

Dear Residents:

I am writing to you today to express a concern I have with how local government is conducted. In particular, I have requested a by-law change which will require all boards and committees meeting at Town Hall to be televised. Currently, the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and the School Committee are televised at Town Hall. In our building, we have four meeting rooms and only one is properly outfitted to broadcast public meetings. Meetings are open to the public and posted with the Town Clerk. If a resident wants to see their government in action, learn how decisions are arrived at or how elected or appointed members conduct themselves, they have to look up the posting and attend the meeting in person. Some of the committees meeting at town hall are the By-Law Review Committee, the Board of Health, Park and Recreation, Water and Sewer, Library Board of Trustees, Planning Committee, Strawberry Valley Golf Committee, Zoning Committee, Tri-Centennial or any of the other boards and committees appointed or elected which are not mentioned here.

Given the technological advances we have today, I believe we need to have as many boards and committees televised as possible. There will be many who will offer excuses as to why it can not be done. In my more than twenty-nine years of government experience, open and transparent government starts with televised meetings. There is no excuse NOT have public meetings televised. There is no excuse for the By-Law Review Committee NOT to mandate through a by-law change that any meeting held at Town Hall, must be televised to ensure decisions are properly debated, committee members express their opinions, votes are taken and recorded. Televised meetings hold elected and appointed officials accountable to the residents of Abington. This can only be achieved when meetings are televised. If you look at the past three elections for board and committee positions, more positions were unchallenged than those which were challenged, apathy runs high and I believe a good reason for the high level of apathy is most of the board or committee meetings are not televised, residents are not engaged enough to question decisions or run for positions. Democracy is not convenience, it requires an informed electorate willing to watch and learn and residents who are engaged enough to run and serve their community.

Five percent of your cable bill each month goes to CAM (Public Access) to provide you the residents of Abington with access to your community by

way of locally produced programs. It is nice to sit at home and listen to the local High School Football game, a local dance recital, school programs or listen to our Police Chief as well as a host of other locally produced programs. However, a critical piece of how government works, how committee members conduct themselves, issues are debated and decisions rendered largely go unnoticed in town because a majority of elected or appointed boards and committees meetings are not televised.

My goal is to have government accountable to the residents of Abington.

Please contact By-Law Review Committee members: Ann Welch, Kathleen Creighton and Jean Kelley. You may contact them through the Selectmen's office at (781) 982-2100

Sincerely Yours

John D'Agostino  
Town Manager, Town of Abington