

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Comments are submitted by the public and are not reviewed or endorsed by the Village.

To: President Martin McLaughlin and the Board of Trustees of Barrington Hills
cc: Anna Paul/Village Clerk
Subject: Public comments for May 23, 2017 meeting

Good Evening, my name is Linda H. Cools, Village Resident Advocate

Tonight the work our new BOT is officially begins, with every new beginning comes new goals, challenges, and expanded visions for our municipality. Public comment is the only continuing barometer on what the electorate wants to see improved, changed or tackled. But if I'm honest, public comment has become merely an opportunity for residents to gripe about problems. I feel it's overall value and impact has greatly diminished. To my knowledge, no individual item or items ever mentioned in this chamber, or at this podium were directly acted upon or new legislation drafted from a timed presentation brought before you. Residents like myself are looking for immediate feedback, resolution and corrective responses to our concerns. Public comment as it is presently constructed is merely a "beat the clock" moment.

President McLaughlin's speech at the swearing in ceremony included the following remarks. He said, "Facts over innuendos." So, tonight, for the benefit of the new Trustees as well as the whole of the board and the public gathered, here are some non-partisan facts that need to be acted upon.

In late November of 2013 the village administration mailed out a Resident Satisfaction survey whose intent was that of tapping resident sentiment on twenty specific questions.

Here is a synopsis of those results.

1. Eighty-seven percent of residents felt that our board should expand on the Town hall format and host future meetings where Trustees present their "State of the Village" status reports and take questions from the public. I believe that this would be a tremendously positive tool in bridging the gap between Trustees and the public at large. By not inviting this type of discourse, it serves only to narrow the apathy gap among residents and sour communications. Yes, I will admit that it might require a bigger time commitment from our Trustees, but it is a obligation of a volunteer public servant to engage in these interactions occasionally to facilitate an open exchange of information. One of the tasks of a Trustee is to interface with and represent the majority public interest, hear minority concerns and address the public's priorities.
2. One of the other complaints cited by a percentage of respondents was vague description of agenda links not provided. I would like to encourage the BOT to post links for all items, not just some. A perfect example of this is the recent posting by Finance committee, where an agenda item "Review Klein hall" was listed. I have no clue what that is, nor do I believe do others. With no link, I was in the dark as to what would be covered. I have also heard the phrase used by individual Trustees; "report as submitted used under various Trustee subsections. Not sure if this means members of the public are given access to these reports without having to initiate a FOIA request to get relevant information on any topic. FOIA'S are time-consuming, and costly, having the immediate documents are the preferable option. I created LongMeadow Parkway and It's Consequences on Facebook, as I felt compelled to bring the information forward to a much larger audience than our website provides. Because, I acutely understand the significance of using technology to reach a large audience in a short time span at tremendous cost savings to taxpayers and the village. Expanding our media reach beyond this room, and timely transparency of information is really at the heart of the matter. And while the elections are technically over, for me the campaign to deliver on the resident's agenda is just launching.
3. Eighty-nine percent support videotaping village meetings. We are lagging behind here. Not only BOT meetings, it should also include all committees that convene at the Village Hall, including those seldom addressed like Finance, and HEC. Those serving on committees and their membership should welcome the opportunity to give the public a glimpse into their activities, to see how and in what matter items are discussed and voted on; whether they attend a meeting in person or not is unimportant. That is the true definition of transparency. Surveys like the one in 2013 are only meaningful if they result in tangible positive effective implementation by this body, otherwise they have no value.

As a village, our strength doesn't come from divisive posturing as has been seen in prior boards, but allowing new ideas and concepts to permeate from the ranks of regular citizens, who are more than deeply invested in the future prosperity of the village and squarely focusing upon reducing our overall tax burden in all village departments. I am hopeful that these ideas all find their rightful place into upcoming BOT deliberations. That dialogue should begin here in earnest tonight. I ask the new Trustees to keep an open mind, and to be amenable to pursuing these various agenda items. That can only strengthen the work of this municipality, and to support its citizens with the goal of delivering excellence in all areas. I support good governance, the individual job of a Trustee is to balance the wishes of the public with that of your administrative roles to our village under it's legal construct. I wish you good luck in that endeavor, and thank you for your time, attention and service.

Linda H. Cools, Village Resident Advocate