

Background of PlymouthFirst, Inc. since its inception

Response by;
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PlymouthFirst was incorporated as a 501c4 organization on October 31st, 2017 under the general laws of the Commonwealth. The 501c4 organization is not a tax- deductible organization but can engage in unlimited lobbying so long as it pertains to the organizations mission.

PlymouthFirst is open to all interested citizens of Plymouth but the organization does not endorse any candidates for office and members are free to support any individual or organization. The individual annual fees are \$20 for general members and \$100 for board and advisory members if so voted by the board. The vision of the organization is to have a Plymouth, where the best and equitable interests of all its residents are advanced and balanced to the benefit of the entire community.

Our mission was to encourage the informed and active participation of all citizens in local government, work to increase the understanding of major municipal public policy issues and promote policy through education and advocacy. The goals are to encourage smart economic development, preserve Plymouth's unique cultural resources, advocate for good management practices and budgetary discipline and keep the public informed.

The overwhelming reasons for the last three government changes, from Town Meeting/Selectmen to Council/ Manager or Mayor besides their overwhelming size, were dissatisfaction with the transparency and accountability of the existing government structure and long lead times to obtain approvals needed for economic growth. Last year at the Chamber of Commerce annual luncheon, I was introduced to Tony Green, the developer of Pine Hills and in chatting about any upcoming projects he mentioned two that were turned down. He did not plan any more attempts because during one of his last applications, a person in planning and development said and I quote , "why don't you do the development in some other town" That type of abuse is why three weeks ago it was announced that he partnered with someone else to develop the rest of the South Weymouth Naval Air Station to the detriment of Plymouth. Imagine this treatment for someone whose current project in Pine Hills has returned almost \$200 million tax dollars to Plymouth, while using minimal town services.

While on the subject of tax contributions, the town has snubbed and labeled the citizens with a Pine Hills address as "elitist snobs " in the local papers because they are interested in making the town better and turn out to vote such as last election with a turnout rate easily double the low rates for the rest of the town.



The OCM has asked what has PlymouthFirst accomplished in its brief existence and some significant achievements include :

A: Actively addressing town meeting warrant articles introducing more questioning onto the spring and fall town Meetings, which in prior years only required a single up or down vote on the budget.

B: Showed to the town some of the weakness in this form of government when one member made a motion to hold the new budget of the schools to the one from the previous year, thus forgoing the increase of \$2.3 million. The resulting threat from the school committee of eliminating 75 teacher positions, two school sports teams, reduced school programs, bus routes and many other drastic reactions and ending with 7 and 8 year olds to attend town meeting holding place cards stating” save our schools, save our teachers” etc.

Interestingly a look back at the schools accounts after the year in question was over revealed that several accounts were underspent by OVER \$2.3 million. Rather than return the extra balances to the general fund as the town does, these funds were shifted to other accounts.

C: Backing the Citizens of Oak Street to defeat the school department over three meetings, which hastily wanted to convert a 1901, five room house into a charter school for 40 students. A very bad idea due to non ADA compliance and other building issues. That school is now inside the school administration building.

D: The PF1st members asked and poked the consultants report about taking over the Waste Water treatment plant with a very weak, easily challenged, consultant conclusion. This decision has now “gone underground” with a response to an new RFP to take over the treatment plant which had only one firm responding and no reporting to the public. The waste water original installation some years ago ,which included an oversight in the bid documents required an additional \$10 Million and other costs, recently concluded luckily with a very good legal settlement.

Other recent settlements for harassment, some for monies, others for change of policy are buried from the public, with no change of personnel.

E: PF1st was instrumental in attending a parking committee meeting a year ago, which in the printed agenda, not easily found, was going to appoint one of their members to a \$100,000 job with the parking group and when 3 members showed at what was normally a private meeting the agenda item was scrubbed and a very experience outsider was hired a month later..

F: PlymouthFirst is comprised of many talented and experienced individuals willing to share their expertise including six town meeting members, COPC chair last year, people who have held elected and appointed positions in other places they lived over the last twenty years. This is especially important having two members of the Nuclear Citizens Advisory Committee who have written extensively to keep the public informed.

The Nuclear Regulatory Agency has insulted the town with their treatment leaving Plymouth to pay for protecting its citizenry from an accidental leak of stored casks. They told the town



to take over the upkeep of the siren warning system as of April 1, 2020 and the harbor on water protection, formally handled by the federal government. They told the Harbor master it was up to him to protect the casks from a terrorist attack by the sea. The current chairman [48 years serving] two months ago took on the task himself to force them to pay for the signaling towers, but a selectman is no match for a mayor of 60,500 people {voters} and no answer has been announced.

PlymouthFirst has had some problems expanding as a second very separate group called PCTC has been working on gathering signatures to put the question of a form of government on the ballot and many members have turned their efforts to that group while maintaining their membership in PF1st.

This organization reached 85 members in 2018 but lost some membership when some of the original founders were too outspoken in pushing for a change of government style and other very significant members left when the organization, keeping to their vision, allowed union leaders to join so they could be informed on our writings and actions. The union members are still members to this day.

What is Plymouthfirst focused on now would be the upcoming articles on building a central fire station in a rush on the most congested stretch of streets and intersections that response times would be 8-10 minutes slower. The previous central fire station in the 70's was approved at breakneck speed due to a grant going to expire. The result was finding a river flowing beneath the floor to add to environmental problems and poor construction of a former bus terminal. When you review the towns track record of building a school that couldn't be repaired after 25 years when my high school is 92 years old as senior condominiums, a police station built next to a dump that leaked methane gas into the station, we need a careful screening of any new site.

Some of our members can be congratulated because their constant seeking of answers, written or verbal, has caused the town manager to issue a weekly report on the problems and issues brought to her and is a wonderful response to the transparency issue.

In conclusion PlymouthFirst has brought positive results to the town, has provided extensive reports on current issues posted on their website PLYMOUTHFIRST.ORG, and still hope to encourage people, looking at their escalating tax bill which must have grown over 50-65 % during the last 6 years to take some time to GET INVOLVED, ask questions and discuss the issues.

The remaining issue under the Town Meeting Form of Government is that 135 members are not a good filter, when only 120 on average showed up to vote the last three sessions. When considering the town moderator [29 years] allows 25 current employees and town retirees receiving benefits to vote, and you have family and same household reps, reducing 13 more votes, you have 82 objective voters representing 44,060 [as of last week] registered voters of Plymouth.

Doesn't seem too democratic DOES IT?

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