road*

Thank you for successful can drive

TO THE EDITOR:

The Wayland Creative Arts Parents Association (CAPA) would like to say "thank you" to the Wayland community at large, and especially to the small but mighty group of volunteers who helped make our recent Spring Can & Bottle Drive a success.

CAPA is dedicated to the continued support of the creative and performing arts programs at Wayland High School and we deeply appreciate everyone who contributed their recyclable bottles and cans on May 8, especially those familiar faces who support us year after year.

Special thanks to our student helpers – Jonah Greenawalt, Doug Curtin, Haylee Rosenblatt, Jade Donaldson, Seth Lifland and Patrick Curtin – and to the following parents – Tom Donaldson, Sean Boyle, Rose Dunn, MaryBeth Finch, Mike Tersoff, Wendy Tyra, Bob Gimlich, Carl Rosenblatt and Kathy Curtin.

Creative Arts Parents Association

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Comments (9)

Dawn Davies

3 days ago

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Thank you, Roger! Great letter.

It is hard to miss that the tenor of the letters on this page are changing.

ysiadeam

3 days ago

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Mr. Harris - once again how right you are. The Finance Committee did not hold a public hearing on the capital budget this year. Hence, Wayland citizens were not afforded the opportunity to provide input until Town Meeting.

The Finance Committee claims that they received over \$8 million in Capital Requests this year. Without public input, the FinCom whittled down these requests to

\$4.5 million. Here's an idea - how about the FinCom hold public hearings in the beginning - when all the capital requests are made. And let the public provide input as to which items should end up on the ballot and the warrant. Maybe then Mr. Krakauer can get his wish - and we will all show up at Town Meeting to rubber stamp what we the public have already agreed upon!

wayland voter
2 days ago
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Report Abuse

No disrespect to Natick, but it's hardly a peer district. And if you think Weston is such a bargain, try buying a house there and see if the tax load is lower.

Yes we're being choked by the high cost of health care. MA health insurance costs are 25% higher than the national average.

villagevoice
2 days ago
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We are being choked by more than health care costs. Citizens are approving Town expenditures which are not prudent in these economic times. There seems to be no regard for those residents in town who do not have a lot of disposable income. It is ironic that some want low income housing but are blind to what their votes for more expenditures are doing which force out of town people who have lived here for decades. I have heard some say 'Let them leave.'

WaylandWatcher
1 day ago
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villagevoice - I've been hearing the same thing for years... 'Let them leave' or 'If you can't afford it then move on out'

The Wayland divide has been driven wider and wider by an ever ending quest to Save Our Services which is successful in forcing its fiscal will because so many are apathetic. So in a way we can't blame Save Our Services, we have to blame ourselves for not showing up and voting and giving up.

Always remember, one person, one vote and one vote can change an entire election.

wayland voter
1 day ago
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'Forcing its fiscal will'? It's a democracy and as you have pointed out, each voter has one vote. Nobody is forced to do anything.

WaylandWatcher
20 hours ago
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wayland voter - you are correct, can't argue with that.

I also said 'so many are apathetic' and this allows SOS to force its fiscal will. Then I went on to say 'we have to blame ourselves for not showing up and voting'

So SOS gets to run Wayland because the voters are apathetic by majority.

I think we both agree.

wayland voter

9 hours ago

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Nope I can't agree with you. I don't believe SOS runs Wayland nor do I believe it has forced its fiscal will. If anyone runs Wayland, it's the selectmen, but they don't always get what they want so it would be tough to say they run everything. At least we agree on one person, one vote though.

WaylandWatcher

5 hours ago

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Well I'm glad we agree on the one person, one vote thing...

The selectmen do run Wayland, and yes its encouraging to see that the selectmen don't seem to have as much absolute control as they used to. This is a positive thing and this means that some degree of power is being distributed back to the people in general.

But there still is an imbalance and SOS and the selectmen are very tightly coupled. SOS was very helpful to them in getting the vote out so they could defeat their opponents and so that they could be in office. This is well known. And remember, 7 of the most powerful people in Wayland met at the head of SOS at a closed door meeting last year to give a 'state of the town' presentation to the PAC who supported them. So this tight coupling is just one manifestation of the control that SOS has. Although a similar meeting of the same magnitude is not as well known to have occurred in 2010. It may have occurred but just not quite as 'in your face' as it was in 2009.

But, again your right, this control does not seem to be at the same level as it was before. Its certainly there and present but just diminished to a degree. Who knows what the future will bring however?

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Aol Health.

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