

AGENDA
SCARBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY – MARCH 14, 2019
SPECIAL MEETING – 4:30 P.M.
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP RE: PINE POINT CO-OP 6:00 P.M.

Item 1. Call to Order.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. Roll Call.

Order No. 19-016. Act on the request from Councilor Caterina to give testimony to the Legislature on behalf of the Town Council relating to funding of Municipal Revenue Sharing. *[Councilor Caterina]*

Order No. 19-017. Act on the request for an executive session pursuant to Title 1, M.R.S.A. §405(6)(E) for consultation with legal counsel regarding the Piper Shores Contract Zone Amendment. *[Town Manager]*

Item 4. Adjournment.

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Order No. 19-016. Move approval on the request from Councilor Caterina to give testimony to the Legislature on behalf of the Town Council relating to funding of Municipal Revenue Sharing. [*Councilor Caterina*]

Councilor Caterina

Ought to Pass

Sponsor

Recommendation

03/14/2019 – Vote:

First Reading/Vote

N/A

Public Hearing

N/A

Second Reading/Final Approval/Vote

Proposed Testimony for March 20, 2019

Senator Breen, Senator Chipman, Representative Gattine, Representative Tipping and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Taxation:

My name is Jean-Marie Caterina. (I am testifying today in my official capacity as a Town Councilor from Scarborough, a town of almost 20,000 people situated just south of Portland.) *or alternately* (I am here today as a Town Councilor from Scarborough, Maine. I speak for myself and some of the other members of my Council who have asked me to represent them.). in Opposition to Municipal Revenue Sharing proposed in the Governor's Budget.

I first appeared before you in January 2014, when the Scarborough Town Council passed a unanimous resolution supporting legislation to oppose the elimination of Municipal Revenue Sharing. I appear before you now to request that Municipal Revenue Sharing be restored to its legislated level of 5%. Towns such as ours have born the burden of a tax shift from those able to pay to those least able to pay for long enough. It is past time to restore the partnership between the state and municipalities that served the citizens so well for so many years.

As in 2014, I stand before you today as the voice of those many mutual constituents who can no longer sustain the burden of an ongoing shift from a tax that determines payment based on income to paying a tax that is based solely on the value of real property, income be damned. I continue to speak for the 90 year old widow living in the house in which she was born. I speak for the clambers and fishermen whose families have lived near the sea for generations who continue to be taxed out of their homes. I speak for the farmers who struggle to make a living and keep their land out of development. I speak for the hardworking middle class families whose wages have stagnated yet have seen their property taxes shoot up over 30 percent since 2011. Yes, Scarborough has many pockets of affluence. However, there are just as many families who have been in my town for generations who are struggling to stay here. For many, they live on fixed or low incomes. Their greatest expense is their property tax. Their greatest fear is losing their home. Their plea to our Town Council continues to be: "Can you help? ".

Scarborough has become the poster child for school budget votes turning into proxy battles due to this fear. Year after year, nasty and vindictive rhetoric rears its ugly head in my town because people on fixed incomes or of moderate means struggle with the negative impact rising property taxes have on their meager budgets. I can't say I blame them. As their elected town councilor, I get it. But as the rug has been pulled out from under our feet, we have had no option but to continue with raising property taxes and cutting services. Neighbors have been pitted against neighbors. It must stop.

It is time for the Governor and the Legislature to take a long and measured look at the consequences of their previous actions. We need to restore fairness in the tax structure. We need to fully restore the Municipal Revenue Sharing as a method of offsetting the regressive effect of property taxes and the funding of state mandates. We need to restore the partnership that existed between the State and municipalities, a partnership that provides stability in taxes for provision of police and fire, schools, and roads. Our mutual constituents, our people, don't have high paid lobbyists laying in wait on the third floor. They elected you and elected me to represent them and their interests. They are depending on us to finally stop this tax shift. Let's get it done.....today.

Testimony in Support of LR 2721

Senator Hill, Representative Chase, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Jean-Marie Caterina. I am testifying today in my official capacity as a Town Councilor from Scarborough, a town of almost 20,000 people situated just south of Portland.

On Wednesday, January 15, the Scarborough Town Council passed a unanimous resolution in our council meeting supporting LR 2721. This was an important vote for us as a Council. As town councilors we don't always agree on all matters, but we agreed on this. We are tired of the lack of support from Augusta. As the local officials elected to deal daily with the concerns of our citizens and our town employees, we have had enough of the tax shifting. We are fighting back.

I stand before you today as the voice of those many constituents who can no longer sustain the burden of a continued shift from a tax that determines payment based on income and ability to pay to a tax that is based solely on the value of real property, income be damned. I speak for the 90year old widow living in the same house in which she was born. I speak for the clambers and fishermen whose families have lived near the sea for generations, in the same small house, who are now being taxed out of their homes. I speak for the farmers who struggle to make a living and keep their land out of development. I speak for the many, many hardworking middle class families whose wages have stagnated yet their property taxes have shot up over 20% in 4 years. Yes, Scarborough has many pockets of affluence. However, there are just as many families who have been in my town for generations who are struggling to stay here. For many, they live on fixed or low incomes. Their greatest expense is their property tax. Their greatest fear is losing their home. Their plea to me is: "Can you help me? ".

There are those who suggest we cut more services in town. Where shall we cut? We have employees doing their work tirelessly with reduced resources and increased demands. We have a public works department that uses and reuses equipment so much that a retired snowplow literally fell apart on its way to auction. Our fire and police services are stretched dangerously thin. We have cut and reduced and cut again until we have nothing left to give. Again I ask, where shall we cut?

I find it particularly galling that there is no need to be in this situation. It is particularly unconscionable to me that this Governor and some elected state officials think it is OK to give some businesses a free ride on their taxes because the businesses say they can't create jobs without those breaks. Many are businesses with no cash flow issues, no problem making a profit. Where are those jobs? Are those breaks actually creating jobs and wealth for the average Maine person? How about my 90 year old constituent who asks me for help in order that she can pull together the money that is needed to pay her property taxes- taxes she is willing to

pay! Where is her pass? Where is her free ride? And my fishermen and clammers, my farmers and my average hardworking, middle class homeowner....where is their tax break? Where is their free ride? Believe me, I never hear that they are not willing to pay. They are willing to pay their fair share. They are asking to be heard. Please listen.

It is time for the Governor and the Legislature to take a long and measured look at the consequences of their previous actions. We need to restore fairness in the tax structure. We need to fully restore the Municipal Revenue Sharing as a method of offsetting the regressive effect of property taxes and the funding of state mandates. Our mutual constituents, our people, don't have high paid lobbyists laying in wait on the third floor. They elected you and elected me to represent them and their interests. They are depending on us to stop this tax shift. Let's get it done.

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