

## **REPORT OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN LISTENING SESSION SUBCOMMITTEE**

On January 9, 2017, the Wayland Board of Selectmen appointed Lea Anderson and Mary Antes as members of the BoS Listening Session Subcommittee (BoSLSS). The purpose of the subcommittee was to hold approximately ten meetings in January and February 2017 to hear from residents about how Wayland's local government is working for them, what can be improved, and through what means residents would like to receive communication from and about town government.

At the conclusion of the meetings, the subcommittee compiled a report summarizing the conversations and issued a report to the Board of Selectmen, the participants of the meetings, and the public.

The BoSLSS invited approximately 100 regular attendees of Annual Town Meeting and approximately 100 Wayland residents selected at random from the town census information. The invitation was mailed on January 16, 2017.

Nine 1½ hour Listening Sessions were scheduled and seven were held:

Thursday, January 26, 7 pm Wayland Public Library  
Saturday, January 28, 10:30 am, Wayland Public Library (moved to First Parish Church)  
Monday, January 30, 10 am, Broomstones Curling Club  
Tuesday, January 31, 1:30 pm, Bent Park  
Sunday, February 5, 2:30 pm, Wayland Public Library  
Wednesday, February 8, 10 am, Tentative (cancelled - lack of response)  
Thursday, February 9, 1:30 pm, Wayland Public Library (cancelled - snowstorm)  
Wednesday, February 15, 7:30 pm, Green Way Condominiums  
Wednesday, February 22, 1 pm, Senior Center

Additional meetings of the BoSLSS were held on January 13 and March 23, 2017 to plan the sessions, approve minutes, and develop a report after the sessions.

Each Listening Session had a facilitator and at least one selectman to take notes. Lynne Cavanaugh and Jean Milburn served as facilitators. Each offered variations of the following questions:

- What town services do you use most often and how well do they serve your needs? How could they be improved?
- What are three things in Wayland Town Government that are working well and you don't want to see changed? What three things would you like to see changed?
- Do you participate in town activities and town-sponsored events? Why or why not?
- What would encourage you to take advantage of these activities and services?
- Many feel that Wayland taxes are high. What services might you be willing to forgo in order to add new or additional services or reduce taxes?
- What is the best way for the town to provide you with information on a regular basis?
- Do you have skills that you would be willing to share with the town on a short-term, one-shot, or regular basis? What is keeping you from joining a board or committee?
- Do you have concerns or comments that have not already been mentioned?

A total of 35 citizens (one citizen attended 3 sessions, so there were 33 distinct participants) attended a listening session. There was a fairly even distribution among the four precincts and participants ranged in age from mid-30's to 90+.

While the feedback is not statistically significant in terms of being representative of the town, it is useful. It shows what is on people's minds, where there might be issues that come up consistently, and what might be possible solutions. (Detailed meeting notes of each session are available as part of the minutes on the town website.)

## **WHAT TOWN SERVICES ARE USED MOST OFTEN AND HOW WELL DO THEY SERVE RESIDENTS' NEEDS**

This section of the summary is organized in alphabetical order by Town department or committee. Specific suggestions are highlighted in bold.

### **ASSESSOR**

The discussion was generally positive with comments about the department's helpfulness. A previous issue regarding difficulty correcting erroneous information on property cards was mentioned.

A **suggestion** was made that exemption certificates should be sent to the bank that handles payment of taxes. A resident expressed concern that an old bank had stopped forwarding tax bills and that there was no address on the tax bill.

### **BUILDING AND ZONING**

This was one of the most actively discussed topics. Comments were focused on two major areas: process (in general and related to 150 Main St. in particular) and qualifications of board members.

Some commented that the system is not working and that there is a lack of confidence in land use boards. Board members seem to be listening and are respectful, but they don't care.

Several participants at multiple meetings expressed frustration regarding how to get a permit, calling it a scavenger hunt. There is no one place to go; the process is not programmatic; and it is extremely disorganized and frustrating. It takes a long time to get approvals even on projects on conforming lots. This is a problem in building, zoning, planning, conservation, and health departments. Some residents said that in other towns, one can go to a website and find a list of documents required. Several residents said that we need a way to answer the question, "how do I get a permit?" Two **suggestions** were offered. One was made that there be a screener with data at his/her fingertips to guide a permit seeker. The second was a video link to show the viewer the steps to getting a permit.

Two people said that a new medical practice in the town center is being held up in the permitting process. Having to appear before several boards that meet monthly and in consecutive order makes for a long permitting-process. For example, the Wastewater Management Committee will not meet until mid-February; then the applicants must go to the Board of Health in March for approval before being able to outfit their new offices. In this case, there must also be a test for asbestos in a building that is only four years old. The practice was scheduled to open in April and they won't be ready because of the permitting process. They chose to stay in Wayland and now regret that they didn't open their practice in Weston.

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One person said that experiences with the Building Department on smaller projects were positive.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) was mentioned multiple times. Two people said they needed stronger enforcement action (a neighbor's trailer and large equipment was parked adjacent to the home for three years without enforcement). Another said that her first interaction with the ZBA was very lengthy. Bylaws are written in a confusing way and she felt the town did not enforce the bylaws. She had to get an attorney but in the end, the project was denied and it turned out well. One person **suggested** listing ongoing cases on the ZBA agenda, not just new ones, so residents would know when the case they are interested in will be acted upon again. Communication with the public could be better.

On the topic of member qualifications, a long serving volunteer in town expressed concern about appointments to the ZBA. She wondered whether the Board of Selectmen questioned applicants' qualifications and personal agenda for wanting to serve on the ZBA. There was also a concern expressed that board members are not familiar with the town's Master Plan and give in to commercial development too often.

### **CONSERVATION**

Many people expressed appreciation for conservation land and open space. Some said that parks and trails are working well. Several mentioned the success of the Mainstone process. One person mentioned liking the community gardens.

Some **suggested** that we need to encourage more use of passive recreational space. Compared to Weston, Lincoln, and Sudbury, we are lacking a network of trails. Weston has 64 miles of connected trails while Wayland has a bunch of islands.

One person **suggested** making productive use of conservation open space by planting hay while conservation has concerns about nesting areas in those fields. He said it is often easier to stick to the status quo than leading or making long-term plans. He urged good stewardship.

One person said that a conservation restriction means they are losing their privacy. They were told that the builder would provide a buffer but the builder has not done so. Several people felt that Conservation holds things up waiting for developers who have not done what they are required to do. Others felt that departments don't talk to each other or work together. For example, when Pelham Island Road needed to be repaved, neighbors felt that the Conservation Commission put up road blocks to the project. Another mentioned that Conservation holds up the removal of trees that have been tagged for removal. Some trees remain there year after year.

### **COUNCIL ON AGING (COA)**

The feedback was very positive about the services provided by the CoA. It was mentioned often as a favorite place that is well run and has a very good staff. People who volunteer for the SHINE program were lauded. Several people mentioned that the COA space was inadequate and that seniors do not get enough support in town.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)**

General comments were positive about the DPW. It was mentioned that the DPW was very helpful with the rail trail. One person expressed hope that the Board of Public Works (BoPW) would think in more creative ways and move towards a zero waste future; she is disappointed that the BoPW is unwilling to support the plastic bag ban.

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There are several departments within the DPW. Comments about each department are below.

#### **Water Department**

Several people had questions about the inconsistent and uneven enforcement of water bans: sprinklers are on when they shouldn't be and accusations that watering was going on when it wasn't. Several people asked why there are always water bans in Wayland but not in Weston. It was thought that the answer might be that the MWRA supplies Weston's water. There was also a question about the purpose of the \$30 administrative fee on the water bill and why it is listed separately.

People felt that protection of water resources is very important. Private wells are a problem because all water comes from the same aquifer. Some suggested that we need new water meters: one for irrigation and one for the residence. One condo owner thought that it was unfair that he had to pay a "commercial rate" because there was only one meter for the condo; he thinks the condo residents should to be treated as individual homeowners.

One person felt that the wellhead protection plan is very good, but was not being implemented. Wayland needs a longer term planning option; water could be focus for testing new ways of problem solving.

### **Transfer Station**

Most people expressed satisfaction with the transfer station. Comments ranged from great, very nice, helpful, clean, well-organized, don't mind going there. One person mentioned the dog treats. Another loves the workers' sense of humor. Several mentioned the environmental benefit of recycling; another appreciates being able to take yard waste.

**Suggestions** for improvement include wanting to see the transfer station open more often. One person was unsure of the difference between black trash bags and orange bags. One person expressed disappointment that there is no trash pick-up given the high tax rate.

### **Highway Department and Snow Removal**

Most people expressed satisfaction with the roads and road construction. It was noted that the DPW is planning road work long term and that is a good thing.

One noted that the Highway Department was very accommodating, helpful, and polite during the repaving of Old Connecticut Path; the workers fixed a driveway problem and put stones back properly on a wall. Another stated that during work on Rice Spring Lane and Happy Hollow Road, the Highway workers went out of their way to be helpful.

Questions were raised about improving the intersection at Routes 30 and 27 and Five Paths. There was a **suggestion** to delineate three distinct lanes on Old Connecticut Path heading east at the traffic light at Five Paths, with one left turn only, one straight ahead, and one for right turns. The driver has often experienced cars in the lane nearest the island going straight instead of turning left.

Most people thought that snow removal was done well on the roads; comments were good, rapid, spectacular snow removal. There was dissatisfaction expressed about the time it takes for snow removal on sidewalks outside of school districts and the lake of ice near the Depot. One person who lives in a neighborhood next to Weston noted that the Weston roads are cleared of snow better than in Wayland. It was also noted that mailboxes damaged by snow plows in Weston are repaired at town expense but not in Wayland.

One person felt that we use too much ice melt on the roads.

## **FACILITIES**

A few people mentioned liking the solar panels and wanting more energy efficiency and even making Wayland energy sustainable with a goal of zero waste. Another person would like to see funds allocated for certain renovations of Town Building, starting with temperature control, windows, and noise. In addition there is a lack of sufficient work space; currently some employees work in a room off the large hearing room under very poor conditions.

## **FINANCE/TREASURER/TAXES**

Some people expressed concern about taxes, wanting a smaller budget and lower tax bill. One person wondered why taxes continue to go up even though the Town Center is producing income for the town. Another felt that appraisals have gone way up and taxes have jumped so that we pay more taxes than Weston.

One person reported that the budget is difficult to read in the warrant; that the terminology and groupings are confusing. She suggested that we set up an annotated version on the website, grouped by function and outcome. The budget presentation is informative, but difficult to interpret.

One person noted that the new payment system wasn't ready when it was rolled out. Another said that the treasurer is required to put together a debt schedule in the annual report, but is still not doing it. She also said that long term benefits liability is a problem, the OPEB report was troubling; and that when we hire, money should be put aside for long term liability.

One citizen suggested the town conduct an anonymous survey of employees on ways to save money. Another suggested having one central office for paying bills.

One new resident was shocked about the lack of economic diversity; he said that Wayland has really smart people, great ideas, leaders of business. He is shocked that the economic base is the residential property tax and said that we need to make Wayland more business friendly.

## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Comments were generally positive. Several people mentioned that flu shots and blood pressure screening by the town nurse are good services. One person mentioned that it is difficult to find out what to do about septic systems in Wayland. She ended up going to the Sudbury website to find a list of contractors. Another point raised was the need for an on-line database at the Health Department. There is a sense that this is in the works but will require a huge clerical effort to transfer data.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Comments ranged from relief that we have hired a new IT Director to concern that there is still a lot of work to do. One person said that hacking is still causing concern, processes are not up to date, and we need to plan better, perhaps a five-year plan. Another said that data privacy and management are real issues but should not be complicated; the cost to fix the problems is trivial. The town should use https, not http but the issue is the host. One person has been working with the schools, but sees little progress although she is pleased with the new director.

One person talked about her experience making big changes in managing a business. She used to keep books by hand but three years ago set up a data base for workers to access. This has hugely improved delivery of service to customers. She thinks that data and technology exist to fix IT problems in Wayland.

Several people mentioned that the town website is poor and needs to be revamped. One no longer uses the website. The need for an on-line calendar of all town functions including the schools was discussed. (More on the website in the Communications section of report.)

## **LIBRARY**

The comments about the library were universally positive from the programming to communication to community-minded events like speakers and workshops. People love the Wayland Library.

Many people mentioned the need to improve the facility. Some want more study space. One said that at first she wanted to stay in the old building, but now is hoping to get a new library. Another thinks the Weston Library is great. Another is excited that the new library is proposed to be in Cochituate; she would spend more time at the new library if tea and coffee were available.

Concerns were expressed about what to do with the existing library, given the deed restriction. Some thought we should know what the options are for the current building before voting on the funding for a new library. Some thought it could be used as a branch library or for specialty stacks like antique books or it could be used for the arts, meetings, and performances. People don't want it demolished.

**Suggestions:** One person expressed a desire to have access to more specialty databases, such as scientific and medical, such as can be found at universities. Another wanted children's programming extended to weekends.

## **PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

People had lots to say about Planning. One mentioned liking the preservation of the historic character of the town although rules are difficult to navigate. There was concern that there are still open spaces that could be developed and need protection. Another just built a new home and does not want bigger homes than the land warrants. This person thinks that the feel of Wayland is nice and wants to preserve the character of the town.

Several people expressed appreciation for the conservation restriction on Mainstone eliminating the potential for development there. Another appreciated the Planning Board jumping in to help coordinate and take ownership of the Rail Trail project.

Some were disappointed about the Town Center and wondered what could be done to make it less cookie cutter and more useful to citizens. Concord Center was mentioned as a pipe dream; the Cheese Shop there is more than a store; it's a gathering place. One felt that the town bent too many rules, that the developer made promises that weren't kept, and that we didn't get the tax bonus we expected.

Another felt that Town government should have some role in making the voices of people known. The Economic Development Committee (EDC) met with the new owner of the Town Center to tell him what we want at Town Center, such as indoor playground, convening spaces, and store like the Cheese Shop in Concord.

One person noted that when Town Center decisions were made there were four developers on the BoS. S/he said that we paid for a water treatment plant we didn't need; that the Glezen Lane turn issue is due to a few people; and that the Selectmen had already reached a conclusion about the project. S/he is suspicious that the BoS was part of the development.

Now some are concerned about CVS in Cochituate and whether the rules were followed. One was curious about the original plan at 150 Main Street and why the town did not subsidize something the town

wanted. Some were told that town government was powerless to stop the CVS development. Another pointed out that the gas station across the street is now closed and wondered what that means for the location.

A question was raised about whether the town is really in tune with the Master Plan that was adopted a few years ago when we favored retaining our “rural” atmosphere. Why doesn’t that include over-development and excessive business traffic on sites near schools and recreational fields?

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Fire Department and Advanced Life Support (ALS)**

All comments were positive. Most people said that Fire Department and ALS are working very well, that the EMTs are excellent. One noted that Fire and Police were amazingly helpful on a building project, both friendly and welcoming.

### **Emergency Management**

There was only one comment about Emergency Management. It was noted that Pelham Island floods periodically and is occasionally cut off at each end of the road. While the town responds quickly it is not always with thought, even though there is usually a fair amount of warning with this kind of weather problem.

### **Police**

Many people expressed appreciation for the Police; they serve the town well. They think the prescription drug collection is a good program and the police presence in the schools is a nice role.

One resident asked for better, more-timely notice of projects that affect road closures. For example, the gas line replacement on Plain Road took six weeks; roads were closed far away from where the work was being done and residents couldn’t get to their houses or work. When asked, the police said they are not always kept informed of utility work.

One resident asked if the Chief is answerable to the Board of Selectmen. She thought that there was an over-reaction to the School Superintendent’s complaint about the former athletic director. She asked if the police in Wayland are part of the Restorative Justice program that the police departments in Concord and Lexington participate in.

A concern was expressed that we in Wayland are currently very aware and concerned about hate crimes against mosques and Jewish temples. There was a question about whether black men are likely to be subject to suspicion just because they are black.

## **RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Comments were generally good about recreation programs like the summer programs for kids, tennis, and the Town Beach, including boat rentals. One person referred to the beach as the jewel in the crown of Wayland; he said that the kids who work there are very nice and that the beach is well kept although dogs can sometimes be a problem. Several people asked why the beach is not kept open later in the season, at least until Labor Day; they would like the beach to remain open even if lifeguards have returned to school.

It was mentioned that Station 2 is a terrible space for art classes. One person liked that the recreation department helps kids who can't afford fees for programs.

## **RIVER'S EDGE**

Support for River's Edge was expressed by some, but there was concern about "ghettoizing" affordable housing. Some would prefer cluster zoning, with housing more integrated throughout the town. One person wondered whether we are looking at the Whole Foods Plaza as a site for affordable housing.

One person expressed concern about the need for better planning, coordination, decision-making, and project management. For example it is not enough to simply say we can solve the school bus and DPW laydown area; it should have been part of the plan.

## **SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

While the schools were not the focus of the Listening Sessions, there were a few comments about the schools working well. One new resident is pleased with Wayland schools, but said class sizes are big (25 and 27) for her kids. She thinks science should be taught two or three times per week in the elementary grades. In Wayland it is taught only once per week. She has met with the superintendent about these issues. Overall the family is very pleased with their decision to move to Wayland.

There was a single question on why vocational schools are still in the budget.

## **SELECTMEN/TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

A few people addressed the BoS directly. One long-time resident is looking for the selectmen to display wisdom, to be a guardian of what the town is and what it owns. For example, we have a lot of land in conservation because people thought it would be good. He felt that the former BoS did not display wisdom concerning the Town Center or the Public Safety Building, which floods. He does not think the current plan to sell eight or nine acres of town land on Route. 20 is wise; it is the only industrial land the town owns and the only space for the school buses and DPW laydown area without a large additional cost.

The same person expressed concern that we need long-term planning and principle-based decision-making. The town should acquire land for future municipal uses. The BoS should plan ahead for five, ten, or more years on a set of principles adopted by the town. He felt that the former board was unwise, biased, and saw a great development opportunity at the town center.

Many attendees thought that the listening sessions were very worthwhile. One said that public comment at meetings is more for complaints than to ask questions to become a better informed voter; she sometimes feels like a pest. She **suggested** an extended comment period from time to time.

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A resident stated that since the BOS controls the warrant, they need to vet the articles and exercise authority so that time is not wasted at Town Meeting. She also felt that the BoS needs to truly understand people's backgrounds and experience when making appointments.



There was a comment that the town administrator needs to be able to do her job as laid out by code. Ten years ago, the town administrator was an obstacle; now we need to empower town administrator.

A number of residents identified two particular projects of concern: the Town Center and the redevelopment of 150 Main Street, the former Finnerty's Restaurant. These came up in many sessions. Some of the comments are summarized in other sections such as Building and Zoning and Planning Departments.

### **Town Center/Business**

A long-time resident asked how much freedom the town administrator (TA) has to act on his or her own. She felt that the Town Center was negotiated and planned by the former TA with little or no input from the elected Planning Board or Board of Health.

Several residents said that they want more businesses in Town Center; they don't want empty storefronts. Residents want non-chain stores, more dinnertime options, and other stores that will draw people into Town Center for a weekend evening with family.

One person asked why there is no park space in Town Center. Another asked how the affordable housing selection process works and whether some of the residents are former town employees. A third said that she never goes to the Town Center; yet she asked what changes could be made to create a more friendly business climate.

### **150 Main Street**

A long-time resident asked what steps the BoS has taken in regard to the action of the ZBA in refusing to hear the petition of neighbors in the development of the CVS site in Cochrane. She asked where our sense of community is. She also felt that Cochrane does not get a fair deal. Another resident liked the original plan for 150 Main Street for a shopping center. He said it would have been better to have a mall with shops, like a nice men's clothing shop.

Another point of view was that business costs us more money than it adds. Some thought that much of the trouble at 150 Main Street is that a former BoS wanted to get more commercial tax base. This person said that Wayland is a residential community so the focus should be on improving the quality of life. One person said that Finnerty's had been for sale for ten years and finally something is being done.

Another thought that the Whole Foods plaza needs an upgrade; it is low quality

### **TOWN CLERK/ELECTIONS/REGISTRAR**

The feedback on the Town Clerk's office and elections was positive. A few people mentioned that the elections and electronic voting are working well.

### **TOWN COUNSEL (TC)**

There was very little discussion of Town Counsel. One person felt that the previous TC was unfamiliar with the bylaws and that TC needs a high level of knowledge. He felt there is a correlation between zoning, planning, and town counsel. Things get rubber-stamped and there is an unhealthy wedding of interest and partners.

### **TOWN MODERATOR/TOWN MEETING**

The discussion about Town Meeting was pretty consistent: too long; too difficult for parents of young children to attend; and not representative of the folks in town (mostly older diehards). Some would like to see a change in the way votes are taken (debate the issues at forums and then vote either remotely or efficiently without more debate). Some mentioned that articles need to be vetted and ready before coming to Town Meeting; otherwise it's a waste of time. Others want to watch on cable and participate from home. Two people felt that electronic voting at Town Meeting is not worth the cost.

Some felt that the moderator (past and present) talked too much, screamed in the mic, and wasted time. It was mentioned that core people talk and talk. The moderator should restrict the number of times a person can talk. He should allow no more than one amendment.

A long-time resident has refused to go to Town Meeting in last five years; he says the warrant should be better organized by putting all planning/zoning articles together and not mixing things up. A new resident said she has a hard time figuring out how town government works; there is no place to go to learn how the town works; we need Town Meeting 101. A long-time resident felt that it didn't used to take so long. It was **suggested** that several articles are of most interest and those should be put at the beginning.

#### **VETERANS AGENT**

The few comments about veterans services were positive: the veterans agent is very good. One person mentioned that he would like to see the veterans agent available all day (not just a half day) and would like to see publicity about her availability in the office and by cell phone.

#### **WASTE WATER DISTRICT COMMISSION (WW)**

The few question/comments on WW concerned why there have been so many problems with the treatment plant at the Town Center and who is paying a sewage fee. One said users pay an extraordinarily high fee; she thinks that businesses are not paying their fair share.

#### **WHAT WOULD YOU CUT TO LOWER TAXES?**

The answers to this question were varied. One asked how we find a balance between taxes and services. Some felt that there is room to find efficiencies through coordination and consolidation, automation, regionalization of dispatch, and learning from other communities. Since we benchmark against other communities with similar character, we should compare our budget with theirs to see if there is anything out of line. One person gave a shout out to the Energy Advisory Committee for doing excellent planning for cost efficiencies.

Others did not see any place to cut or anything to eliminate. The good school system and roads need to be maintained. It is easy to think of things to add, but hard to cut. It was pointed out that sometimes things seem expensive and turn out not to be. A long time resident said she doesn't resent paying taxes and is willing to pay for services, but if she didn't have money, she would suggest cutting school budget.

Another person suggested cutting schools, but not in the classroom. It was felt there is too much support staff and paying for teachers' children to go to Wayland schools is too expensive. One person asked if there is a way to keep Wayland from being a high school factory. We need more seniors to stay in town because they make the town more interesting and they are a bargain.

There were several people who said they needed more data to answer the question--that we don't know what we don't know. Some wanted to know employment numbers, what is in retirement numbers, what the benchmark data are, and what can be automated.

A new resident said that Dr. Stein's budget presentation helped people understand the tradeoffs. In her previous state, the superintendent asked citizens at a forum to make tradeoffs in the budget, putting people in the shoes of the School Committee. It was a great way for people to get to know one another and understand the budget. Perhaps this listening session could be the start of something similar.

It was mentioned that a lot of good work leading to financial efficiency is going on.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The discussion around communication was robust. There was nearly total agreement on the need to improve communication from the Board of Selectmen on what is happening in town. One person said that we need open and transparent communication to citizens for the health of town government. One person said she wants a news sharing organ, something that gives in-depth information. Another said he hears more from other people or his employees than from the town. It was pointed out that there are two kinds of communication: citizens who want to find information by going to a website (pull) and the town needing to send information to residents (push). The response can't be the same to both types.

The sources of information mentioned were

- The Town Crier: one of the better sources of information; more people should subscribe (at one meeting 6 of the 8 attendees subscribed); however there is no critical reporting in the Town Crier
- WaylandNews: considered a great resource that is run by a volunteer when it should be managed by the town; very useful (at the same meeting 7 of the 8 attendees subscribe)
- Wayland Voters Network
- Facebook
- The Buzz, WayCAM: a good resource with mixed comments about the quality of the video sound.
- Inserts in the tax bill: helpful, but not enough; inserts **suggested** for Town Census as well
- Wayland Public Schools emails: very useful (There was a question about connecting with the Wayland Student Press Network.)
- Reverse 911: a few people thought 911 was overused. One said that we don't want to be bombarded.
- Town Warrant: provides pro and con arguments for each article; there is no other place to read pros and cons.
- Town Website: There was nearly unanimous opinion that the website needs to be revamped to make it easier to find things and more user-friendly in general. One said our website is a clunker; Sudbury's is much better.

The website was mentioned numerous times as needing to be the primary reliable source of all town information; it should be the one and only comprehensive, understandable source of town information. Comments included that the Website should be interactive. It needs an on-line calendar that includes all town functions including schools.

Examples of the kind of information people said they look to the website to provide include:

- Current conditions such as the status of the rail trail, road closures, or the Glezen Lane turn restriction
- Topical information such as information about voting precincts, list of projects and what has been accomplished to date, overview of town departments' work
- Data such as the tax rate over a period of years, list of available databases and how to access them
- One person **suggested** that meeting agendas for all boards be available in one easy-to-find location instead of having to look at each board's agenda separately.
- There should be better publicity about the available services people don't know about, such as rides to medical appointments.
- Another **suggested** regular communication correcting inaccurate information, but acknowledged that it is a lot of work.

It was **suggested** that a once-a-month concise, clear email with links to more in-depth information would be useful. One person said that something regular from the Selectmen would make her feel much more a part of the town. A third **suggested** a Selectmen's column—in large print, or a Selectmen's blog. There was consensus that people would be willing to give the town their email address to receive a regular communication that had value. There was discussion about the need to push out information (emails, newspapers, inserts in various mailings) and pull people to the information (website).

Other **suggestions** around communication were to extend BoS public comment once a month to 45 minutes and to produce a booklet for new residents with information about boards, town meeting, how to behave at meetings, etc. One person **suggested** educating residents about where money goes so that they can figure out their tax value.

One last major topic around communication was the need to work on the town's image. One person felt that town boards take a negative hit in the Town Crier, especially related to CVS (150 Main St.). We need a positive public relations effort, perhaps an ombudsman. It was acknowledged that communications is very difficult but we need a communications plan.

### **SERVICE ON A BOARD OR COMMITTEE**

Participants gave a variety of reasons for not serving on town boards or committees. On the other hand, most who have volunteered have found it a worthwhile experience and some participants offered their expertise.

### **TONE**

Several people think the contentiousness is discouraging and off-putting. The level of divisiveness makes it difficult for some to participate. Others fear public castigation, being called a liar, or a cheat—there is no protection now. Another worries that there are hidden agendas. Others would not run for office because the conflict of interest laws are too much and the Open Meeting Law (OML) is a deterrent—it is not good for small towns. Another said that the OML hamstrings boards.

Several commended the BoS and the School Committee for what they have to do.

## **VOLUNTEER IN OTHER AREAS**

One resident loves the garden club and would rather spend time doing this. Others volunteer for things with their kids, such as volunteering at school, the principal search, or school council. One is involved in Transition and Wayland Walks, others with their religious institutions. Another said that there is so much competition for people's time that some organizations are dying.

## **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE**

One person does not feel qualified and another felt one needs an impressive resume to get elected. Another said that town government here is so different than in other places. One person wondered where to find notification of openings. Some agreed that we need to get more people to run. One resident said we need a way to get people interested in town government; she is concerned about apathy of residents.

## **EXPERIENCE AS A TOWN VOLUNTEER**

One person served on two elected boards and the Master Plan Committee and found it a good experience if you are ready to work. Another person said potential volunteers should not be afraid of being on committees with people with different views as long as decisions are based on facts and issues. Committees usually come to consensus.

One resident has been on three committees and is still on the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which has a high turnover rate. He would not join another committee. Another serves on the Board of Health; his time used to be limited but now that is changing. Although there are bright people on the board, he disagrees with how members base their judgments; one is coming around. One person said s/he learned a lot serving on a committee, met new people, and will do it again when s/he has more time.

## **VOLUNTEER INTERESTS**

Some would be happy to volunteer, offering skills in finance, data, analytical ability, and analytic modeling. Another is at good at taking things that are complex and breaking them down. Another has experience in opioid education and intervention.

One will try to identify opportunities and another was interested in knowing what opportunities were available besides serving on a board. Yet another is running for the BoS; he has been involved in public service since high school; studied law and public policy; and was educated in Weston Public Schools

## **APPRECIATION FOR THOSE WHO VOLUNTEER**

One person hugely admires volunteers in town government and doesn't understand why Open Meeting Law is such a problem.

## **NEED FOR COORDINATION**

One person said that as an outsider it is very clear that coordination is a problem and that problems are being addressed with band-aids. We are not deploying resources to take care of problems. We have not increased staff in the building to take care of things. Coordination is an issue among boards, committees, and departments. It is good that the land use department meetings have been reinstated.

Another resident said that many things work well and that s/he is generally pleased. This person said that there are two things at play: silos and volunteers. Silos make coordination hard and volunteers don't necessarily follow through. The town needs a proactive approach to enforcement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

While the number of participants was small, similar points were made again and again. The BoSLSS makes the following recommendations in two areas.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

The strongest, most consistent comment was the need for better communication—communication between and among boards, committees, and departments and better communication with residents. While the method of communication was not as clear, there was almost universal agreement that the town's website is the most important communication tool. It needs to be revamped, reorganized, made more user-friendly, include a town-wide calendar, and be kept up-to-date.

The runner-up communication tool is a regular, perhaps monthly, electronic newsletter that provides information of value to town residents, with links to more in-depth reporting. It should inform residents, correct misinformation, and explain what is happening. Residents could subscribe by providing their email address. The Town Crier is a third source for providing accurate information to residents. Our recommendation is to use at least these three methods. While social media is said to be vital to reaching younger people, it was not mentioned with any frequency.

It was also clear that many new residents would benefit from how-to resources—how to understand Wayland and how to navigate the construction permitting process. The first will help residents participate in Town Meeting, understand what various town departments and boards do, where to go for various town services, etc. (The League of Women Voters has provided a "Know Your Town" booklet in the past that might be useful in developing such a document.) There is a real need for resources to guide people through the process of construction and renovation projects, appearing before town boards, providing needed paperwork, etc.

Improved communications will not only result in a better informed citizenry, it will improve customer satisfaction and enhance the community's perception of town government and its volunteers.

### **COORDINATION**

Several residents noted that many town functions are carried out in silos, with little coordination or communication between departments. Although public comment was not as strong in this area, with the exception of the land use departments, we believe that there is a real need to improve coordination between and among departments.

Related to coordination is long term planning and developing a vision for the town. In addition to better financial planning, this will bring all voices to the table early in the planning stage, which will result in better project management and a higher quality product.

Finally, there is a need for better enforcement of bylaws, decisions, water bans, etc. This too involves coordination between departments and between initial plans and final decisions and will result in increased confidence in town boards.

### **THANK YOU**

The BoS Listening Session Subcommittee thanks the citizens who provided feedback on Wayland's town government. We also thank our facilitators, Lynne Cavanaugh and Jean Milburn, for their help in making the sessions run so smoothly.