

# Enter as Minutes

I'm speaking as a citizen but also as a selectman because I feel that you're a selectman as long as you hold the position. What I have to say is important and I would like everybody to hear it before we continue with the rest of the meeting.

I would like to address the hostility and genuinely horrible treatment of Town employees, past and present. In the 36 ½ years that I worked for the Town, I witnessed this type of behavior twice- first shortly after Dave Lewis retired, causing us to lose our new Town Manager at the time and again in the past 5-6 years.

First off, I think it's absolutely despicable how the employees are being treated through this budget process and they do not deserve to be treated this way. I feel that instead of attacking your employees and making up money in the budget to cover for past mistakes or shortfalls that were made by other people or boards, it is beyond unfair. I believe that just about every member of the Town's workforce would agree and probably would even be open to having to contribute more towards their healthcare, but in a fair way that is spread out over a period of time. Jumping their contribution from 3% to 20% in one year is just wrong. I find it strange that the discussion from an earlier meeting seemed like the majority of the board was leaning towards a 6% -10% increase. As everyone probably know's, the Town's employees are looking to unionize and that news came out before the previous selectboard meeting. And then strangely enough after that came out, some on the board decided that they should have their contribution raised to 20% percent in one year. Boy, if that doesn't look like retaliation and punishment for wanting to unionize, I don't know what does! It's just my opinion and I don't blame the employees for wanting to unionize.

I believe that organizations and employers should invest in their employees to build a strong foundation and create a more productive workforce. Instead of forcing people out or not caring if employees leave, the Town should want people to make their career as a Town employee. When that happens, it improves efficiency, cuts down on costs and the amount of time needed to train people and quite often helps save money since they know what works and what doesn't and how to operate within a budget. A good example that I can give is, the year after I left my position as Road Foreman the salt budget was over spent by \$37000. All in all, the employees are the reason why the Town is able to function.

The other thing I want to address, since I always get shut down when I try to explain it, is the high turnover of Town employees during the past 15 years but especially the past 5-6 years. There has been much talk about a toxic work environment, and let me tell you that it's not a myth. It happened when I worked for the Town and is still going on. The main reason for the high turnover has been the toxic work environment, with a few exceptions. To give everyone an example of that, I would ask everyone to take the time to watch the recording of the March 23rd selectboard meeting. You'll have to watch it by linking in from the Town's website because the part that I'm referencing happened after the executive session and PEG TV had left. I was verbally attacked for simply bringing up wasteful spending that I witnessed and the unwillingness to save a significant amount of money on winter sand that I had presented when I was the road foreman. People can watch it and make up their own minds about what the video shows. As the minutes from that meeting state, yes I did leave the meeting while it was still in session after the exchange and would

do it all over again because there is no need for people to be treated that way. I guess it was my turn that night and I wonder now who's turn it will be next. Employees just want to come to work and do their job and not have to walk on eggshells or worry that they might say something that may upset someone or maybe not agree about something and then have a target on their back. I have witnessed it firsthand when I worked for the Town as well. I would also like everyone to know that in most cases there are different stories out there than the ones that have been told. False narratives abound, and I speak from experience because there were plenty of them out there about me after I resigned from my position, but this isn't about me.

I know that there have also been comments floating around stating that if things are so bad, why don't people come forward? Well, I've got 4 good reasons and there are probably more. The first is people fear retaliation or being targeted as most of the employees have witnessed it happen to coworkers over the years. The second is that sometimes people choose to just move on rather than deal with the stress which not only affects them, but their loved ones as well. The third is that some people leave and keep quiet out of fear that it might make it difficult in landing a new job, being that a new employer might not want someone that had issues at a previous job. The fourth one is that many people don't pursue legal action because it costs a lot of money, takes a lot of time and creates extra stress.

I'll wrap it up there, but I'm asking the people of this Town to please wake up and see what's going on now and has been going on right before their eyes and realize why the chaos has been occurring in this Town over the past 15 years or so. It's also time to show all the employees of this Town the respect and

appreciation that they deserve. They are not the enemy. They are what makes this Town function. Thank you.

Read in selectboard meeting on 4/13/2026  
by Selectboard Member Rick Bowen



Patrick Cuskey  
Town manager 4/17/2026