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PRESS RELEASE
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Wareham Selectmen violate free speech rights of “Wareham Ten” speaking out against strip mining and deforestation for large industrial solar say lawyers

Contact: Meg Sheehan, Save the Pine Barrens
www.savethepinebarrens.org
environmentwatchesoutheasternma@gmail.com
Cell: 508-259-9154

Wareham MA – Lawyers for Wareham residents demanded that the town’s Board of Selectmen immediately revoke their “illegal practice” of refusing to allow them to speak during “Citizens’ Comment” portions of Board meetings saying this is retaliation for the residents’ questioning a sand mining and forest clear-cut operation for solar. A [letter](#) detailing the violations was sent on August 30, 2021.

The Board has dubbed a group of local advocates trying to protect wetlands and waterways from strip mining and deforestation the “Wareham Ten.” At issue is a plan by AD Makepeace, a local land speculator, and Borrego Solar of California to clear-cut 70 acres of pristine Pine Barrens forest, strip mine 1.2 million cubic yards of sand, and install an industrial solar utility on Tihonet Pond in the heart of Wareham. Using the “Ten Residents” provision of state law, the group has asked the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to overturn the Town’s permit for the project. A Board majority, back up by Town Counsel Brian Bowen, falsely labeled this a “threat of litigation” and banned the residents from speaking during “Citizens Comments” during their meetings.

Chair Judith Whiteside, former Chair Peter Teitelbaum and Selectman Patrick Tropeano each violated the Ten Residents’ constitutional rights in at least seven incidents since February 2021 according to the letter. Chair Whiteside also deprived one of the Wareham Ten, Jody Santagate a seat on the Finance Committee. Leslie Edwards, Kathy Pappalardo and Lisa Morales are also identified in the letter.

“The Board is retaliating against its own residents who are pursuing their legal rights to try to protect the environment,” said Meg Sheehan, an attorney with the group. “For decades, the Board has let AD Makepeace destroy forests and strip mine the land with impunity. The Board is dead wrong if they think they can keep hiding the truth by trying to silence those who speak out against this environmental destruction.”

END



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