

## Sharon Iovanni

---

**From:** Randy Perillo [perillo@rcn.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 18, 2009 1:33 AM  
**To:** Randy Perillo  
**Subject:** 11/17: Board of Selectmen meeting summary

This message goes out to the **704** families of **Stoneham United** and the following non-Stoneham residents:

Public Health Agent/Certified Health Officer (Stoneham Board of Health) **Robert F. Bracey**,  
Stoneham Recreation Director **Christine DelRossi**,  
State Representative **Jim Dwyer** (30th Middlesex District),  
**Bob Grover**, Director of Public Works,  
State Representative **Jason Lewis** (31st Middlesex District),  
Boston Globe North reporter **Eric Moskowitz**,  
Stoneham Superintendent of Schools **Dr. Les Olson**,  
Stoneham Town Administrator **David Ragucci**,  
Stoneham Sun editor **Amy Saltzman**

*Register to receive State Representative Jason Lewis' newsletter at <http://repjasonlewis.com/signUp.html>. Lewis, along with State Representative James Dwyer, represents Stoneham.*

---

---

If you received this message as a forward and would like to become a member of Stoneham United please contact me to get on the direct distribution list. (perillo@rcn.com)

---

---

Hello, everyone.

I attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on November 17, 2009. Here are the highlights:

- Dan Towse, on behalf of Whip Hill Park Trust, donated \$10,950 to The Town of Stoneham. According to Towse, the donation pays for all maintenance costs for the park located off Perkins Street.
- The board voted, 5-0, to accept a new tax rate as proposed by Director of Assessing Brian MacDonald and the Board of Assessors.
- Citizen Ken Pruitt and a group of other Stoneham residents addressed the board regarding their unhappiness with the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) bus service to Stoneham. The board decided to create a subcommittee to begin addressing the problem.

Chairman **John DePinto** and board members **Richard Gregorio**, **Paul Rotondi**, **Frank Vallarelli**, and **Bob Sweeney** attended the meeting. Town Administrator **David Ragucci** and Town Counsel **Bill Solomon** also attended this meeting. Office Manager **Muriel Doherty** did not attend this meeting.

---

---

### **Whip Hill Park Trust donates \$10,950 to pay for park maintenance costs:**

Dan Towse, the Whip Hill Park Trustee, presented the town with a check for \$10,950. Towse said that the trust has existed for 35 years. The trust has donated \$473,113.32 to Stoneham in that span, an annual average of \$13,500.

Towse said that the biggest concern facing Whip Hill Park is the lessened security coverage. With Tree Warden Jim Previte splitting duties between Whip Hill and the Department of Public Works, the park finds itself without a 24-hour caretaker for the first time. Towse said that he is considering hiring work-study students from institutions such as Essex Agricultural and Technical High School during the busy summer season to provide more security coverage.

Towse said there are some capital concerns for Whip Hill Park and the manor. He said the manor needs painting. The trust plans to pay for this upkeep and will contract out the job. Towse proudly said that there's never been a Town Meeting warrant article to request town tax revenues to pay for capital upkeep at the park. Towse said that the trust has always been able to pay for "extras" not included in the park's budget.

Towse suggested that the town use federal stimulus money or state transportation aid funding to widen the road at Whip Hill to accommodate two-way traffic. The DPW estimates such a project would cost \$45,000.

Towse said that the \$10,950 donation from the trust to the town pays for all Whip Hill maintenance costs for the year.

### **Board votes to accept new tax rate:**

Director of Assessors Brian MacDonald presented data and information to the board regarding the Board of Assessors recommendations for a new tax rate. Assessors Chairman Craig Celli, Secretary William Jordan, and member Richard Mangerian all attended the meeting.

The Board of Assessors recommended a shift in the residential factor to 0.9305 for fiscal 2010. MacDonald said that the average single-family tax bill in Stoneham would be \$4,607.49 for fiscal 2010, a \$130 increase from fiscal 2009.

MacDonald also said that the Assessors recommend maintaining the residential vs. commercial tax ratio. Currently residential taxes makeup 82 percent of the town's tax base.

MacDonald also explained the options of accepting a resident or commercial tax exemption, shifting the tax burden from owners of smaller homes and owners of smaller businesses to the owners of larger homes and businesses. MacDonald explained that approximately 65 small businesses in Stoneham could benefit from the commercial tax exemption (putting a greater tax burden on Stoneham's larger businesses). MacDonald noted that the Assessors did not recommend adopting such a policy for residents or businesses.

Sharon Iovanni, Executive Director of the Stoneham Chamber of Commerce, asked the board to consider adopting the exemption for small businesses, even if just for one year, to help struggling small businesses in Stoneham.

Richard Mangerian of the Board of Assessors said that small business is essential and important, but Stoneham needs to see the larger picture. He said the exemption option is really better for larger towns and cities with a greater percentage of commercial and industrial businesses. Mangerian concluded that there are enough tax exemptions in the law as is.

The board voted, 5-0, to accept the tax rate with a shift in the residential factor to 0.9305 for fiscal 2010, but without residential or commercial exemptions as discussed during the hearing.

### **Stoneham residents speak out against poor MBTA bus service:**

The board decided to form a subcommittee to address public disappointment in MBTA bus service to and from Stoneham. Town Administrator David Ragucci plans to contact State Representatives Jason Lewis and Jim Dwyer and State Senator Richard Tisei about meeting with Selectmen Bob Sweeney and Frank Vallarelli and members of the community. The board hopes the reps and senator could work with the MBTA to improve service.

According to resident Ken Pruitt, the service desperately needs improvement. Pruitt and a group of six other bus riders expressed unhappiness with the bus service. Pruitt said that Stoneham taxpayers dish out \$430,000 annually for bus service through community assessment. Pruitt said the town pays for services it does not receive. He cited 10-15 minute waits and unpredictable arrival times as a hardship for commuters attempting to get to work at designated times. He added that sometimes buses just don't show up at the stop. Pruitt added that the buses that do arrive are often overcrowded and cause safety hazards. He concluded that the amount of riders warrants three buses per hour, not just the two the MBTA sends now.

Another resident, Dennis Boyd, said that the last bus leaving the Orange Line stations departs at 7 p.m., a time that is not very late for the many professionals who often need to stay at work later. He said that limited service costs commuters more in fuel and parking. Boyd said he had written to many government officials in the past, but no one could provide a solution to the ongoing problem.

Resident Lynn Ford spoke of her position in the medical field. She said that senior citizens and limited-mobility citizens need reliable, safe transportation to participate in society. She explained that a 30-minute wait for a bus may be annoying to an able-bodied person, but it makes life very difficult for the disabled, the infirm, and the elderly. Ford said that such citizens need to sit on a bus and be able to enter and exit, but crowded buses make that task daunting.

Selectman Vallarelli said that Stoneham pays for a service it does not receive, but must pay the same amount whether the town wants the service or not. Vallarelli suggested sending the MBTA a letter to explain the complaints.

Selectman Gregorio said the MBTA has been "very unfriendly" in the past. He suggested conducting a meeting with Stoneham's state reps and senators directly.

Chairman DePinto agreed with Gregorio's suggestion to form a subcommittee to meet with the town's legislative delegation (reps and senator). Selectmen Vallarelli and Sweeney plan to participate in those meetings.

**Also at this meeting:**

Town Administrator David Ragucci announces that Stoneham Ford and StonehamBank each made \$7,500 donations toward the purchase of a new van for Stoneham Senior Center use. Town Meetings voters approved the purchase on October 26. According to Ragucci, the van should be available in the next 30 days.

Ragucci also announced that, in an effort to reduce costs, the Town of Stoneham and the City of Melrose are drafting an agreement to share a single building inspector. According to Ragucci, the decision should have minimal impact on the people of Stoneham. The agreement could become official as early as January 2010.

Ragucci noted that two new Stoneham Police Department officers are attending the state's police academy. Each new officer is a Stoneham resident and a military veteran.

The board voted, 5-0, to appoint Robert Conway and Ellen McBride to full-time positions on the Stoneham Conservation Commission. The board also voted, 5-0, to appoint Josh Portman to an associate position on that commission.

The board voted, 5-0, to appoint David Leblanc and Nathan Kramer to positions on the Stoneham Historical Commission.

The board voted, 5-0, to grant a one-year extension on the site plan for 9-11-13 Gould Street. According to Attorney Charles Houghton, representing the property owner, the building is essentially complete. The board also voted, 5-0, in favor of changing the large building's official address to 11 Gould Street.

The board voted, 5-0, to sign a development agreement and voted, 5-0, to sign a mitigation agreement related to development at the location of the former Boston Regional Medical Center (BRMC). Despite a 95-unit reduction in the residential building project, Gutierrez Company (5 Wall Street, Burlington, MA) agreed to leave the mitigation fee paid to the Town of Stoneham at the same level. If the developer decides to increase the number of units up to the allowed maximum, no other mitigation fees would be necessary.

The board voted, 5-0, to grant a second one-year site plan extension to the developers of a Dunkin Donuts coffee shop in the location near J.J. Grimsby's along the Fellsway near Melrose. According to Attorney Charles Houghton, representing the developer, the project should begin very shortly.

The board voted, 5-0, to nominate Jim Previte as "Tree Warden of the Year."

Thank you for your time,

Randy

---

**Upcoming government meetings:**

**School Committee:**

**THURSDAY, December 10, 7 pm, Stoneham High School Library, 149 Franklin St.**

**Board of Selectmen:**

**TUESDAY, December 15, 7 pm, Stoneham Town Hall, 35 Central St.**

**Board of Selectmen:**

**TUESDAY, December 22, 7 pm, Stoneham Town Hall, 35 Central St.**

**Upcoming community events:**

**Look for weekly community events listings in your inbox each Tuesday morning.**