

Did I Hear That Right? What Listening to Truro TV Tells Us.

February 11, 2025

via email to editor@truronews.org

Dear Editor,

I am a fifth-generation Truro resident who is happy to see that many more generations of my family will get to live here. We are not rich. We make tough choices, work hard running our local small businesses, and hold up our end of things. This has made it possible to live good lives here, though sometimes it is a challenge.

Since the Fall, with the cold weather and a leg injury, I have had the chance to watch more Truro TV than usual. In fact, I have watched almost every recorded committee meeting in Truro for many months. What an eye-opener. I actually ask myself pretty frequently: Did I hear that right?

Here are a few of the more amazing examples that folks might want to know about:

“Voters Don’t Count...” In January, a Select Board Member said, “voters don’t count” and suggested that as custodians of Town land, the Select Board can overrule voters. He was pushing for the DPW to be located in the one place voters decided in a binding vote not to allow for use as a DPW site. Did I hear that: ... voters don’t count? I am sure voters will show just how much we count when we vote against him in May at the ballot box.

“Tap Into your home equity” to pay for the new DPW. At a recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Building Committee discussing the price tag for the most expensive design option for a DPW, the Chair of the FinCom made a throw-away remark that the tax burden on a “\$30 Million” building would add about “\$550-\$700 per year” (for 30 years) and that taxpayers could finance that in several ways, including to “tap into your home equity.” It actually is now set at \$35M, making the home equity tap even higher! So, did I hear that? Pay a ridiculously high tax increase for a truly overpriced DPW by taking out a home loan? When I was on the Finance Committee, I looked at how to reign in expenses and debt, not tell folks how to finance excessive tax increases out of home equity...

“I measured it with my yardstick” said one member of the DPW staff on more than one occasion when trying to prove that the least expensive option for a DPW did not fit on the current Town Hall Hill site. There are two architects on the DPW Committee and the project engineer who actually know how to measure the site accurately. Using proper tools and methods, they confirmed the campus plans do fit on the THH site. So much for the amateur “yardstick” approach. Are we supposed to take it seriously?

“I don’t need to get Select Board approval, but I will.” Our former Town Manager had a knack for making contracts when he did not have the funds to pay for them at the time, so he had to be creative. Forget what it means to sign a contract if you are not sure you can pay for it...but his last effort involved trying to get \$12,500 to pay for a study proposed for property that my family had owned years back. Based in part on information I shared, the Select Board decided not to proceed at this time and to get more info first. But the Town Manager was not happy and actually said he could fund that himself [from Town funds], “I don’t need to get” SB approval, but “I will.”

“Use the DPW for Town Meeting” - Our former Town Manager pushed for a very large DPW - way larger than we need - so that the vehicle storage bays can be used for Town Meetings. You want to meet in a

Vehicle Storage Bay? I wouldn't. At \$1500 a sq ft that the OPM estimates, the 3,000 extra square feet he wanted – and seems to have gotten – increases the cost by about \$4.5M. The former TM also said that this is better than paying \$50,000 for a tent for ATM. It would take 90 tent rentals to spend that much. On top of that, we heard the Town's A-V consultant say last winter that ALL meeting spaces in Truro can be digitally linked to allow for real time seeing and hearing each other - and that our public spaces have more than enough combined capacity to hold all voters. **We could hold Town Meeting that way easily, cheaply, and always IN Truro for less than \$50K - paid just one time.**

It is not just that absurd things have been said, it is that behind these absurdities is a mindset that holds fiscal restraint, prudent budgeting, limited debt, and tax reduction are not worthy goals for Truro. Neither are keeping growth managed, keeping Truro rural, keeping our water clean and safe, building up our green energy capacity, or respecting that folks who own the land here actually have something to say - and a right to say – about what the future of our Town will be.

But recently, that's what I have been hearing on Truro TV, with few exceptions. Time for a change.

Sincerely,

Roberta Lema, Truro