

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

Promoting community involvement and communication



Marta Reese Flanagan

Update
25 January 2024

Update on What is Happening with Town Government

Wellfleet's town government has been in turmoil of late, as the *Provincetown Independent* has been chronicling. Both Rich Waldo, the Town Administrator (18 months on the job), and Silvio Genao, the Assistant Town Administrator (after 3 months and an offer to become acting town administrator), have resigned.

Last month 15 town employees sent a letter to the Selectboard to complain about its "failure to support current staff" or to "create a productive, attractive, or even safe work environment" for town employees. There has been no reply from the Selectboard.

These problems and other issues promoted the WSRA's Board of Directors to send a letter to the Selectboard this month to express our concern with what is happening, followed by a second letter in response to comments made about our first letter at a Selectboard meeting. A short [news story](#) on this appeared in this week's *Independent*.

We wanted you to see what we have written. Both letters are copied below. We are monitoring what is happening in town and will send you more information soon. Also, the Wellfleet Community Forum will hold a forum on February 5th to discuss the issues revolving around town governance and what they are calling the "state of the town." As soon as we have the Zoom link, we will send it out.

On a more positive note, the Selectboard has been holding open interviews for an acting town administrator. It has also tried to limit the endless hours of its meetings and to control the vitriol that has

characterized many of the meetings.

In an unrelated development, the town received welcome news this week: The state announced long-awaited funding which will permit construction to begin on the [Residences at Lawrence Hill](#), the 46 unit of desperately needed affordable housing to be built on town-owned land opposite the elementary school.

Susan Reverby, for the WSRA Board

First Letter to the Selectboard

January 8, 2024

Dear Members of the Selectboard:

The Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association makes clear in our mission statement that we are committed to:

- preserving the qualities that endow Wellfleet with its unique sense of place,
- contributing to the health and vitality of community in every season, and
- respecting the year-round residents and town employees
- who are responsible for managing the community's affairs.

Our board of directors has watched with dismay the ongoing pattern of dysfunction within Wellfleet town government. It is heartbreaking to stand by helplessly as our beloved town stumbles from one crisis to the next:

- The town's years-long financial accounting problems, the lack of stable executive leadership with six Town Administrators during the past decade;
- the incivility evident among members of the Selectboard;
- the anger members of the community direct at public officials and town staff;
- the appearance of opacity in the Selectboard's failure to release unredacted minutes of its June executive session;
- the persistent morale issues plaguing our municipal workforce;
- the Selectboard's failure to respond to the concerns town staff have raised, and despite the many fiscal needs that confront the community, the Selectboard's decision to incur a \$4.5 million penalty rather than work cooperatively with a federal government agency to facilitate the dredging of harbor's mooring area.

Perhaps most disturbing is the apparent reluctance among the many community-minded Wellfleet residents to run for seats on the Selectboard. Acrimony, endless meetings, and the challenges facing the town may be contributing to the apparent reluctance many seem to feel about serving on the Selectboard.

Yet, it is the Selectboard that is in the best position to improve the functioning of town government. We know you have been trying to do this, yet alas the same issues are raised over and over by the same people with no resolution. We would like to see the Selectboard create and immediately implement a plan for restoring a modicum of stability to Wellfleet town government. This needs to be the Selectboard's overriding priority. May we suggest a good first step would be to ensure that Selectboard meetings are consistently respectful, orderly, expeditious and deliberative.

We raise these concerns because we care deeply about Wellfleet and are eager to see the town government in a position to address the many forward-looking policy challenges we face, such as water quality in our waterways and affordable housing.

It took years for town governance to reach the current set of circumstances. It will take time and a great deal of effort and good will to restore town governance. If our Association and members of the seasonal community can help, we would welcome an opportunity to sit down with the Selectboard to explore how we might be useful to you and the town.

Respectfully,

Susan Reverby for the Board of Directors of the Wellfleet
Seasonal Residents Association

Second Letter to the Selectboard

January 18, 2024

Dear Members of the Selectboard:

We were heartened to learn that Tim Sayre, the Selectboard member who we understand is delegated to do correspondence for the board, read the letter that the Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association submitted to the Selectboard last week. The letter expanded upon Susan Reverby's comments (on behalf of our board of directors) at the public speaking period at the previous Selectboard meeting.

However, we are dismayed that his response was to quibble with a technicality in one of eight bulleted points, missing (or just failing to respond to) the letter's message about "the ongoing pattern of dysfunction within Wellfleet town government."

Our letter noted that the Selectboard "is in the best position to improve the functioning of town government." We urged the Selectboard to "create and immediately implement a plan for restoring a modicum of stability to Wellfleet town government" and suggested "a good first step would be to ensure that Selectboard meetings are consistently respectful, orderly, expeditious and deliberative."

That said, we have noted and support chair Barbara Carboni's efforts to restore civility by allowing more time for public comments and by explaining the legal difference between freedom of speech and freedom to behave badly. Nonetheless, the distrust of town government and its officials is still very evident at the meetings.

On behalf of the Association and its members, we also offered to sit down with the Selectboard to explore how the seasonal community might be able to help the town address the many challenges confronting our beloved Wellfleet. The offer still stands.

Respectfully,
Susan Reverby
for the Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association Board of Directors



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