



Billy Walsh <bwalsh@natickma.org>

Welcoming Community Policy

1 message

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To: Selectboard@natickma.org

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I am resending this memo, as I am not sure my first attempt was successfully sent.

Dear Members of the Select Board,

I want to comment and express my thoughts of the proposed Welcoming Community Policy. I believe this item has been in the works for almost two years. I am pleased that local media has brought attention to this proposed policy, as I was not aware of it previously.

I am an immigrant to the United States and have lived in Natick for over 40 years.

I am not supportive of the Town adopting such a statement. Here are my reasons.

- The fact that Board and others in Natick have spent two years preparing and discussing such a document is a clear indication that the proposed policy is obviously fraught with potential legal issues, is controversial and probably unnecessary
- Even two years ago, prior to the recent presidential election and increased focus on immigration, I don't understand why the Board felt it was necessary to develop such a policy and get involved in what is a political and often partisan issue. My understanding is that the vast majority of towns, villages, etc. in Mass. have handled the issues addressed in the Natick draft without the need for adopting ambiguous and problematic policies.
- This policy does not serve the community well. The very nature of the policy and its title is divisive and controversial. The proposed policy will get Natick unnecessarily involved in a political morass.
- The draft document attempts to be clear, but sends a broad conflicting message. Town officials, it states, need to comply with applicable federal and state laws. But, then the policy sends a message that either broadly or by inference suggests otherwise. This is most clearly exemplified in item 5—"No employee of the Town.... " I suspect that this has taken two years to develop because of the complexity of federal, state and local entities as it relates to the two federal codes mentioned in point 1. I have read these two codes and don't pretend to fully understand them, but appreciate the challenge of drafting a policy that is consistent with the intricacies of those statutes. Related to the federal statutes, they are specifically mentioned in the draft, which creates issues and questions. For example, should it be expected and/or prudent for employees to read and understand these statutes? Does the town have the responsibility to provide town wide training and information on these statutes? My purpose in raising these particular questions is to point out how in many ways the proposed broad policy raises many questions.
- The policy may have future, unforeseen consequences. What happens if in addition to the two federal codes listed in item 1, the federal government adopts new or changes to federal law regarding federal, state and local communication and cooperation matters regarding immigration? Will the town then need to revisit and revise this policy and provide employees with an explanation as to how and why the policy has changed? This is problematic and, in my opinion would be an unwise use of town resources, both people and money.
- From a practical perspective the most important department in Natick that is likely to be impacted by the proposed policy and the issue it is attempting to address is the Police Department. Instead of adopting the proposed Town wide policy, the Board

should make sure that all police officers and administrators in that department understand what is expected of them. Though item 4 in the draft is not sufficiently detailed for the police department and the situations they may encounter.

In summary, I understand the feeling on the part of some, though I don't know the gestation of this proposed policy, that such a Town policy is appropriate or needed. The Board should vote to not approve the Town wide Welcoming Community Policy. It is confusing, divisive, sends mixed messages and filled with practical and legal concerns. The proposed Town wide employee policy does not serve well the employees of Natick and the overall interest of the Natick community.

Respectfully,

Enzo Rebula
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Natick