

Keep Financial Oversight Independent

To the Editor,

I am writing with concern about the composition of Truro's committees, particularly in light of Article 39 of the 2025 Warrant regarding Finance Committee (FinCom) membership. This article rightly proposes that FinCom members not simultaneously serve on other town committees – to ensure their independence – a common and crucial practice for financial oversight. The Select Board voted 4-1 to support the article, and the town meeting consensus was that the Charter Review Committee should review the article for next year's town meeting.

However, this principle of independence was disregarded on September 9, 2024, when the Chair of FinCom was appointed by the Select Board as a member of the Ad Hoc DPW Building Committee (AHBC). As I stated in the record at that time, this situation creates the potential for conflicting loyalties of FinCom members. The FinCom Chair should not be in a position to shape and support the very costly plans that their own Finance Committee will later need to independently evaluate and recommend to the taxpayers and voters. It's akin to being both the accountant and the auditor.

This instance highlights a broader issue: the tendency for the same individuals to serve on multiple committees. While their dedication is acknowledged, this practice can lead to "groupthink," limiting fresh perspectives and potentially allowing for the management of committee outcomes. It also forecloses the opportunity for other members of the community to serve on committees. When the Select Board is actively recruiting for committees, there is usually no lack of talented volunteers among Truro's population.

The Town Counsel's statement during the pre-town meeting on April 17, 2025, emphasized that these types of independence provisions are very common throughout the Commonwealth for finance committees because there is a clear preference for having a Finance Committee be independent, completely independent, and not tied to or have allegiances to any particular boards or departments of the town. The current situation with the FinCom Chair on the AHBC directly contradicts this essential principle of good governance.

To ensure the integrity and effectiveness of all our committees, we and the Select Board must prioritize the independence of FinCom and encourage broader participation from a diverse range of residents across all our town boards.

Sincerely,

Michael Forgione

Truro May 5, 2025