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Mapleville, Rhode Island 02839

May 8, 2019

John Pacheco III - Burrillville Town Council President
Town of Burrillville
Burrillville Town Halls
Harrisville, Rhode Island 02830

2nd Amendment Sanctuary resolution should be rescinded

Dear Town Council President Pacheco,
Good evening everyone! My name is Paul Roselli. Over the years I have come before you representing one or a variety of non-profit environmental groups. Tonight, I'm here representing myself.

Over these years, I have been witness to resolutions, deliberations, workshops, regulations that have been sponsored by or proposed by you and others on the Burrillville Town Council. I have not always agreed with the end results but feel that my respect, admiration and love for each of you transcends any and all reactions I may have to the work that you do. That is your job after all: to look out for the greater good, find truth from fiction, delve into subjects to find common ground that helps define our sense of place and our sense of community, while always maintaining decorum and respecting the dignity of all the citizens of our Town.

Many of you have traveled with me and others across the state opposing a fracked gas power plant, looking for ways to increase tourism with our rivers, streams and open lands. We have travelled by car educating the state on the vagaries and intricacies of electricity price auctions, water usage, truck traffic and asking towns and cities to support our resolution on a number of issues that are central to maintain and improve our town and region's way of life.

And that is our goal after all. What we, you, do here is akin to creating what some religions would call creating our earth's Heaven, or nirvana, the Garden of Eden, the upper realm or Paradise. Indeed, anything short of that would be considered folly or a waste of effort or time. Why would we want to achieve anything else.

It is within that spirit of creation and respect that I want to tell you how I feel about the Resolution declaring the Town of Burrillville a "Second Amendment Sanctuary Town."

First off, I have to applaud you in taking a stand against unfunded mandates. Clearly municipalities are being pelted with the untenable situation of having to take care of business not only within our own borders but that of mandates and business from the entire state. Education, pensions, health care, infrastructure, new safety and municipal equipment and training for 911 dispatchers - all those make their way to your desk and then to the pocketbooks of the citizens of this town. And if that is all the resolution stated, then I would be on your side. I would applaud your efforts. But this resolution does not say just that, and I am not on your side.

In my world of environment activism I fight for all species in our town attempting to reduce or halt the damage or decay or extinction of anything that is connected to the land and water around us: that includes us by the way. But what seems to have become extinct with this resolution are the species of transparency, discourse and dissent. There was no discussion among the citizens of our town, there does not seem to be any attempt to send the resolution out before-hand for citizen review. What seems to have happened is that outside national organizations sent over a policy statement for you to review and approve. And you did with no dissent. No dissent is the most troubling. There should have been one among you who stood up for the other citizens in town: those who do not own guns; those who felt that they were left out of the discussion; those who feel that with all that is going on with legislation on the makeup of the Energy Facility Siting Board, changes to solar and wind permitting and installation, and decisions about the power plant that you could have waited. But you didn't wait. And there was not one among you who dissented.

This resolution violates my first and foremost principle: that is, belief in the rule of law. Now I know that with this resolution you meant to counter what you felt was another breaking of the law by those who promote sanctuary cities. And you might be right. After all the breaking of a law is a breaking of law no matter what law you are trying to break! If breaking the law means, in this context, distancing local police from working with federal agents or asking the Burrillville Police Department to, as is mentioned in the resolution, "exercise sound discretion when enforcing laws impacting the rights of citizens under the second amendment." Either one of those is, taken as a whole, is breaking the law. But I hope you understand, that there is a stark meaningful difference between the two: the first is for people - providing sanctuary to those who are oppressed or in danger of life and limb or feel they need a safe haven in order to subscribe to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The other, your resolution, has to do with things. You are not allowed to provide sanctuary to things, not even people with things.

Think of the ramifications for those who are impacted by domestic abuse, those whose lives are threatened by acts of violence in the home or workplace, those who live with someone who has a gun. How do you think this resolution makes them feel? Your actions are disrespectful to survivors of gun violence, and are out of step with the way the majority of Rhode Islanders feel about commonsense gun safety reform.

I want to go on but know that there are other voices here that need to be heard. I want to hear them. I will end that you, everyone in this room, and law enforcement here and throughout the State does not get to pick and choose what laws to accept or what laws to enforce. I ask you to rescind this resolution. Take it back. You made your point.

I wish that we had had this conversation earlier.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Roselli