

Dear Select Board Member Tracy Hardekopf,

I have some questions below pertaining to the Select Board meetings on 3/23/2020 and 4/13/2020, mostly relating to the issue of the warrant articles. I was hoping you could take some time to respond to these questions. If we don't hear back from you by 4/22/2020, we will go to print with what we already have. This line of questioning would allow you to clarify the record so there are no misunderstandings, since we have these questions based on your testimony at the Select Board meetings, in addition to feedback that we have received from members of the community.

- Why did you apologize regarding the response to the petition warrant article correspondence during the Select Board meeting on 4/13/2020?
 - Who were you apologizing to?
 - What were you apologizing for?
- How much extra time was expended in reference to petition article mailings? You indicated “a lot” of extra efforts and time was expended.
 - What extra efforts were expended?
 - How did the extra time and efforts pertain to being applied to the actual mailings of letters that the warrant articles specified?
- Based on the record of the Select Board meeting, you limited questions and comments from Select Board members. Why didn't you allow time for public comment on the matter of the warrant article correspondence from the petitioners, or the public in general?
- It's our understanding that the petitioners did participate through public comments, suggestions, and ideas from the community. Why did you request this type of participation after the fact? It was our understanding that, for an example, the nuclear non-proliferation petition was shared community-wide and interested residents attended an event at the Barrington Public Library on 1/23/2020 in the Children's Room. It was also our understanding that New Hampshire State Representative Matt Towne met with at least 30 community members at the Barrington Town News event on 1/13/2020 and discussed the warrant article in depth with residents from a variety of different areas in Barrington before obtaining the 25 required signatures to submit the warrant article. We also understood that Rep. Towne's warrant article was like those in at least 53 other towns and cities across New Hampshire, and he had taken into consideration input from outside of Barrington as well. With these facts in mind, do you still think the warrant articles were not reached through a democratic process? Both events were advertised to the public at least 2 weeks in advance on Barrington Town News, in addition to other means of advertisement, such as on Facebook, or on the Library's website.
- How do you think townspeople bringing their prospective warrant articles to the Select Board in the future will improve the democratic process? Was this stated because a majority of the Select Board apparently disagreed with the nature of the warrant articles? Was this the reason why the Select Board didn't want to comply with the requirements of the warrant articles?
- Would the Select Board be willing to share copies or scanned PDF files of the letters that were sent out?
- Why did you support sending out the letters at the 3/23/2020 meeting, and then change your tune at the 4/13/2020 meeting?

- Is the requirement to bring prospective warrant articles before the Select Board going to become official town policy? If so, can you see how this could suppress petitioners from pursuing prospective warrant articles?
- When you stated that townspeople should bring warrant articles before the Select Board, “so that we can ensure that all of these topics are appropriately discussed – even ones such as the moral imperatives” like the nuclear non-proliferation warrant article, did you really mean that the Select Board should be able to decide whether the topics are appropriate to be on a warrant article? And/or have you heard any of the other Select Board officials expressing this point of view?
- Do you really believe that a Select Board meeting is the proper place to be discussing sensitive warrant articles, like the nuclear non-proliferation warrant article, since the meetings are video taped and put on YouTube? Having a public forum on matters of national security could attract a very diverse group of viewers to such a video, including, potentially, persons that do not live in Barrington, and perhaps even persons that don’t live in the United States. Is the Town of Barrington prepared for such an audience?
- On 4/13/2020 during the Select Board meeting, you indicated that there was some correspondence regarding the warrant articles, yet you didn’t share any. Were there any responses from the letters sent out from the Select Board? If so, could the Select Board make this information available to the public?
- Considering the introduction of potential regulation of how warrant articles are presented to the town on 4/13/2020, and the majority of the Select Board that didn’t want to comply with the warrant articles that passed on 3/23/2020, and the apology, and the thanks to the Select Board for putting in ‘extra time’ to comply with the warrant articles, is it safe to say that the Select Board didn’t think sending out the letters was appropriate, even though the warrant articles passed by a majority of the voters? If so, could you please elaborate on the behind-the-scenes communications that took place regarding this matter? We can’t expect that there were no behind-closed-doors communications on this matter due to the circumstances of your change in tone from 3/23/2020 to 4/13/2020. Are members of the Select Board allowed to communicate with each other outside of a public meeting?
- Do you think that perhaps the petitioners of the warrant articles felt that the letters coming from the town would have a greater bearing on the recipients than if the letters came from private citizens? If so, why would the Select Board ask the petitioners to send the letters themselves, when the warrant articles specifically stated that the Select Board would send the letters if the articles passed? Is the Select Board not elected by the public through the same process of allowing Barrington residents to cast their vote?
- Were there things that the members of the Select Board, such as yourself, would have liked to see in the language of the in-question warrant articles? Or was there dissent in their existence?
- You stated that you sent the letters to focus on more pressing issues, such as the global pandemic. We were wondering what work the Select Board has done regarding the global pandemic. Has the Select Board been in communication with the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)? We want to do a separate article on what the Select Board has been doing to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Would you be willing to elaborate in more detail what the Select Board has accomplished with regards to this more pressing issue?

Please contact me if you have any questions about our inquiry. Also feel free to provide additional information to clarify the Select Board's positions on any of these issues, or any other issues. Our purpose as a newspaper is to report the news, and not to finger point, which is why we are covering both sides of the dispute over the warrant articles. We hope you'll participate in this effort to clarify the positions of each side so that progress can be made on this very pressing issue.

Sincerely,

--Patrick R. McElhiney

Chief Editor

Barrington Town News