

1 July 2017

Town Of Washington
Summit Hill Road
Washington, Mass.

Attn: Select Board

Subject: Town of Washington revenue ideas

Approximately two years ago I approached the Board regarding the possibility of establishing a Veterans War memorial to honor those men and women that have served our country from the Town of Washington. At that time I was told that the town was experiencing financial challenges. I was issued a challenge to try to raise the money in a different manner with the possibility that the town may be of assistance.

Subsequent to that initial discussion, there have been some additional thoughts pertaining to this subject and some additional subjects such as cemetery maintenance. During the past two years the town has been challenged to find additional moneys to be able to fund additional projects.

Here are some thoughts on ways in which the town of Washington may increase their revenue stream without affecting the real estate tax base.

1. Create a designated committee - I would urge the select board to create a committee consisting of a member from each of the following committees: planning board, assessors, finance committee, and select board. Each member of this committee should think of at least one way to accomplish the task of increasing revenue for the town. Some thoughts follow:
2. In order to maintain the personality of the town and yet open up growth, consider a business zone along the route 8 artery. Route 8 seems to be a natural for this new zone within the town.
3. Define the total acreage within the town borders. Then define the acreage currently comprised of the non profit, municipal, and land preserves within the borders. Finally, establish a maximum limit for these types of organizations that may inhibit future revenue growth. An example may be that if the town has 10,000 total acres then only 2,500 acres may be dedicated to this type of use. This would assist in insuring that the majority of the town is capable of residential/business growth.
4. Consider a property view enhancement for those properties that have elevation such that the view increases the property value. Use the Commonwealth guidelines for assistance.

5. Consider a property enhancement fee for those properties that are not taxable yet have road frontage. The fee could be based upon x number of dollars based upon total road frontage. If a property has 100' of road frontage and the fee was \$10./foot then the annual fee would be \$1,000.
6. Consider a personal property fee for the items required to operate a cottage industry as permitted within the existing zoning by laws.
7. Consider an annual fee for the cottage industries, ie \$100./per business. This fee could be used to defray any annual inspections that may be required by an enforcing official.
8. Forestry enhancement may be a consideration. Once again define the total acreage that is owned by the town. Conduct an audit of the acreage and determine the amount of land that promotes deciduous and coniferous growth. Engage with a forest evaluator to determine the amount of the forest that is mature and optimum for harvest and re-planting. Consult with the forester to establish, "wood lots", possibly 5 acres that may be auctioned to certified foresters such that the town may receive appropriate proceeds for the harvest. This same forester would be responsible for the proper re-planting of the harvested area.
9. In order for these efforts to be successful, the town needs to appoint an enforcing official to uphold these guidelines such that the town does not experience a blighted area nor is taken advantage of during times when fees must be paid for these various endeavors. The current zoning by-laws that were recently passed can serve as a guide for the enforcement.
10. If this enforcing official determines that one or more of these uses or users in not in compliance then a schedule of fines should be established such that the town may collect these fines in a professional manner.
11. The town should also stay current with the defined roadway infrastructure. The town should be aware of all chapter 90 roadways and keep the commonwealth up to date. The town should also have accurate records as they pertain to properly abandoned roads and to minimize paper roads/streets. Examples that come quickly to mind would be Whitney Road, Cross Place Road, Ryan Road, West Road.

The current boards have the inherent authority to engage and discuss additional areas that may be used to enhance the revenue stream for the town and present and/or implement these areas accordingly.

Considerations and suggestions by Peter J. Blake