

Your Right to Know BEFORE You Vote

Letter to Editor, Truro News April 7, 2025

via Email

As you know, I have been tracking the Town's fulfillment of Public Records Requests (PRRs) and reporting on it for many months. Under the former Town Manager, the process was simply obstructive. I won't repeat what was learned.

In early February we saw some improvement in response time, waiving inflated fees, more considerate responses, etc - and I was really encouraged by it. But that seems to have been a false hope. On four key PRRs the Town's recent response is NADA, no production - even on several where the State has ordered that the Town produce documents in specific ways. I sent my prior summary to the Town Manager and other officials a month ago, so the problems are not news. I understand this is a busy time for Town Hall, prepping for Town Meeting. That is important and time sensitive work. But these are the very same reasons why PRRs that are WAY overdue need to be fulfilled timely – pressing. Time sensitive and also required by law and State determinations.

Public Records Requests – Pattern of Delay Resume on Vote-Critical Items

A pattern of delays seems to be developing again on particularly important issues—some are probing controversial issues but all may be of critical importance to informing your votes at the upcoming ATM and Town Election. One even involves previously undisclosed efforts to influence Truro citizens' votes through involvement from out-of-town officials and organizations. All involve public records containing information that is important to the public's interest.

The topics are telling as is the failure of Truro to produce the relevant documents. Some of these are more than 8 months overdue! That is not administrative delay for good reasons – it frankly appears to be official obstruction for dubious reasons. Please remember, the Town has regulated time limits on responses and while it can request extensions, these have to be approved by the person making the request or by the State.

Here are the four delayed requests for information that are important for all to be aware of:

- **PRR requesting emails and documents exchanged with Select Board Member Weinstein within a specific period related to voter suppression and targeting of voters** from May 2023-May 2024. **This is 8 months late, and 4 months after the State ordered proper privilege logs and production to be issued on appeal.** We have all seen Mr. Weinstein play a critical role in efforts to target voters he and others believe were opposed to the DPW on Route 6. The Town has not produced the bulk of the requested documents nor prepared accurate and responsive “privilege logs” even though ordered to by the State four months ago. If the Town will not produce public records of a sitting Select Board Member now running for office nor give proper, lawful explanations of why they are being withheld, perhaps that SB member should not run at all. Truro deserves truth and transparency from office seekers and office holders.
- **PRR filed in late January requesting all documents related to the consultancy work of Angie Sprang for the Town of Truro** and communications between Ms. Sprang and the former Town Manager, other Truro officials, and staff. No response to date except to acknowledge that Ms. Sprang, Truro's RAO consultant, would recuse herself from handling this request for obvious reasons. Other PRRs have shown that the need for an outside consultant is exaggerated. Certainly, the summary provided last month shows that performance is questionable as well. Yet

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Truro is asking voters to cover her consulting fees again in FY 26 and not in consulting, but in free cash (meant for one-time costs only). Truro voters deserve to know the deal before they approve the expense.

- **PRR filed in the beginning of February concerning specific officials' communications regarding the DPW review process.** Fees for production were inflated and appealed in favor of the requestor. The (acting) Town Manager's response was considerate and a sharply reduced fee was set. Nothing since, months overdue. **This is exactly what happened last year** regarding delayed/appealed requests for DPW-related communications. And those documents that were eventually produced were made available the day AFTER ATM 2024. Truro voters should know whether these new delays will also obscure or hide info the voters should have before ATM 2025.
- **PRR filed in early February seeking information about outside (non-Truro) influence on Truro voters at FY 24 ATM.** Last year, the efforts to suppress voter turnout and interfere with voters' choices were oppressive and transparent. But how did they get organized and implemented? It is one thing for Truro citizens and officials to debate and have passionate views about key issues facing taxpayers. It is entirely different to have a machine operating from outside Truro to influence actual votes. This PRR was motivated by documentation from a prior PRR showing two Provincetown Select Board members along with staff of two non-Truro housing non-profits, and a political operative consulting with an elected State official worked with the former Truro Select Board Chair to achieve what was described as "our goals" - that is, the goals of non-Truro actors. Truro voters deserve to know if this is accurate so it never happens again. What is concerning here is the failure to respond as required NOW on this matter. Why? If there's nothing to hide, then do not hide it.
- **Truro voters were outraged last year by these tactics to evade the letter and spirit of the public records law.** It seems these tactics may be continuing, as least as far as keeping public information from the Truro public is concerned. Truro voters worked hard to clean up and clear out informational and tactical blocks to good votes at STM and ATM last year and deserve the info needed to keep cleaning up Truro this year, too.

As I wrote last time, **Public Record Requests make a difference. Persistence does, too. Demand better.** More as I learn it.

– Jon Slater