

From: George Harris
Subject: Re: Election
Date: June 11, 2020 at 10:39:09 AM EDT
To: "Karlson, Cherry"

Cherry,

There are seven individuals who were elected to various Wayland boards (Selectmen, School Committee, Public Works, Recreation, Trust Funds, Assessors) who cannot begin to serve their terms of office until the close of the annual town meeting, now postponed to a time uncertain. This is no way to reward those volunteers who ran for office. Now we realize that our by-law preventing timely service is defective and needs to be revised to avoid this situation from recurring.

But the Selectmen knew or should have known this unfortunate situation was inevitable when they set the town election for June 9. But you write that "We have never been in this situation before and will need to figure it out." The time for figuring it out was last April. Why did the Selectmen not perceive this issue much earlier?

The Selectmen do need to do something proactive and soon, but their track record is not all that encouraging. I thought the selectmen should have moved expeditiously in March to file for a special act to fix the election and annual town meeting problems as did several other towns successfully. And Wayland was the only one of our neighboring towns (and many, many others) that failed to defer payment of property taxes.

The governor has declared a state of emergency, as have the selectmen. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Under the present state of emergency, the selectmen could vote immediately to suspend the by-law so that the will of the voters will be effectuated now, not at a future time uncertain. No one in Wayland would be prejudiced by such an action, but failure to take action prejudices most of the voters if not the public at large. In fact, a case could be made that our by-law under the present circumstances violates the Massachusetts Constitution.

Another route is to proceed with alacrity to request a special act of the legislature to suspend our defective by-law. I hope the Board will not dither and move to ensure that the will of the voters is effectuated ASAP. Thank you.

George