



Southold Town Democrats

Government in the Public Interest

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Statement by Kathryn Casey Quigley at 1/16/18 Town Board Meeting

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Good evening, my name is Kathryn Casey Quigley. I am the recently elected Chair of the Southold Town Democratic Committee. I am here this evening to formally introduce myself to Supervisor Russell and our Town Board. I thank you for your service to our town, and look forward to following your work and efforts as our elected representatives, in the months ahead.

While there are probably issues about which we disagree, there is undoubtedly also much that unites us. One of those unifying aspects is likely that the foundation of our democracy depends on an engaged citizenry. So I thank you for allowing me to be here. And I call on all residents of this town- especially given that our town is led by one party rule- to continue to participate in the process of shared accountability by engaging with their local government.

The ability of residents to stand before you this evening is an admirable example of open democracy, but there is still much about the operation of town government that remains opaque. I believe we can do better.

Our capacity as residents to engage with government in an informed way requires your assistance. We depend on our local government to provide as much information in the most accessible, transparent and efficient ways possible. To that end, I have a few questions that I hope you can address moving forward:

Has the Town Board evaluated the mechanisms by which you communicate with residents of

this town? Have you considered how to best engage with constituents to keep us informed? This is relevant in myriad circumstances: from emergencies and storm announcements, to town meeting agendas, meetings themselves, minutes and vacancies for Committees.

While local media is an invaluable and crucial tool, I believe it is incumbent upon our elected officials to more directly communicate with residents. I'd like to provide a brief sample of concerns and possible solutions:

Webcasting of work sessions, planning board & zoning board meetings. I applaud you on webcasting these meetings - it is a great initial step, and I hope that the successful practice can be applied elsewhere to help residents remain fully informed into the important meetings and decisions happening within their local government.

A second example is the posting of committee vacancies. Recently, it appears that certain vacancies, specifically - for Planning Board and Housing Commission- have been first posted through a town councilman's personal facebook page rather than through some formal town outlets. Is there policy and procedure on how vacancies are announced? While the planning board vacancy seems to have just made it to the Suffolk Times (about a week after the posting on the personal facebook page), I haven't been able to find these vacancies even explicitly posted on the Town website.

I am optimistic that your responsiveness to this matter will result in greater openness, thereby better empowering residents and making us all more effective in our shared project of serving Southold.

Thank you for your time.

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