

Remembering Peter Crawford 1954-2019 A Model Citizen Of Rye,

We first saw him popping up at the Deliberative Session in 2012 to speak numerous times and question town officials on stage as well as some of his fellow citizens. He soon joined the board of the Rye Civic League and showed his firm understanding of the law, its interpretation and his skills as an indefatigable researcher of town hall documents.

More than any other citizen in the last eight years, Peter attended town board meetings and asked the most pointed questions. He reminded me of Joan LaFrance, one of the Civic League founders in 1968, who was just as active as Peter and when she was at meetings she was often the most informed person in the room.

All residents are indebted to him for the numerous mistakes he caught in town proceedings as well as the many warrant articles he initiated, including adding video recording of all town meetings. Who can forget Peter standing at the recycling center in the coldest weather with signs promoting his proposed changes and a table for people to sign his petitioned warrant articles? He was undaunted by the weather, uninformed citizens, and verbal attacks.

He personally took responsibility for filming our Town Deliberative Meetings, site walks and other key activities. Peter did yeoman's work on town budgets that enabled the story of our spending to be told. Leveraging his technical expertise he made Swiss cheese of Verizon's justification for the need for a cell tower on Brackett Road. During his eight years in town he was at the forefront over the debate on town hall, the proceedings of the Rye Water district and every other challenge facing the town. He was often the lone dissenting vote on the Budget Committee and although people did not always agree with him, he was widely respected for his knowledge and his research. He served as secretary for the Civic League, kept detailed records and always provided meticulous preparation for the Board prior to every monthly meeting and for its more extensive retreats.

Peter fully understood that citizens form the legislative branch of town government and, beyond voting, they must work with the executive branch for government to work well. Peter cared deeply about Rye and that is why he was always questioning and offering supportive comments. His was not the voice of a cynic who only offers negative criticism; it was the voice of an active citizen which our town and our nation need for democracy to work. Elected and appointed officials should welcome participation of citizens like Peter Crawford and not try to silence them.

All Rye residents will miss his huge contribution to improving town government. His loss has left a gap that we will be hard pressed to fill, but his politically active life in Rye will serve as an

inspiration to all about our responsibility to participate in town government. If we just did a fraction of what Peter did Rye would be all the better for it.

Whenever I fell behind on town issues I could always call Peter to quickly bring me up to speed. He was always in good humor and charitable in his comments about town officials, even when he did not agree with them. Peter had a winning smile, an infectious laugh and for some of us he was affectionately known as “Peter pop up,” for his constant questioning and comments in public meetings. We were always glad to see Peter take time off during the summer for his other passion out on the ocean and that is how we will remember him now, happily sailing New England waters, but always keeping an eye on Rye.

Alex Herlihy, Rye Civic league Board, June 24, 2019

