

The Hummel Report Mid-Year Update



As we reach the mid-point of 2013, The Hummel Report has significant developments on investigations since the beginning of the year.

The Tax Man Calleth - Under the category of “Be careful what you ask for,” now-former Somerset Selectman Arastou Mahjoory challenged the town to speed up a revaluation that has been taking place the past year.

“The Board of Assessors needs to get their valuation people out there quicker. If they increase the assessment, no problem,” he said in a May interview with *The Hummel Report*.

We raised questions about the legality of a 1,500-square-foot in-law apartment on his property assessed at only \$17,000.

Mahjoory said the former garage had electricity and water when he moved in at 497 Chace Street, even though relatives of the previous owner contradicted his story. We found no permits at town hall to convert the space into living quarters.

In repeated interviews with us over several weeks, Mahjoory challenged the town to come look at the property, but the town’s assessor tells *The Hummel Report* that when she arrived he refused to let her inside, saying his mother-in-law had a heart attack. The town increased the assessment anyway and last week sent him a supplemental tax bill for \$1,000 that is due later this month. That’s in addition to the \$4,200 he pays now for a total bill of \$5,200 going forward.

Mahjoory, who was up for re-election to the Board of Selectman, lost his seat four days after our story ran. The margin was just 83 votes.

Wrong Way - In February we reported on a blocked right-of-way to the water in East Providence. The homeowner insisted she had an agreement with the city to put a fence in front of the path and threatened to sue us over our story. Last month the city told her to take it down.

Retired Providence police officer Tabitha Glavin put a fence across the city right-of-way shortly after moving to 61 White Avenue in Riverside in 2009. We interviewed two neighbors who wanted to know why years had gone by and the city had not forced Glavin to remove the fence.

The day after our story ran, Glavin’s attorney threatened to sue us - and the neighbors we interviewed - saying we had “false and misleading information” in our report, adding, “The matter that you reported

has been resolved with the City of East Providence.” But she never provided us any documentation about an agreement or that the city council had approved it. The attorney maintains the city has not produced any evidence that East Providence owns the land.

The Hummel Report has obtained documents issued earlier this month by the city’s director of public works and harbormaster, who ordered Glavin to take down the fence by July 8. But her attorney went to court to block the city and a judge will hear the case later this month.

An Eye on the Water - The Bristol Town Council last month chose a new harbormaster, surprising many in town when it bypassed the in-house candidate for the job.

We reported that the former harbormaster, Joe Cabral, retired last fall under pressure after town officials discovered hundreds of calls had gone unanswered at his office last summer. Cabral’s son-in-law, Matt Calouro, who served as the assistant harbormaster, applied to replace Cabral, but lost out to Greg Marsili, head of the Coast Guard station in Bristol. Marsili officially took over in late June.

Calouro initially agreed to stay on until Marsili arrived, but then told Town Administrator Antonio Teixeira he was going out for medical reasons.

Meanwhile, Mike Marshall, a resident who has been pushing for answers about the harbormaster’s office, has asked for a forensic audit of the department. Teixeira told *The Hummel Report* this week he decided to do a full forensic audit on a department that handles hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

All Fired Up - Hundreds of people turned out to a meeting in Exeter in March, upset by the council’s decision to try to get the process for obtaining a gun permit shifted from local control to the state. Council members who supported the proposal are now facing a recall effort.

Exeter is the only community in Rhode Island without a police department, which means the issuance of gun permits falls to the town clerk and town sergeant. Four members of the council voted to ask the local legislative delegation to put in a bill to have that responsibility shifted to the attorney general.

Gun rights activists packed a school cafeteria to voice their displeasure before and after the vote.

Exeter resident Lance Edwards said that night he would work to recall the four council members, and last month was true to his word by filing a petition for a recall at Town Hall. The town clerk tells *The Hummel Report* the group has 120 days to get 496 signatures. If they are successful, the recall election would be held within 60 days.



Pot for Pain - And finally, the state's second marijuana distribution center opened in Portsmouth at the beginning of June. And so far, the owners report doing a robust business.

We got a tour of the Greenleaf Compassion Center a month before it opened, when the building on West Main Road was still undergoing renovations. It officially opened at the beginning of June. Its co-owner, Dr. Seth Bock, tells us that 125 cardholders have already come in to purchase marijuana. He projects 300 by the end of the year.

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