

Town of Marlborough

First Selectman

Bill Black



26 North Main Street
P.O. Box 29
Marlborough, CT 06447
Phone (860) 295-6204
Fax (860) 295-0317

TO: Senator Gayle Slossberg, 14th District, Representative James Spallone, 36th District and the members of the General Administration and Elections Committee.

FROM: Bill Black - First Selectman, Town of Marlborough

DATE: 1/30/09

RE: Senate Bill 772 An Act Concerning Freedom of Information Act

Dear General Administration and Elections Committee,

The Town of Marlborough as many other smaller municipalities do not have IT Staff in house and utilize contracted services to operate and maintain the Town Websites and the requirement of posting minutes with the seven (7) day timeframe provides serious challenges.

These challenges include that commission clerk bring the minutes into Town Clerk's Office as required on the sixth of seventh day after the meeting. This leaves little or no time for the Town to get the minutes to its subcontractor and have the minutes posted in time. The subcontractor may be away on business, have other job commitments, or away on vacation all of which the Town has no control over that will result in violations of the Freedom of Information Act.

In addition, Towns are challenged by on hourly rates charged for IT services, which increase costs to the Towns. It is tough to budget this item since the length of the minutes vary and Boards/Commissions hold special meetings in addition to their regular meetings, therefore making it difficult to budget the number of meetings and the length of the minutes for a fiscal year. This requirement on top of the rising legal advertised costs in the print media is causing budgetary issues in many municipalities regardless of size.

The Town of Marlborough is a firm believer in the Freedom of Information Act and that citizens should have public information available to them, however, the website posting seven (7) day requirement is an undue burden on many municipalities. Please know that some communities have shut down their websites as means to comply with the law. This seems counterproductive and in direct contradiction with the intent of providing public access to the Town information, however, if this law is not amended this likely will force other municipalities to follow suit of those who have already shut down their websites.

We request that the timeframe for posting minutes on the Town website be amended so that the period of filing should be doubled or eliminated.

Sincerely,

Bill Black – First Selectman