

Christine Joyce

4/7/08 (2)

**From:** Dore' Hunter  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 02, 2008 10:27 AM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen; Steve Ledoux  
**Cc:** Terra Friedrichs  
**Subject:** Transition comments

Lauren,

Given that it will only be a few days before I am off the Board, and that there will in that interval be only the one short, pre-Town Meeting meeting of the Board, I am listing here for your and the other BOS members consideration a few matters in regard to the transition.

**FEATG:** As you know, I have been the leader of this advisory body which has been working toward a conceptual design of a new North Acton Fire/EMS Station. The idea is that such a better situated emergency response base could replace the 1951 building in the Center, and thereby provide better response (i.e. within the NFPA) standard to the far ends of North Acton. This has always going to be a "hard sell" for those folks having within standard service. Recognizing that because of the deepening recession it is not likely that monies could be raised and appropriated in the near future in any case, the BOS recently adopted my suggestion that at this point we work through what is necessary to get a concept plan on paper and use that as a basis to renegotiate the restrictive site deed restrictions. The next meeting of the FEATG Steering Committee with the architect is set for Thursday 17 April and I expect that architect will then and there have a concept plan showing how the location of the better portion of the site which would allow direct emergency vehicle access to the 2A/27 intersection could be used.

I am willing to continue to lead this group through to the point where a concept plan can be provided to the Board, but you may not wish me so to continue since I will not have any official status. I would like a quick decision on whether I should continue to lead this process, given that there is the pending meeting. If the answer is "no" please consider this a request for me to be designated as just a member of the Steering Committee, and to appoint a new leader.

**Senior Center Expansion Committee:** I have been on this committee as a Selectman, Paulina, of course, is leading it. I request that the Board re-designate me as a regular member of the Steering Committee so that I can continue with this group.

**Transportation Matters:** I have represented the BOS for some years at the occasional meetings of the MBTA Advisory Board, Fitchburg Rail Line Working Group, and the Corridor Advisory Committee (Lincoln, Concord & Acton re Route 2). The Fitchburg Group's next meeting is on 14 April. It will be about two months before the next CAC quarterly meeting. The "T" Advisory Board will meet again in about a month to take action on the "T" budget for the coming fiscal year. I am willing to continue to represent the BOS at these meetings if the Board wishes, status as a Selectman is not necessary. However, a letter of appointment as the Town's representative would be in order. If the Board wants to assign some or all of these functions to someone else I will be willing to accompany the person selected to the next meeting.

**Veterans Service Officer:** Although this activity is not directly related to my soon to be prior status as a Selectman, I think the Manager and the Board should consider how this function should work when I may be less often in Town Hall, or in Acton, and Terra should know about it.

As you know I was recruited by Don Johnson to perform this function so that the Town could receive the 75% reimbursement from the State Department of Veterans Services for the Town's payments to eligible veterans under MGL Chapter 115, and avoid any other sanctions being imposed by the DVS (the law requires the Town to have a VSO, who is supposed to be full time in Acton irregardless of the case load). This because Don could not find any other veteran to perform the functions.

As I believe you know, I eventually accepted the post, but refused the usual salary because I did not think it

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seemly for a Selectman to also be a salaried employee of the Town. Two years ago I did finally accept the job on an arrangement that provides that I record and submit the time I actually spend doing VSO work, or attending frequent VSO meetings and training sessions, for reimbursement. I have found that the time I have spent on VSO activities widely, but is not a full time job. I turn in time sheets for actual veterans activities against which I am paid. I am not sure exactly what the hourly pay has been because the vouchers cover both the Selectman's stipend and the hourly money, I have never tried to break it down and it was not the subject of negotiation, my memory is that Don set the rate at \$28/hour. I understand that most Town's VSOs are paid a salary of \$30-40K per year. My guess is that this Acton arrangement saves the Town something on the order of \$20K/year. You can, of course, check the numbers.

I have found the "ramp up" time necessary to understand all the details involved in the Chapter 115 benefits, and to obtain the working knowledge of the various functions of the Federal Veterans Administration required of a VSO, to be quite lengthy. This particularly since I have seen relatively few cases in which to test the training and reading, compared to some other full time VSOs in communities which are not as expensive to live in as Acton.

Nevertheless I am willing, in the short term at least, to continue the present arrangement, as long as it includes the part time services of a secretary (Donna Rochette currently, but she will retire in September) who assists with the paper work and is in Town Hall on a normal work schedule and thus can respond to telephone calls or walk-ins. Donna was the secretary who supported the previous HR Director (Charlie Jones) in that roll and also in his VSO functions, when he was with us. The VSO work is in large part unscheduled. My wife and I customarily spend our summers, and gather our extended family, two hundred miles away in the Adirondacks, which poses a summer problem I have only solved the last two years through managing to group VSO matters together for times that I was driving back to Acton for various Selectmen oriented meetings or events, and through the experienced services of Donna, who knows how to handle most veteran's matters, and generate the documents, but cannot sign the paperwork since she is not known to be a veteran by DVS.

I am not asking at this point to be replaced, but should the Town Manager or the new Board wish to make some other arrangement for delivery of the statutorily required veterans services I will have no objection.

**Future Activities:** I intend to remain active and engaged in Acton activities, although probably at a lesser time commitment than recently. One activity I have been very interested in is that of the Community Preservation Committee. I recognize that the CPC already has one former and one current Selectmen among its members, but I would appreciate an appointment to that CPC, at the Selectmen's pleasure. In addition I am open to consideration of other opportunities that might be available for volunteer work for the Town

Regards,  
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