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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** DEPARTMENT HEADS  
**FROM:** JOHN F. ROONEY, III  
**SUBJECT:** ME  
**DATE:** MARCH 28, 2017  
**CC:** BOARD OF SELECTMEN



It is with utmost sincerity and honesty that I say, no shout, "Thank You," to each of you for allowing me to work with you over the past seven years. I compose this message and am sending you this impersonal note as I have delivered to the Town Clerk my resignation as a member of the Board of Selectmen effective May 8, 2018. (The reason for the length of the advanced notice will become apparent as you read on.) And, while I vow to get together with each of you personally, until then it is vital that, whether you concur or disagree with me, each of you fully understand the foundation for my decision.

As most of you know, I have overseen and guided the operation of a successful medium-sized business, employing over seventy-five individuals, for a number of decades. As such, when I say that the Town is amazingly blessed to have you as Department Heads, I know from where I speak. Your kindness, unselfishness, professionalism, expertise, and commitment to each other and to the Town's residents is categorically unconditional, and you should individually take immense pride in what you have accomplished and continue to accomplish.

I, on the other hand, after many meetings and discussions with residents at meetings, at the transfer station, via e-mail and on the telephone, have come to the realization, perhaps much later than one would have thought, that the priorities I envision for the Town are, at times, incongruous with many Town residents. Particularly, the sentiment underlying the citizen's petitions identified in Special Town Meeting Articles 6 and 7, which will take center stage in a matter of weeks at the Annual Town Meeting, make it clear to me that the Town finds itself at a critical juncture.

We should all be very troubled about the potential to allow the recall of elected officials or those appointed to boards and committees simply because

of disagreement with a decision, *viz.*, a political decision, as opposed to recall based upon misconduct. While I am a true believer in elections, term limits, as well as a recall provision based upon misconduct, the passage of these Articles creates the real likelihood of decisions being made that are not in the best interest of the entire Town. As was mentioned at Special Town Meeting by one of the primary sponsors of these Articles, if approved, they will allow a small number of residents to “coerce” (his word) elected officials and appointed volunteers to vote a certain way or face the consequences of a recall petition.<sup>1</sup> This is diametrically antithetical to my way of thinking.

I have come to the conclusion, after much reflection, that I can more effectively mount an insistent and objective opposition and resolutely oppose these Articles, without an aura of bias or partiality. Consequently, I have alerted the Town Clerk of my future resignation and my intention not to seek reelection to the Board of Selectmen upon the expiration of my term in 2018. (While there may be those who believe I should immediately resign, I do not for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that there are a number of pending issues, ongoing projects, and unfinished business that I have worked tirelessly on over the last number of years that I feel compelled to see to conclusion. This has been a hard decision, one that I have agonized over for too long, and is neither made summarily nor lightly.)

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<sup>1</sup> By way of illustration, if one of my Board members happened to be in opposition to Special Town Meeting Article 1, perhaps because of the proposed cost of the land purchase or the cost of future construction, or for whatever reason, and those holding a contrary view had failed in their coercive efforts to secure the “right” vote, he/she could be the immediate subject of a recall petition simply for believing and voting for what that member believed was in the best interest of the Town, a position that turned out to be “unpopular.” That is wrong and we as a Town cannot sit back and let that happen. The health of the Town and the way decisions are made moving forward are much more important than me seeking an additional term as a member of the Board of Selectmen.

Selectmen do not and should not sit as enlightened philosopher-kings and –queens or as a Platonic Guardian thinking that they are somehow smarter and wiser than people whom they serve. The democratic process must always be guarded and treasured, and it is inconsistent with those representative tenets when politics or coercion drives a decision rather than thoughtful voting and trying your best to do the right thing.

In addition to the precarious junction we find ourselves with these Articles, it seems ill-fated and unfortunate that the days of compromise, the days when differing positions could gather in one room and work out an agreeable consensus, the days when civility was primary and dominated and governed relationships, are distant and isolated objects in the Town's rearview mirror with the likelihood of return becoming fainter each day. The personal animus that pervades and at times dominates the discussion is penetratingly mordant, and is neither productive nor something I am willing to put my family through beyond the expiration of my current term. The residents need to elect and deserve someone who echoes their character, demeanor, ideals and temperament, and if decisions are to be made based upon "coercion" and politics, that someone is certainly not me. I will never, under any circumstances, compromise my values and integrity.

Please do not think I am being fatalistic. I am not, nor should you be. I am, though, a pragmatic realist with imperfect and insufficient time to offer others. I remain sanguine that we can overcome the coercion mentality and I plan to concentrate full efforts at garnering resistance to Articles 6 and 7. Also, I genuinely hope with all of my being that the fury, anger and divisiveness that dominates our meetings and debate will come to an end with the election of like-minded, thoughtful and reflective representatives to boards and committees.

Without question, the noblest part of my journey that I will forever cherish, something which has made this entire endeavor so meaningful and worthwhile and one I would never change, has been the opportunity to meet so many awesome and remarkable people, especially all of you. Friendship, like wine, gets better with age, and I am confident that the friendships I have made with all of you will continue to season and blend for many years to come.

Again, thank you for your service to the Town, for your patience with me, and for unselfish willingness – without a scintilla of annoyed inconvenience - to guide me through the morass that is municipal government. I will continue to try and make decisions that are in the best interest of the Town, and I know I can count on your guidance and support until I step down. I will always remain beholden and indebted to you for everything you have done for me. Godspeed.

JR

PS To the extent I have left anyone off this email, it was neither intentional nor from lack of effort. Please do me a favor and make sure it gets to every Department Head and feel free, without hesitation, to share it with whomever you so choose, but especially the Town's invaluable and hard-working employees.