

Dear Select Board members,

As one of the relatively few members of the public present at last night's select board meeting I also feel compelled to comment as I was unable to do so at the meeting.

I'm Jeff Peet and I live on 9 Atwood Rd. I served for a couple years on the Conservation Commission and was able to get a flavor for the incredible amount of time and energy the committee volunteers in this town put into making our town a better place to live. I cannot say how grateful I am for the service they, along with the select board, provide this town. The thanks and respect deserved for this service cannot be overstated.

It is part of the job of the select board to ensure that dialogue between the board and the town's committees is an ongoing process. So while it is completely normal and acceptable for the selectboard to have differences of opinion with the various town committees and their members, using the surprise withholding of committee reappointments as a means to express those general grievances is absolutely unacceptable. By its very nature, this takes what should be a productive discussion about the town's priorities and turns it into a personal attack on whichever member happens to be up for reappointment. There was a lot of mention of rubber stamps in the previous meeting but my feeling is that by the time a re-appointment finally comes around, it absolutely should be a rubber stamp except in the most extreme of cases and after many good faith attempts to improve the situation. In my day job I manage a number of people and one of the very first things they teach at managers school is that you have failed as a manager if you are giving surprising feedback at an annual review.

More specifically on the June 18 meeting and speaking as someone unfamiliar with the personal history and politics between the members of the board and the committees, the tone and nature of the direct personal attacks on the two long-time town volunteers who were denied reappointment was completely unacceptable. The idea that a long time volunteer's committee appointment should be taken away, not because of their performance on the committee, but because of public comments made outside their committee role is wholly inappropriate. Perhaps this was not the only reason for the denial, but it was the main reason put forth by the board at the meeting. No specific reason for the other denial was given beyond vague comments about the failure of the committee to deliver results. As the board clearly stated, bringing affordable housing to Southborough is extremely hard. Volunteers working in good faith

over many years in a committee should not be kicked off because the committee as a whole is generally failing to achieve results, especially when no one more qualified is in line to join and the town is facing key deadlines.

I recommend the board go back and watch the video of these exchanges and try to imagine viewing it as someone from the outside. It wasn't pretty. I feel that at the very least a formal letter is due to all the committee members who were held apologizing for the way they were treated over the last two meetings signed by all the members of the select board. I also recommend the select board reconsider its denial decisions in a future meeting.

Finally, on the issues of open space and affordable housing, Southborough is a town of many people each of whom have a plethora of opinions and priorities. While many, including myself, agree that affordable housing is a key priority for the town, that absolutely does not mean we don't also deeply value things like caring for and expanding open space. These goals are not wholly incompatible and each proposal needs to be taken individually. It absolutely should be the role of open space to comment and propose ideas for improvements to new developments though, as you know, they have no authority to force the implementation of those proposals on anyone. For affordable housing to be expanded in Southborough compromises will have to be made and this can only be done with all the stakeholders working together in good faith. Please, let's try to work together to maximize both new housing options and open space for the benefit of the whole town.

Sincerely,

-Jeff Peet

9 Atwood Rd.

Southborough, MA